

115th Fires Brigade



Cowboy Thunder

Volume 1 Issue 1

July 2009



**115th Fires Brigade Units
conduct TOA and Combat Patch
Ceremonies**

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Commanders' Comments

Howdy from COWBOY 6

We have the entire brigade here in Kuwait and units are in place. Morale is high as soldiers are eager to get into the missions. We completed the last of our required training in July and conducted relief in place (RIP) operations in preparation for



Col. Richard C. Knowlton

assuming mission responsibilities under transfer of authority (TOA).

The RIPTOA process is when the unit that is here currently doing the mission, in turn, trains us on the specific tasks and processes used to accomplish the mission. We then demonstrate proficiency in those tasks prior to our assuming the mission. Many of our units have completed the process and soon the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and 45th Fires Brigade will relinquish their missions to us in the 115th Fires Brigade.

Your Soldiers' morale is high as their great attitude carries us forward into this mission. When people are faced with diversity, whether here or at home, the attitude they approach the problem with often makes or breaks the experience.

When soldiers approach their mission with a positive attitude it is much easier to work through any adversity

encountered. The positive interaction each Soldier has with those at home makes a huge impact on their attitude and his or her ability to deal with adversity, here or at home.

I encourage those at home to continue to stay engaged in a positive way with your Soldiers and your communities. This will enable all of us to keep up a positive attitude as we move through this mission and deployment together.

Each and every one of you should be proud of your Soldiers and the professionalism and skill they have brought to this mission.

They have faced a lot of turmoil in the year approaching the mission and during the mobilization process, the post mobilization training at Fort Hood and the transit into theater.

I am very confident in their ability to accomplish this mission and come back to their families, communities and jobs physically, mentally and spiritually intact.

Happy Trails Cowboy 6

Command Sgt. Maj. Comments

As we start settling here at Camp Arifjan and the other camps throughout Kuwait, we need to keep in mind what guides us, especially during those difficult times.

Our Soldiers will reflect on our Army Values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. We will complete our tour here in the Middle East, with a great deal of pride and earn the respect of our nation and those nations that we continue to help shape for the future.

The units of the 45th Fires Brigade and the 29th Infantry Brigade have done an outstanding job of meeting any mission assigned to them in theater to a high standard and a high level of professionalism. We need to keep in mind that no matter how unusual the methodology they deploy, the units we replaced have been successful. We need to use those Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, (TTPs) as we conduct the mission. We need to refine those TTPs as the enemy continues to refine their TTPs.

We need to take what we learned at Fort Hood and continue, most importantly, the Composite Risk Management to do all our great work safely.

Soldiers must continue to watch each other using the Battle Buddy System. Even though we trained and lived in the heat of Fort Hood, we still need to acclimate to the dry heat here and the change in our body clocks. Watching each other and making sure we get enough sleep right now is paramount to being successful in the desert.

As my wife reminded me, the desert will test you physically, emotionally and spiritually.

As an organization, we need to take care of one another through these challenges and go home each with a medal on their chest and feeling proud of what we have done.

Getting adjusted on the front end of our tour will pay big dividends in accomplishing these two goals.

Along with this we need to constantly remind each other to do the right thing at the right time for the right reasons all of the time; Pre-Combat Checks

and Inspections need to be conducted to standard every time. Mission briefings need to stay focused as if we will get attacked on every movement. Soldiers doing camp command need to treat every Soldier like they are the most important Soldier in the Army, but also uphold the standards established at every camp.

All our Soldiers need to be proud of what they have accomplished so far in this mobilization. Now is the time to establish those things that will get us through the deployment successfully and bring every one home physically, mentally and spiritually intact.

COWBOY 7



Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin

115th Fires Brigade

Commander

Col. Richard Knowlton

Command Sergeant Major

Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin

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On the Cover:



Lt. Col. Brian Naugher, commander 151 CBRNE based in Gadsen, Ala, attaches a 115th Fires Brigade combat patch to Sgt. Dustin W. Simpson at Camp Buehring August 4. (photo by Sgt. Martin M. Morales)

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115th Fires Brigade

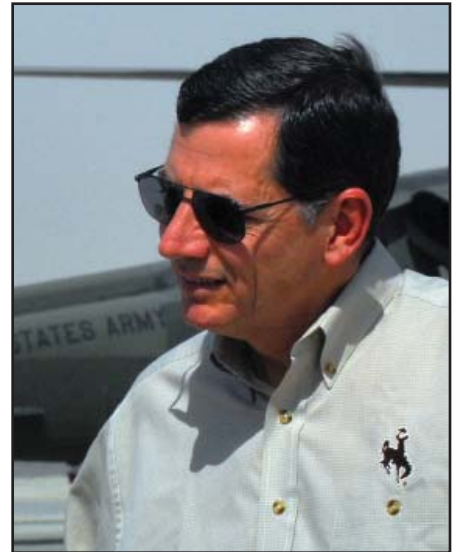
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Transfer Of Authority, Combat Patch Ceremonies

Units assigned to the 115th Fires Brigade conduct Transfer Of Authority ceremonies and assume responsibility of their missions. The ceremony consists of the departing unit lowering and casing their colors and the new unit raising their colors to take the position of the outgoing unit.

Patch ceremonies mark the award of the combat patch worn on the right shoulder. Unit patches worn on the left shoulder show what unit a Soldier is currently assigned, and the right shoulder patch shows what unit the Soldier serves with while operating in a combat zone. The Soldiers of the 115th Fires Brigade will be authorized to wear either the brigade cowboy patch or a previously awarded combat patch on their right shoulder.



PATRIOTISM: It's not hearing the call It's answering the call

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. David Largent

Throughout the existence of this great country there have been those who have heard the call to serve.

But only a small portion of those who hear the call actually step up and answer that call.

What makes that leap from hearing to action? For many it's Patriotism!

What's Patriotism?

Patriotism is seeing what happened on Sept. 11, 2001 and leaving a comfortable job as a school teacher in a desirable school to join the Army. Patriotism is heading off to basic training, Officer Candidate School (OCS), Signal School and finally to Ft. Huachuca, Ariz. to finish a three year enlistment.

Patriotism is knowing it's going to be hard and doing it anyway.

Patriotism is finishing that initial enlistment and being available for the next five years as an Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) member. Patriotism is hearing that call again, once more putting your job on hold and this time preparing your spouse of less than a year and a half, to take care of things at home and joining a mobilizing National Guard unit heading off for a yearlong deployment.

Patriotism is knowing it's going to be hard and doing it anyway. It's giving a hundred percent to ensure the citizens of this country are protected and the Soldiers you serve with are prepared to conduct their mission in as safe a manner as possible.

Patriotism is Capt. Richard King, battle captain, Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 115th Fires Brigade, an IRR soldier activated and assigned to the brigade.

After finishing his original enlistment he didn't think he would hear from the Army again, but sometimes surprises come in small packages.

"I got a Fed X package with a set of orders in it that read, 'You are ordered to return to active duty,'" said King.

"When I told my wife she felt like this was the worst thing ever. We had just moved to Va. from Wash. five months earlier, I had just started a new job and we were planning to start our family," he added.

King told his wife Jennifer, there is a reason for everything. He said he didn't know what that purpose was, but that they needed to stay positive and make the best of it. Regardless of the length of time there was a reason he was meant to be back in the Army for another year.

How do you move ahead when all your plans are suddenly and dramatically changed?

"You throw yourself into it, you

give a hundred percent and then you enjoy it. You have to be fully committed," King said.

"Staying positive is the key, you get engaged as much as you can. I try to build my team, learn my job and maintain a positive mental attitude," he added.

According to King, we have the easier job.

"It's easier for us because we're here and busy, I know it's harder for Jennifer. I contact her as much as possible by phone or e-mail whenever I get a chance," he said.

"She has a lot to take care of with the new house, her work, two kittens and me being gone. It's a lot and she feels overwhelmed," King said.

So who's a Patriot?

If you ask King he'll tell you it's his wife Jennifer. He'll tell you she's the one taking care of things at home while he answers the call.

Patriotism is knowing it's going to be hard and doing it anyway.



"You throw yourself into it, you give a hundred percent and then you enjoy it. You have to be fully committed," said Capt. Richard King, Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 115th FiB. King communicates with his wife Jennifer through cell phone and email as often as he can.



Capt. Richard King, a mobilized Individual Ready Reserve Officer is a battle captain for, 115th Fires Brigade.



Sen. John Barrasso presented a Wyoming state flag to Lt. Col. John A. Papile, commander, 960th Bri-

gade Support Battalion. Barrasso presented a flag to each of the Wyo. based battalions assigned to the

115th Fires Brigade, July 26. (photos by Master Sgt. Dave Largent, 115th Fires Brigade)

Sen. Barrasso visits Wyo. Soldiers in Kuwait

Editors Note: The following is a letter written by Sen. John Barrasso to his constituents back in Wyo. after his visit to members of the 115th Fires Brigade in Kuwait.

I just got back from visiting Wyoming's Army National Guard troops in Kuwait. They are there to defend our freedom, and they are making us proud. The temperature was 117 degrees.

The Wyoming Guard is fortunate to be in the very capable hands of Col. Richard Knowlton. He grew up in Goshen County and graduated from Torrington High School. He personally knows a remarkably large number of the men and women in his

command. The respect they have for him is quite evident.

I had the privilege of visiting Soldiers at each of our three bases – Camp Arifjan, Camp Virginia, and the Life Support Area. I visited with hundreds of Wyo. Soldiers, and thanked them for the sacrifices that they and their families are making on our behalf.

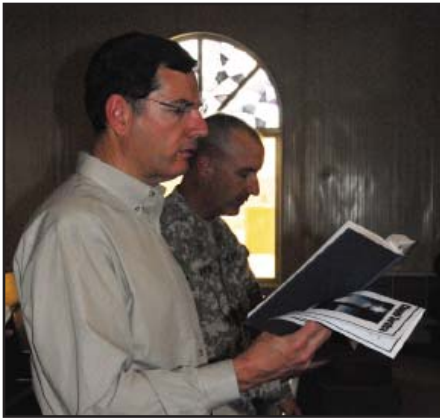
The Wyo. troops have significant responsibility throughout Kuwait and Iraq. On any given day, they collectively log over 10,000 miles transporting equipment and supplies around Kuwait and throughout Iraq.

These men and women are our

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Sen. John Barrasso checks out a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle (MRAP) while visiting with Wyo. Guardsmen at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, July 26.



Sen. Barrasso and Col. Richard C. Knowlton, commander, 115th Fires Brigade, attend church services at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, July 26.

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mechanics, teachers, computer specialists, game wardens, firefighters, and police officers. They are mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. They are our friends and neighbors.

It's no surprise that they miss their families and they miss Wyo. I met soldiers from just about every community in Wyo. They all told me that they are getting plenty to eat and enjoy the chance to connect with loved ones at home by phone and email.

Part of the mission statement for

the 115th Fires Brigade is for each of the soldiers to return home physically, mentally, and spiritually intact. Support systems are in place.

Scott Morey, an orthopedic physician assistant from Sheridan runs a well equipped clinic. Chaplain Randy Sawyer, also from Sheridan, and Chaplain Rob Peterson from Casper offer counseling and church services. I worshipped with the troops Sunday morning.

Each of the soldiers wanted you at home to know that they are doing well, trying to get adjusted to the exceptionally high temperatures and are settling in for the year ahead. They are very appreciative of the efforts by the folks at home to pitch in and help their families while they are away.

I asked Col. Knowlton how those of us at home could help. He encourages us to actively reach out and involve the families of our soldiers in events throughout our communities. Invite them to community and church socials, involve them in community activities, and lend a helping hand.

The people of Wyoming have always supported our troops and their families. We now have another opportunity to embrace the families of those who are serving our state and our nation. 🇺🇸



Sen. Barrasso 'gets a lift' from Sgt. John Wayne, of Casper Wyo., as part of his tour around Camp Virginia, Kuwait, July 26.



Spec. Michael Mickelson, from Lovell, Wyo. and Sen. John Barrasso discuss vehicle maintenance at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, July 26.



Wyo. Guardsmen raise the flag given to them by Sen. John Barrasso. The flag was flown during Frontier Days back in Cheyenne, Wyo.

NCO'S: BACKBONE OF THE ARMY

Story by Sgt Robert D Walden

The year 2009 has been designated as the Year of the Non Commissioned Officer for the US Army. NCO's are enlisted service members that have been given authority by the Uniform Code of Military Justice to accomplish tasks and supervise junior ranking service members.

NCO ranks in the Army start with corporal, at E-4, and go up to command sgt. maj., at E-9. Enlisted service members generally have several years of experience and a high level of proficiency in their field by the time they reach the NCO ranks.

NCOs are the most visible leaders in the Army. These military leaders are responsible for training personnel and executing the mission. They also provide guidance to commissioned officers. This role as advisor is important because although officers may be very well educated, they often begin their careers in a position of authority, or show up to take command without the years of experience, leadership, and training that NCO's possess.

Because of the NCO's professional experience and ability to supervise and get the job done, they are considered to be the backbone of the Army. The officers are the thinking head, and the junior enlisted are the working hands and feet.

"NCO's are definitely executors," said Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton J. Franklin, from Cheyenne Wyo., 115th Fires Brigade. "We take the guidance and commanders intent and carry it out. The execution of a mission may not be clear. Situations change, but if the intent is clear, NCO's will get to that end state the commander is striving for."

"Keep in mind that we always look out for the soldiers the best we can, said Franklin. "That doesn't mean always coddling. Soldiers are not always in a comfortable and safe situ-

ation. But even when we do bring them into harm's way, we do everything we can to bring them all home physically, mentally, and spiritually intact."

"In a lot of armies around the world, officers are totally in charge," said

Franklin. "This is all done by the officers in many other countries. It makes it difficult for their Armies to run smoothly and grow."

Being promoted through the enlisted ranks up to being an NCO is not an easy task. Soldiers must prove

"During a training mission to Nigeria, I noticed how amazed their officers were at the latitude that our NCO's are given and their abilities to accomplish a mission," said Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton J. Franklin.

Franklin. "During a training mission to Nigeria, I noticed how amazed their officers were at the latitude that our NCO's are given and their abilities to accomplish a mission."

"U.S. NCO's lead, enforce standards, evaluate, and recommend pro-

themselves by being physically fit, proficient in their job, and show that they are capable of leading others.

They show that they are ready by having positive evaluations given by

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The 115th Fires Brigade senior officer, Col. Richard C. Knowlton and senior enlisted member, Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton J. Franklin synchronize their watches. These top leaders work together every day to accomplish the brigade mission and ensure troop welfare. (photo by Sgt. Martin M. Morales)

their supervisors. These evaluations are used to highlight what a Soldier has accomplished, and also to determine their potential.

"It's not just an achievement based thing," said Franklin. "The army promotes all of its leaders on potential. An important thing about being an NCO is helping all of our Soldiers reach their potential. It's important to evaluate our soldiers fairly and promote them up to their level of competence."

"I did not serve as a Cpl., but was promoted to Sgt. in just under three years in the Army," said Sgt. Jonathan M. Penna from Springfield, Mass., unit supply specialist, 115th Fires Brigade. "I was one of the fastest guys in my units' history to make E-5."

Sgt. Penna attributes his success and speedy promotions to "staying physically fit and keeping a positive attitude. Making sure mission and Soldiers come before everything else."

"Being an NCO means being a leader," said Penna. "Making sure the Army standard is met, leading by example and taking care of Soldiers is what makes a good NCO."

Sgt. Penna attributes his success and speedy promotions to "staying physically fit and keeping a positive attitude."

"The most rewarding thing of being an NCO is that people look up to you. They admire what you do and realize that you have one of the hardest jobs that the army has to offer," said Penna. "Especially when you have soldiers to work with, influence and lead to accomplish the mission."

When asked what advice he would give to NCO's Franklin said, "Maintain mission focus and enforce standards. Most important, love your Soldiers and get to know them. Make sure they are being taken care of. Be true to the NCO creed and recommend awards and punishments justly."

"Being an NCO doesn't have a lot of glory," said Franklin. "It's pure hard work and dedication. It's living the Army values and ethics. It's loving your Soldiers and loving what you do. A lot of things NCO's do they don't get recognition for that just have to be done for our organization to function. It's the NCO that executes the mission and ensures that it's carried out successfully." 🐾



Sgt. Jonathan M. Penna keeps his guard up while boxing during an evening workout at the Zone 6 gym, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, July 30. Penna attributes much of his success as an NCO to physical fitness and he uses aggressive sports such as boxing and wrestling to stay at the top of his game. (photo by Sgt. Robert D Walden)



East Coast Port Security Unit Replaces West Coast Unit

Story by Lt. David Twomey,
Port Security Unit 301

Camp Patriot, Kuwait – U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Unit 301 from Cape Cod, Mass. arrived in Kuwait to relieve their west coast counterparts, Port Security Unit 311 from San Pedro, Calif.

Members of PSU 301 were activated in early April and spent over two months planning for defense operations in support of the Commander, U.S. Central Command.

An extremely aggressive training schedule was needed to incorporate Coast Guard, Army and Navy tactics to form the joint military environment in which they would be operating. Personnel from PSU 301 trained in various locations on both the East and West Coasts in prepara-

tion for this deployment, including: Cape Cod, Mass., Fort Dix, N.J., Newport, R.I. and San Diego.

PSU 301 completed the training requirements mandatory for all soldiers and sailors deploying to the Middle East due to the early partnership formulated between Port Security Unit 311 and Port Security Unit 301.

Cmdr. Paul J. Smith, commanding officer of PSU 301 was a plank owner at PSU 311 and deployed to Iraq, Bahrain and Kuwait during the initial phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Smith and Cmdr. Kenneth G. Stefanisin, commanding officer of PSU 311 have been working together in the Port Security community over the past 15 years. Smith and Stefanisin had already established an excellent working relationship which led to a seamless transfer of author-

ity that was accomplished in record time.

“PSU 311 is a mature unit with two prior Middle East deployments to their credit. They have set the bar high for us, but they also spent many days of work over the past several months preparing us with all that we would need to succeed. It was an odd moment in time to relieve Cmdr. Stefanisin and my old unit in the same camp where we all worked together six years before. It is now up to us at PSU

301 to begin our own history in the Middle East,” said Smith.

PSU 301 is comprised of Coast Guardsmen and women from a wide variety of backgrounds from throughout New England and beyond. As word spread of our pending deployment, many Guardians volunteered to join PSU 301. Three Sailors from Sector New York and one from Sector Providence requested transfer to PSU 301 in order to fill critical billet vacancies. Upon arrival, they quickly assumed leadership roles sharing the skills learned during their tenures as civilian law enforcement officers.

Petty Officer 1st Class Christopher Pupo is a sergeant with the New York City Police Department assigned to the Emergency Service Unit. Shortly after 9/11, he joined the Coast Guard in order to help America avoid another terrorist attack and to “better serve the NYPD, Coast Guard, and the United States of America,” Pupo said.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Jack Herzlinger also works as a police officer with the NYPD Emergency Services Unit. “I wanted to show my commitment to my country. My family is extremely proud of my military service. This is something that I can pass down to my son to let him know about the value of service to one’s country. Freedom isn’t free. We all need to do our part,” said Herzlinger.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Carlos Sowell, an eleven year veteran of the Connecticut State Police, also joined the Coast Guard after 9/11. Sowell stated, “I entered the law enforcement community because I felt it was my duty as well as my personal instinct to defend and protect the citizen’s of this country. After 9/11, I felt there was more I needed to do. Joining the Coast Guard afforded me the opportunity to fulfill my desire



U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait, Deborah K. Jones, and Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano meet with Sailors from Coast Guard Port Security Unit 301 at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, July 2, 2009.

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Sailors from Port Security 301 patrol the waters of the North Arabian Gulf off the coast of Kuwait.

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to serve my country in more than one capacity.” He volunteered to join Port Security Unit 301 at the suggestion of Ensign Kia Clarke, Sowell’s supervisor at Sector Southern New England. Ensign Clarke previously spent three years at PSU 301 as a Port Security Specialist in PSU 301s’ Security Division.

During their deployment to Kuwait, Port Security Unit 301 is working with U.S. Navy Maritime Expeditionary Squadron Five, an active duty unit from San Diego. PSU 301 and MSRON Five have combined to form Command Task Group 56.5, which is responsible for landside and seaward security missions throughout the North Arabian Gulf. 🇺🇸

Editors’ Note:

PSU 301 and Maritime Expeditionary Squadron Five are under the command and control of the 115th Fires Brigade.



During their deployment to Kuwait, Port Security Unit 301 is working with U.S. Navy Maritime Expeditionary Squadron Five, an active duty unit from San Diego to form Command Task Group 56.5, which is responsible

for landside and seaward security missions throughout the North Arabian Gulf. (photos by Master Sgt. Dave Largent, 115th Fires Brigade)

Proper Preventative Maintenance, First Step in Safety

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Robert D Walden

“Everyone on the road seems to have a go go, be first attitude. I have seen lots of smashed cars on the sides of roads, people passing on the shoulder, and tailgating,” said Sgt. Martin M. Morales, commander’s driver, 115th Fires Brigade. He is a law enforcement officer back home in Colo.

“Cars speed by in one lane, and in the other, a car could be going really slow like it’s about to break down.”

Many things in Kuwait are different than other parts of the world. Driving habits are one of the differences that many service members aren’t used to here. People driving at night without headlights on, backing up to a missed exit ramp on the freeway, poorly marked construction zones,

unmarked speed bumps, and hit and run accidents are some of the things our Soldiers experience on the roads in Kuwait. Road signs and metric measurements for speed and distance can also cause confusion to inexperienced drivers in Kuwait.

“I’ve never seen so many speed

License. “It covers common causes of accidents and how to avoid them,” said Maj. Kirk Schaumann, safety officer, 115th FiB. The brigade also held classroom instruction specifically on driving in Kuwaiti which taught Soldiers the road signs, possible road conditions, and local driving habits.”

“The number one thing that will prevent injury and even save your life in an accident is the seat belt,” said Jamie Browne, safety Director, 1st TSC .

bumps,” said Morales. “Most haven’t been painted in a long time and don’t have a sign to mark them. They are really hard to see at night or during sand storms.”

Soldiers are required to complete the Army Accident Avoidance course before being allowed a Kuwaiti drivers

115th FiB Soldiers use the Right Seat, Left Seat program, said Schaumann. “This helps our Soldiers gain experience before being expected to take the wheel.”

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Ensuring your vehicle is properly maintained gets you off to a positive start. Sgt. Martin M. Morales,

commanders driver, HHB, 115th Fires Brigade, checks the oil before hitting the road.

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Incoming Soldiers are first shown how to drive by Soldiers from the outgoing unit while riding in the right, or passenger seat. Once they have gained knowledge about the roads, they take the wheel with the outgoing unit member in the right seat so the incoming Soldier can still draw from their experience.

Morales didn't drive this deployment until after riding with Command Sgt. Maj. Edgardo A. Coronado, 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team from Kapolei, Hawaii. "He drove from Arifjan up to Beuhring," said Morales. "On the way there he told me how to drive and instructed me what to do in different situations." Morales then drove back with Coronado's guidance.

Complacency is a leading cause of accidents, said Master Sgt. Carolyn Williams, Safety NCOIC, 1st Theater Sustainment Command. Complacency is a feeling of security, often while unaware of some potential danger.

Everyone has had authority figures such as parents, teachers, or supervi-

sors telling us that safety is important, but for many of us, its blown off because of an overconfident or smug attitude of 'it isn't going to happen to me,' or 'it's always the other guy,' said Williams. "Well every one of us is that other guy."

"Most accidents happen at the beginning or the end of a deployment," said Jamie Browne, safety director, 1st TSC. "Soldiers are inexperienced at the beginning, and get tunnel vision toward the end. They get excited to go home and forget the little things."

The 1st TSC Safety team investigates vehicle accidents to determine how to make the training and policies better. "There is always a cause to accidents," said Browne. "Investigations help us to identify the cause and find ways to minimize it, and make our Soldiers safer."

"The number one thing that will prevent injury and even save your life in an accident is the seat belt," said Browne. "It's a simple device but we still have people that don't put it on."

"We have established policies to

keep our Soldiers safe. Some are written in blood because we had to learn the hard way," said Browne.

If Soldiers follow the rules and pay attention while driving, we will have fewer vehicle accidents and more service member will make it home physically, mentally, and spiritually intact.

1 TSC Safety Office Driving Tips:

- ♦ **Wear your seat belt.**
- ♦ **Keep your speed down and never exceed the speed limit.**
- ♦ **Drive in the right, or center lanes and allow vehicles to pass.**
- ♦ **Pay attention. No talking on cell phones and avoid eating while driving.**
- ♦ **Kuwait is a harsh environment. Go prepared by bringing food, water and an overnight bag in case you're going to have to stay somewhere.**
- ♦ **Have emergency contact numbers available.**
- ♦ **Conduct map reconnaissance before leaving to become familiar with the routes and exits.**



Sgt. Martin M. Morales, commanders driver, HHB, 115th Fires Brigade, checks the tire

pressure as part of daily preventative maintenance before driving the vehicle.

Transformation: 115th Fires Brigade Makes the Move

By Capt. Mary Sandoval

The officers of the Wyoming Army National Guard waited for the morning session of the officer professional development weekend to begin on Saturday October 6, 2007. The focus of the workshop had been on the transformation of the 115th Field Artillery Brigade to a Fires Brigade and the impact across all of the major commands in the Wyoming Guard. Col. Steve Mount, an operations officer addressed our group and announced that we would soon receive a notification of training for a pending deployment for the spring of 2009.

The announcement was not shocking. The brigade had deployed in 2004 and under the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) Plan, 2009 would be our ready year to go again. With the transformation of the unit and preparation to deploy for service in a non standard mission, the Soldiers would be expected to accomplish a lot in a short eighteen months.

Seven of the army's thirteen fires Brigades are in the National Guard

and Wyo. was honored to be selected to transform to one. The transformation took place on Nov. 1, 2007, and the 115th fires Brigade was created.

Under transformation, the 115th FiB received a brigade support battalion and a signal unit. The 960th Maintenance Company, headquartered in Torrington, Wyo., transformed to the 960th Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) and moved their headquarters to Casper, Wyo. The 148th Signal Company was created entirely new and is headquartered in Laramie, Wyo.

New weapon systems and equipment were needed to support the new units. The 2-300 Field Artillery Battalion, headquartered in Sheridan, Wyo., and its four batteries throughout the state received High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARs) to replace their towed M-198 Howitzers. The last firing of the M-198 took place in May 2008 and was a moment that evoked bittersweet memories for many members of Wyoming's field artillery community.

In the Army, we do not receive a piece of equipment and put it to use immediately. We ensure that equip-

ment operators are trained on it before it can be accepted into a unit's inventory. Training was conducted on many new kinds of software, hardware, weapons systems, and command posts. Many Soldiers went back to military schools to re-classify and learn a new specialty. In short, everything that is required to sustain operations in a fires brigade was taught to the soldiers of the 115th.

The transformation affected every member of the unit and every major command in the state. Whether we trained for new jobs, trained on new equipment, or transferred to other commands, every single member of the field artillery brigade and each major command in the state felt an impact.

During the conversion, Soldiers also needed to prepare to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and to conduct a non-standard mission. The Soldiers worked hard at learning new skills and to operate new equipment only to step away and work in Kuwait for a year in a totally different position performing a different mission.💰

We want your stories photos, and ideas.

To submit please email us at:

115thFiB_PAO@Kuwait.swa.army.mil

To view more photographs please visit our

Facebook page at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cheyenne-Wyoming/115th-Fires-Brigade/115980276368?ref=ts>

or visit the Brigade Web Page at:

www.115firesbrigade.com

115th Finds Time to Train and Relax at Ft. Hood

Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band performed a USO show at Fort Hood June 30, 2009. Sinise and the band thanked the Soldiers for their service to this country and rewarded them with a three hour concert. The Denver Bronco cheerleaders dropped by to perform several routines and sign autographs and the impromptu band of the 115th performed at Shorthorn Airfield on North Fort Hood.



Gary Sinise



Denver Bronco Cheerleaders



Sgt. Tyrell Peterson



115th Fires Brigade volunteer photographers



Staff Sgt. James McGuire



Master Sgt. Charles Olivas