

115th Fires Brigade



Cowboy Thunder

Volume 1 Issue 5

December 2009



**Volunteers Barbecue
Steaks For Troops!**

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VIP Visits

Soldiers from the 115th Fires Brigade received several visitors here in Kuwait to wish them well during the holiday season.

The first visitor was Wyo. Gov. Dave Freudenthal who visited Soldiers in Kuwait and Iraq on a trip sponsored by the Secretary of Defense to see firsthand the conditions of deployment. Sen. John Barrasso and Rep. Cynthia Lummis of Wyo. celebrated Thanksgiving by meeting with Soldiers and answering questions about issues affecting their communities at home.

Tito Ortiz, a competitor from the Ultimate Fighting Championship, signed autographs and met with Soldiers at several Camps in Kuwait and Iraq.

Maj. Gen. Raymond W. Carpenter, acting director of the National Guard Bureau, had dinner with the

troops at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, and passed out NGB T-Shirts as an early Christmas present.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston toured Kuwait and Iraq with entertainers that made up the Hope and Freedom tour.

Gen. George W. Casey, Chief of Staff of the Army, spoke to service members about the withdrawal from Iraq and the buildup in Afghanistan.



Chief of Staff of the Army George W. Casey

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Command Sgt. Maj. Comments

As the days continue to count down, we start turning our attention to going home and what perceived obstacles may prevent us from returning home on time. We continue to get mission changes, but we have **NO INDICATIONS** that our time in Theater will get extended because of the Afghanistan Surge. In fact, Secretary Gates continues to emphasize the Dwell Time and making deployments more predictable, which is a huge indicator to me that the Secretary has no desire to extend personnel in Theater. Also supporting this thought is that our replacements have just conducted their Pre-Deployment Site Survey, which indicates everything is going according to plan for us returning home on time.

Hopefully the Soldiers, Sailors and Coast Guardsmen here in theater have made progress to their personal goals they established when they left home.

Along with that, hopefully everyone at home has made progress toward their personal goals while their loved one is away. If not, take a look at what you are doing and make the lifestyle changes necessary to accomplish at least part of the goals. Back home we would call these New Year's Resolutions, I would just call it refocusing to get accomplished what you want to get done before we get home.

As we prepare for the last quarter of the deployment, we need to remind ourselves not to get complacent and



Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin

feel like we know everything. In theater, we need to continue to do the little things that make us successful. Continue to do those After Action Reviews, Composite Risk Management Checks, PCI's and PCC's. At home, please keep doing all the good things you have done the past nine months to make you successful. Everyone needs to stay engaged both at home and here in theater and let's keep going strong to the finish line. Continue to do those AARs, CRMCs, PCI's and PCC's.

As I look around the Brigade, I am totally amazed at the support we have gotten from the home front. The amount of care packages has totally overwhelmed all of us. The cards and letters are truly inspiring and is a great reminder that a lot of Great Americans really do care about us back home and appreciate the sacrifice that our Soldiers, Sailors and Coastguardsmen are making. Thanks to each and every one of you. 🇺🇸

115th Fires Brigade
Commander
Col. Richard Knowlton
Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin

Cowboy Thunder Staff

Editor
Master Sgt. Dave Largent

Assistant Editor
Sgt. Robert Walden

Contributing Journalists
Sgt. Katie Gray
Spc. Matthew Oda
2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen

On the Cover:



Volunteers from 'Support Our Troops' out of Minnesota barbecued steak for Minn. National Guardsmen at Camp Buehring, Kuwait Dec. 12. (pages 4-5)

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115thFiB_PAO@Kuwait.swa.army.mil
Photos must be in either JPEG or TIFF format. Please include information identifying who is in the photo, what they're doing, why, when, where, and who took the photo.

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Steaks for Troops!

Story and photos by
Spc. Matthew H. Oda

Members of Serving Our Troops, an organization from St. Paul, Minn., cooked and served a steak dinner to hundreds of Soldiers Dec. 12, who are deployed to Camp Buehring, Kuwait with the 1-151 Field Artillery, a Minn. Army National Guard unit.

The same meal was prepared and served to the friends and Families of the Soldiers at a program held at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium in downtown St. Paul, Minn.

Another group of volunteers from the Serving Our Troops organization went to Basra, Iraq to cook for the Minn. Soldiers stationed there.

Video camera's were set up at all three locations for a live feed broadcast, allowing them to see each other as they enjoyed the meal together from thousands of miles away.



Sgt. Nate D. Sutton, truck commander, C. Company, 1-151 Field Artillery enjoys his steak dinner. Volunteers from Minn. provided a home cooked meal to Minn. National Guardsmen at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.



From left to right: Dick Leitner, Rick Feltner, Pat Flynn, Kevin Moore, and Eric Flannery grill a batch of steaks to be served for the Steaks for Troops ceremony. They are volunteers from Minn. that provided and cooked a steak dinner for the 1-151 Field Artillery Minn. Army National Guardsmen stationed at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

“Back in Minn. the Families are eating steaks just like the Soldiers here and they get to be on video so it’s a really good event and great for morale,” said Pvt. Christopher Rees, a gunner on a Convoy Escort Team. “Overall it was a good event with the best steak I’ve had since I’ve been here,” he said.

Serving Our Troops started as a group of volunteers who work at several of the restaurants in St. Paul that helped raise the money for the steaks by collecting donations from people that felt the need to do something for the service members deployed. The group has since expanded and has members from throughout the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

“This is a real community effort. All of these folks in Serving Our Troops have businesses and restaurants in St. Paul, and all of them helped make what we call a St. Paul meal,” said Ted Davis, the convention and visitors authority representative and liaison.

“They love the opportunity to bring a little bit of home to the people overseas and to bring Families together. Everyday people back home have dinner with their Families and Serving Our Troops is just an extension of that,” said Davis. “Its like having Sunday dinner with the Family; only its halfway around the world.”

Serving Our Troops has been bringing high quality steaks to Minn. Guardsmen since the beginning of 2004.

“A couple of the guys who are now in charge of the program were sitting in a bar enjoying a meal one day when all of a sudden something crossed their minds,” said Davis. “If they could enjoy this meal here and those men and women overseas can’t, what can be done about that? That’s when they came up with the Serving Our Troops organization,” he added.

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From left to right: John Tinucci, John Haggemiller, Kevin Moore, Jim Ibister, Bob Dickman, Pat Flynn, Rick Feltner, Matt Anfang, Dick Leitner and Eric Flannery all stand in front of a table stacked with the steaks they flew from Minn. to cook for the 1-151 Field Artillery Minn. Army National Guardsmen stationed at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

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They've done a number of send off ceremonies in the states and have delivered steaks to Iraq in the past and to Kosovo.

"The event went very well. The whole time I've been here, I've been treated like a king," said Pat Flynn, an employee from Rapid Packaging and one of the volunteer chefs at the event. "Everything went off without a hitch and we had some nice, warm cooking going on. It was an eye-opening experience to be able to cook for the troops and hear their experiences."

The chefs cooked 750 of the 1100 steaks they brought to Kuwait. The rest of the steaks that were not grilled were stored to be prepared later for the Soldiers that were out on mission or that couldn't make it to the event that night.



Soldiers from the 1-151 Field Artillery Minn. Army National Guard and Soldiers from other units sat and enjoyed a steak dinner cooked by the Serving Our Troops volunteers from Minn. As the Soldiers ate, a live video feed was displayed, broadcasting a program being held at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium in downtown St. Paul, Minn., with friends and Families enjoying the same meal at the same time as the Soldiers.



Soldiers and Sailors of the 115th Fires Brigade gather on the deck of the William B. Bunker, a U.S. Army Logistical Supply Vessel, at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, Dec. 5 for the once-a-year Saint Barbara's Day celebration held for Artillerymen.

St. Barb Visits 115th Fires Brigade

Story and photos by
Sgt. Robert D Walden

As the cool Dec. sky darkened and the call of seabirds slowed along the coast of Camp Patriot, Kuwait, service members from the Army, Navy and Coast Guard, which make up the 115th Fires Brigade, gathered onboard the William B. Bunker, an LSV-4 transport vessel, for their annual St. Barbara induction ceremony, Dec. 5, 2009.

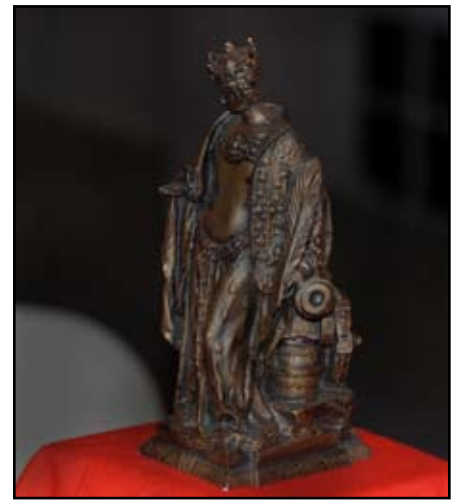
Appropriate for the occasion, a red haze from the onboard lighting was cast across the deck of the ship where artillerymen, and others that have played an important role in the brigade's mission, celebrated the occasion by eating local Kuwait food, smoking cigars, and sharing stories with each other about adventures from the past while listening to live music provided from the band Local Joes, which is composed of members from the 115th FiB.

During the ceremony, Soldiers who were already members of the Order of St. Barbara wore red shirts under their ACU's signifying their membership in the fraternity.

After the meal was served and eaten, the ceremony began with toasts to the President of the United

States, and the spouses who support us at home. The Vice President of the Mess, Capt. Scott Gromer, called the Masters of Punch, Sgt. Maj. William Frost and Master Sgt. Micheal Smith, forward to make the Field Artillery Punch.

Artillery punch has been enjoyed by artillerymen for many years during socials as a source of courage. It is also believed to be a brew



Saint Barbara has come to be known as the patroness for those in danger from thunderstorms, fire, and explosions. Cannon misfires, muzzle bursts and exploding weapons were not uncommon in the early days of field artillery so artillerymen often sought the protection of Saint Barbara.

of medical value. "It will cure what ails you, or it will ensure you don't care," said Gromer. "We wear our children on it and carry it in our thermos jugs to ward off the

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Lt. Col. David P. Chase, commander, 1-147 Field Artillery, adds ingredients to the Field Artillery Punch during the Saint Barbara's Day Ceremony as Sgt. Maj, William N. Frost, operations sergeant major, HHB 115th Fires Brigade watches to ensure the punch is properly mixed.

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winter's chill. In a pinch, it is an effective bore cleaner for the cannon, lubricant for the breech or propellant for the missile."

Battalion commanders assisted in creating the punch by adding ingredients that represent past conflicts that artillerymen from the 115th FiB have been involved in. Some of the ingredients added were: a red liquid symbolizing royalty, and the King of Battle, field artillery; a yellow liquid symbolizing the rain water collected from the roofs of Manila brought home by 115th soldiers fighting in the Philippine Insurrection; and a brown powder symbolizing tears of the spouses, which have been shed for the men and women of this Brigade during every war and campaign of its history.

To test the punch and ensure its quality, Col. Richard Knowlton, commander, 115th FiB, was asked to taste the mixture. Knowlton added the final ingredient, gun powder, and declared the punch satisfactory, and "Just like last year."

The inductees were then called forth and presented a certificate accepting them into the order of St. Barbara, and a cup filled with Field Artillery Punch. A toast was made welcoming them to the fraternity, and all the inductees drank a full cup of punch together.

Two new members of the Honorable order of Saint Barbara, Spc. Adrian Avila of the 151 CBRN and Staff Sgt. Thomas Rabjohn of the 363rd EOD, gave the ultimate sacrifice for their Nation while serving on this deployment. They were accepted into the fraternity posthumously.

The poem, 'Fiddlers Green,' which is about a special place in heaven for artillerymen, was read by Staff Sgt. Johnson as Sgt. Tyrell Peterson from the Local Joes band played a fiddle in the background.

To conclude the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Mark MacCarley, deputy commanding general, 1st Theater Sustainment Command, addressed the group as the guest of honor.

"You have exceeded even your own expectations while engaging in non doctrinal missions that are absolutely essential to our success here in Kuwait, Iraq, and onward to Afghanistan," said MacCarley speaking about the 115th FiB's accomplishments.

"You've done it and you've done it well."

Saint Barbara has come to be known as the patroness for those in danger from thunderstorms, fire, and explosions. Cannon misfires, muzzle bursts and exploding weapons were not uncommon in the early days of field artillery; so artillerymen often sought the protection of Saint Barbara.

Service members who have served in the United States Field Artillery with distinction, and have dem-



Just a taste is all it took for Lt. Col. Brian R. Nesvik, commander, 2-300 Field Artillery, to know the mix was just right.

onstrated the highest standards of integrity, moral character and professional competence are honored along with stone hurlers, archers, cannoners and rocketeers from the past by being inducted into the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara. 🇺🇸



After being awarded a certificate by Col. Richard Knowlton, commander, 115th Fires Brigade, inductees drink a full cup of Field Artillery Punch to complete their acceptance into the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara during a ceremony at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, Dec. 5.



From left to right: Staff Sgt. Michael W. Upton, Spc. Jeffrey L. Ellison, 1st Sgt. Paul D. Webster, Spc. Trevor C. Birch, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) David A. Hall, Sgt. 1st Class Dale J. Willis and Sgt. Gerald C. Hernandez prepare to organize the massive pile of Christmas boxes sent by friends and family back in Wyoming.

SANTA EMPLOYS WYOMING CITIZENS TO ASSIST WITH 115TH FIRES BRIGADE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

It didn't seem much like Christmas for many Wyoming National Guardsmen who were deployed here to Kuwait where the temperatures were in the seventies. It was snowing back home, where their Families were trying to stay warm, Christmas shopping and planning Family dinners that would be short loved ones.

We all know Christmas comes on Christmas Eve when Santa rides his sleigh around the world delivering presents.

For the Wyo. Guardsmen of the 115th Fires Brigade, Christmas showed up much the same except it wasn't one package at a time, or in Santa's sleigh.

In addition to packages many received directly from family and friends, hundreds of packages were sent from groups and citizens back in Wyo. who wanted to help the Sol-

diers have a better Christmas.

The packages started showing up in the mail several weeks before



1st Sgt. Paul D. Webster, HHB, 115th FiB received hundreds of Christmas packages in the mail to distribute to unit members.

Christmas. It started a few at a time and grew in both frequency and quantity as Christmas drew closer.

The following people and groups sent packages to soldiers in the HHB 115 FiB. We are still receiving a lot of packages so this list is not all inclusive.

C. Anderson
 Kristi Bennick DFS Laramie
 Maureen Hurley
 Jamie Pullas
 Mr & Mrs Gary Igo
 Beatrice Francis
 Trinity Lutheran Greeley Co.
 Rex & Debra Ellis
 Gary Hearne DFS Laramie
 DFS Cheyenne
 WYDOT
 Pat McGuire

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Staff Sgt. William Ahrndt, of Casper, Wyo., A Company, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, 115th Fires Brigade, wraps a package sent to his unit at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, Dec. 20.

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Shawn, Brooke & Keith Zabka
 Leslie Applegate
 Wyoming Chapter of ARMA
 VFW Aux. 1881 Cheyenne
 Nanette Alexander
 Shanda & Kevin Rice
 Dept. of Env. Quality Cheyenne
 George Geyer
 Gail Christensen



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher M. Peterson gets in the spirit wearing his antlers as he helps sort Christmas gifts donated by friends and family back in Wyo.

Nancy Tsandes
 Jeanette Lamb, DVR Laramie
 Kim Bright
 Flo & Norman Beville
 Marsha Geist
 Shirley Gilham State of Wyoming
 Lisa Griffith
 Miller Elementary
 Mary Marshall
 UW Professional Studies, Chi Sigma Iota
 James Townsend
 Jerry & Lyn Barby
 Ron Kisicki
 Georgia & Tim George
 Cheyenne VA Medical Center
 Tyler Store WYANG
 Debra Hamilton
 Marian Gladen
 Louise Van Court
 Pioneer Park School
 Dawn Jung
 Charles J Wing
 Jack & Carol Hough
 Debra Hamilton
 David & Beverly Webster
 John Swartzentruber
 Judith Drudge
 Jim Barr
 Cynthia Lumis, Mike Enzi & John Barrasso
 WYHY FCU
 Marsha Dibble
 Merrill Freeman
 Laramie County District Attorney
 Gilchrist Elementary
 Robert Schmidt
 Robert Garrison
 Peter Heinzen
 Div. of Victim Services Cheyenne
 John & Joanne Cornelison
 Diane Weiss
 Regina Dodson
 Gale Stevens
 Bethany Perez
 Linda Delgado
 Pete & Jodi Heinzen
 Wyoming Patriot Alliance
 Kristi Weidenbach
 Rosalind Schliske
 Gary Bingham
 Cora Levack
 Josie Sanchez
 Al Wolf
 Pamela Degney
 Sublette Co. 4H, Pinedale



Spec. Jeffrey L. Ellison, HHB, 115th FiB, helps organize donations sent to Kuwait by friends and Family back home.

Alpine American Legion Post #46,
 Tess Steinburg
 Cheryl Snigg, Anderson School
 Jim & Joyce McHugh
 Central Control Department,
 Laramie County Sheriff
 Carey Junior High School
 Vickie Spires



1st Sgt. Michael Warner, of Cody, Wyo., assigned to Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, 115th Fires Brigade, plays the role of Santa Claus, handing out care packages sent by well wishers in Wyo. to troops in Kuwait.

Together as a Family

Story and photos by
Spc. Matthew H. Oda

There are no greater bonds than the bonds shared with a mother and her children. That certainly holds water with Josh and Kimberly Ramos and their mother Dawn VanHeuveln. Their Family has always been close to each other. As Dawn's children got older and more independent, some might think they would start doing their own things in life and start straying from the Family. This might be especially true if one of them joined the military; however, that would not be the case for their Family.

These three Family members joined the Guard within a couple months of each other all becoming part of the same battalion in the Minn. Army National Guard.

"When I was a junior, I had an idea I was going to join the military," said 20-year-old Josh. "My mom was prior Navy and she always wanted me to join the Navy, so I took a look into it but it wasn't really my cup of tea. Then I looked at the Guard and saw they had great opportunities so I decided it was the best choice for me," he said.

The recruiter came to speak to Josh one day but ended up talking to Dawn. She was the first one to join in Sept., 2006. "Me and my sister followed her and joined two months later," said Josh.

Each feels fulfillment from their service even though they all joined for different reasons.

"I joined the service again because I missed the satisfaction of doing good in the world, which makes me feel more complete," said Dawn, 42-years-old, who served in the Navy years ago.

"When I Joined the Guard, I knew one day I was going to get deployed,"

said 21-year-old Kimberly. "I was okay with that because I looked at a deployment as a new adventure. I want to see things in my life and I want to be able to say I went there, I saw that," she added.

"I want to go to college and study sports management so one day I could open up my own gym or manage one someday. I saw that the Guard would help me go to school and offered great experiences so I signed up," said Josh.

All three of them are all part of the 1-151 Field Artillery. Kimberly and Dawn are truck drivers in the 175th Forward Support Company, and Josh is a mechanic in Alpha Battery.

Once they had settled in and became used to life in the National Guard, the call came letting them know they were getting deployed to Kuwait. Being in the same battalion, the three of them got stationed on the same camp doing Convoy Escort Team missions.

"I feel like one of the fortunate ones because I'm able to see two of my children most of the time," said Dawn. "Well when I say most of the time I mean a couple times a month. But that's still more than other Soldiers who have Families back home that don't get to see them," she said.

Soldiers in Josh's unit have joked with him about having his mom on the deployment to take care of him.

"A lot of people tell me that I couldn't even leave the states without my mother and that I needed her to come with me to get deployed," said Josh laughing. "But I love having my Family here. It's an honor to serve with them, and I just hope we all make it home safely at the same time," he added.

Kimberly loves having her mother here with her because there are some things only a mom can fix.

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From left to right: Spc. Kimberly Ramos, Spc. Josh Ramos and Spc. Dawn VanHeuveln stand together as a Family with the vehicles they use for their Convoy Escort Team missions in the background. All three are with the 1-151 Field Artillery Minn. Army National Guard stationed at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

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“Having my Family here is almost like a dream come true because I get to be here with them and share this experience with them,” said Kimberly. “Whenever I’m having a problem with something only my mom can help me with, I would just go find her,” she added. “I always hunt my brother down even when he’s sleeping to ask him, ‘hey, how was your mission, I wanted to see how you’re doing, and I miss you!’”

Having your Family with you on a deployment definitely can have a positive impact on Soldiers, but it can also have its drawbacks.

“I love being with my Family but I’ve noticed I get a lot more worried when they’re going on a mission,” said Dawn. “I know exactly what kind of missions these two are doing and the dangers that come with it, so it makes me worry a lot more than it would if I was back in the states and had no idea what these two did,” she added.

Mom isn’t the only one that worries when a Family member’s out on mission.

“There are a lot of times at night when I know they are out on the road and it keeps me up, hoping they will



Spc. Dawn VanHeuveln

be safe,” said Josh. “I always know they will be though, because we have a great team here and I know they’ll come home safe,” he said.

It was a unique challenge for this Family having three of them deploy and leaving the rest at home.

“It’s been really hard for my daughter back home,” said Dawn. “We try and make her feel better by communicating with her a lot and reassuring her that we love her and we’ll be home soon. We try and talk with her on Facebook and on the phone as much as possible. We tell her about all the fun things happening here like the donkeys racing the HUMVEES,” she added. “We also use Skype to video chat with her so at least she can see us.”

Living conditions and missions are very different compared to the past. Things are a little easier to bear during this deployment to Kuwait because of technological advancements making it easier to communicate.

“I think we have it really good here compared to past wars like World War II and Vietnam,” said Josh. “It’s a different era where we don’t have to stay in a foxhole for hours-on-end, and sleep in the dirt or cots. Now we get to sleep in beds.”

“I like the fact that I can go on the

internet and speak to someone like they are right in front of me, unlike the old days where you waited weeks-on-end for a letter,” Josh said. “I think we have it great here considering the past.”

Josh, Dawn, and Kimberly coordinated to go on their R&R together so they can have the entire Family together for the holidays.

It will be nice to have the everyday conveniences of life back home as well.

“I look forward to spending time with the rest of my Family and the simple things in life we take for granted like not having to go outside to go to the bathroom or shower,” said Dawn. “Or being able to go to the refrigerator and grab a nice cold beverage,” said Josh smiling.

Having their Family together will make it easier for them to return to Kuwait. The feelings of accomplishment and service help them to see the bigger picture.

“I feel if what we do here benefits someone, somehow, someday, then I’m proud to help,” said Josh. “If we can help a Family from losing someone to come over here, then we’ll take that spot so they can stay home with their Family because I have my Family here.”



Spc. Kimberly Ramos



Spc. Josh Ramos

Accidents: Combat Lifesavers, Medics Respond to Emergencies

Story by 1st Lt. Christian VenHuizen

There is living evidence that the U.S. Army's combat lifesaver course and the advanced individual training for U.S. Army medics works.

A half-dozen or so military, civilian, American and allied lives were saved thanks to the well trained Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, 115th Fires Brigade.

In just a few months, two sets of Powder River medics were dispatched to accidents requiring extrication, of which one required medevac by air. A third incident involved 2-300th Soldiers trained as combat lifesavers who happened upon a fatal car crash.

All of the wrecks were within less than an hour from their home base at Camp Virginia, in Northern Kuwait. Two of the wrecks were T-bone types of crashes, the third appeared to the Soldiers as a head-on collision. All of the Soldiers reported their training immediately turned into lifesaving action.



Spc. Natasha Nevel stands as her actions to help save lives involved in a car accident in Kuwait are described to fellow Soldiers.

Spc. Natasha Nevel, of Sheridan, Wyo., and Sgt. Dominic Hideo, of Saipan, both assigned to A Company, 960th Brigade Support Battalion, attached to the 2-300th, rolled out of Camp Virginia a little after 8 a.m., on Nov. 19. The normally routine drive to a nearby base quickly turned horrific.

Nevel could see the cloud of smoke in the distance. Then she could see the wreckage. One car was overturned. Another vehicle surrounded by a small crowd of local police and military.

"As soon as I put the vehicle in park it was like an immediate adrenaline rush where everything that I had been trained to do just kicked in," she said. "Like everything that I did was something that I learned in combat lifesaver class. I guess I was just doing what I was trained to do, that's how I look at it."

Combat lifesaver (CLS) teaches first aid skills that go beyond a normal basic first aid course. CLS certified Soldiers know how to begin intravenous saline drips and treat wounds often found on the battlefield. CLS certified Soldiers are authorized to use special first aid kits with all of the new tools they've been taught to use.

In this case, both Soldiers were CLS certified and carried one of those kits in their vehicle. Nevel grabbed it and made her way to the handful standing around.

"I said 'Hey, I have a CLS bag, let me see what I can do to help this situation,' and (one of the spectators) just kind of looked at me, stumbled back and walked off," she said. "So I just continued to do what I had to do, grabbed the fire extinguisher and went to help."

Nevel began checking to see if the victim, a Department of Defense contractor, in the upright vehicle was conscious.

"That's when I noticed the front of the vehicle caught fire," she said.

"So I ran back up to my vehicle

where I yelled at Sgt. Hideo that it's on fire and grab the fire extinguisher."

Nevel said she caught a hold of one and rushed to smother the flames. Once out, she resumed treating the patient for cuts and shock.

The private said the view of the other car didn't escape her or her sergeant. They triaged the victims and decided to focus their efforts on the one victim they knew they could help. She said the bodies of the two other victims were pinned in the wreckage, preventing the pair from administering aid.

Hideo and Nevel were recognized for their actions on Thanksgiving Day with a commander's coin from Lt. Col. Brian Nesvik, commander of the 2-300th, in a ceremony attended by U.S. Sen. John Barrasso and Rep. Cynthia Lummis, both representing Wyoming.

Nevel plans to attend nursing school at the University of Wyoming after this deployment.

Just as Nevel and Hideo were in

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Sgt. Dominic Hideo is recognized for his actions in saving lives involved in a car accident in Kuwait.

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the right place at the right time, two groups of 2-300th medics on two different days found themselves in similar situations.

“We weren’t expecting to have to go to a car accident at all, and we just pulled together and when we got there, we just jumped in and did what we needed to do,” Spc. Travis Holler, a 2-300th medic who responded to one of the T-bone accidents.

Holler, of Sheridan, and fellow medics Spc. James Lopez, of Buffalo, Wyo., and Sgt. Louie Bagorio, were on their way back from an all-night mission in Iraq when they were dispatched to provide medical support for a weapons qualification range. They were barely situated at the range when they were briefed about a near-by accident and asked to respond.

What they rolled up on was a mix of

military and civilian vehicles. “There was one patient lying on the ground and there was one patient in a soft-side Humvee that appeared to be T-boned,” Holler said.

Bagorio, from Honolulu and on loan from the Hawaii National Guard, went to work on the patient on the ground, already suffering from shock. Lopez said he joined Holler and a small group of people trying to help the victim pinned in the vehicle.

“I was keeping the guy stable from the side and I was directing them,” he said of the efforts to free the victim. “They had a tow chain and they were yanking it by hand, hooking it on to pieces and trying to pull it by hand. I was telling them which pieces to pull so that it wasn’t yanking on him until I could get in and really assess his (injuries).”

The trio stayed until the last patient was flown to a treatment center by helicopter.

For Lopez, this was the second time

he was called to action for a roadside wreck, following a weapons range event while making his way home. Lopez and his partner, Pvt. Alex Carmody, of Sheridan, rolled up on the accident. Lopez said Soldiers who left the range earlier already pulled the victims out of the vehicles.

“We got out and worked together real good as a team. Each of us kind of worked an area,” Lopez said. “We hooked him up to the oxygen and everything and got him stabilized.”

While the medics deal with unplanned and often unwanted situations, their schooling is designed to ensure step-by-step reaction – no hesitation, no questioning their abilities in the heat of battle.

“I was always taught that’s the way it would work,” Lopez said, admitting he clearly could identify each step of the way in his head. “I wasn’t expecting just everything to fall right into place.”



Lt. Col. Brain Nesvik, commander of the 2-300th Field Artillery Battalion, applauds Sgt. Dominic Hideo, left, and Spc. Natasha Nevel, center, for their work in rendering medical and fire suppression assistance to Department of Defense personnel and contractors in a two vehicle accident near Camp Virginia.

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UFC Fighter Tito Ortiz



Sgt. Maj. of the Army
Kenneth Preston



National Guard Bureau's
acting director, Maj. Gen.
Raymond W. Carpenter



Hope and Freedom Tour
Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader
Abigail Klein



Wyo Rep. Cynthia Lummis



Wyo. Sen. John Barrasso



Wyo. Gov. Dave Freudenthal



Wyo. Gov. Dave Freudenthal



Wyo. Sen. John Barrasso

Tap, Point, Tap

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Thank you for your service and
God bless you all! Jeff John, editor

By John Connor

This isn't about politics. It's not about oil, or WMD's or who lied or didn't lie about *what*. It's sure as heck not about Democrats or Republicans or what passes for "truth" around Foggy Bottom. This is about something far more important — to *me* anyway. It is about young Americans, and in a greater sense, about the future of our nation.

Sitting in my "office" — a field pack between my boots and a Maxpedition "Operator Attaché" across my knees — I was scribbling notes for this January column while waiting out a flight delay in the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport. I thought the piece was OK — something light and lame about New Year's resolutions. Two minutes after the announcement my departure gate had changed, that column was blown away with the breath, the words of young Americans.

Tap, Point, Tap

I fell in behind about two dozen Soldiers striding up the corridor, all fit and radiating energy, decked out in their neat but faded ACU camouflage. Several were NCO's of equal rank, but their natural leader was obvious: a black sergeant of medium height; one of those guys whose torso forms a V-shaped wedge of muscular shoulders tapering down to a narrow waist. Even leading, he carried on a constant stream of positive conversation with those following him.

Reaching a junction, he stopped

suddenly, spotting four other soldiers in ACU waiting for them. One of them, a big, squarely built black sergeant stepped forward. He and The Wedge burst into broad smiles. As I watched, they reached up and tapped the U.S. flag patches on their sleeves with two fingers, then pointed at each other, and then tapped their own chests. They quickly came together, shook hands, dropped their bags and bear-hugged. Others repeated the same tap-point-tap drill and their own greetings. Of course, I had to know what that tapping and pointing was about. I introduced myself to Ray the Wedge and Big Ollie.

"It's just something we started doing in our outfit last time in Iraq," Ray explained, a little sheepish. "When we touch the flag, it means First, my country. When I point, that's *Then YOU, my brother Soldier*. Then, *Me*."

"It's not that simple," he said. "There's a lot more, but in combat it's like this: All of us, none of us is as important as America, and what we do as Soldiers. Then, my brother Soldier is always going to come before me. That's the way it has to be for me and for them too. I get hurt, I get killed, that's not so important. My country, then my brother Soldier, then me. Oh, man, it's hard to explain." Maybe it is to others, I told him; not to me.

In those seconds, my mind had flashed back months, and then years. *Months*, to watching two young Marines "banging knuckles" and murmuring "DFY, bro'." They too explained, and they too were a bit embarrassed telling a stranger. It meant "Die For You, brother," and it wasn't just something they just *said* — it was a credo they lived by. *Years*, to some small-unit cross-border ops when things had gone

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The subdued flag is worn by all 115th Fires Brigade Soldiers. Each Soldier has the option to chose from the 115th, their Battalion or a previously awarded patch to wear below the Flag as their combat patch.

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wrong, horribly wrong, and men from other teams, dead and living, had been left behind. We began joining hands before each mission, swearing we would never leave each other behind; that if the situation came down to it, we would all go down together. *Together.*

Ray scanned my battered boots and pack; did kind of a “scar survey” on me and then peered into my eyes.

“I ’spect,” he said, “You might know something about that, mister.” He excused himself and stepped away. I sat with Ollie.

“Hey, I never knew what America was until I went to Iraq.”

“Really,” Ollie confided, “*He* started that in Iraq, and we all got behind it. It helps remind everybody what’s important and who we are.” He laughed, “Now lookit my boy, Ray! I’m older and senior, but he is *The Man*, you know?”

Ray was passing down two rows of seated Soldiers, stopping before each one, leaning down or kneeling, touching shoulders or knees, asking “You good? Everything OK at home? Got all your gear? Ready to get your head

back in the game? *Good!*” The looks exchanged between them were redolent with respect, resolve and compassion.

“See,” said Ollie, “He just naturally does what others have to be taught to do. In Iraq, he said we have to tell our people that first, we are American Soldiers, and we *are* America to these (Iraqi) people. We got to do what’s right no matter what. Second, any of us or all of us would die for any other fellow Soldier. He made them believe it. We grew up close to each other, and I can tell you this: he sure didn’t learn it on the street.”

Ollie explained he and Ray came from similar but separate “hoods” in New York City. They enlisted after 9-11, as he said, “Ten percent because of 9-11, you know, like *You can’t do that to us!*; 90 percent because of we gotta get offa these streets and make something out of ourselves.” Now, he said, “It’s one hundred percent about being Americans, and being Soldiers, and having values we never got on the street. Like, I never knew there was anything worth dying for before I went Army.” Ray had approached and overheard those last lines.

“Hey, I never knew what America was until I went to Iraq,” he said. Ray explained that until he joined the Army, the furthest he had traveled from New York City was Bayonne, New Jersey — “Not exactly *seeing America*, you know? Everything I know about America, I learned from *them*,” he said, waving at his troops.

“All kinds of people from all kinds of places, all Americans believing in and leaning on each other.” He paused, looking suddenly older than his years.

“And everything I know about freedom, I learned in Iraq, from see-

My Soldiers? My country? Freedom? Damn right I’d die for them.”

ing people who didn’t have it — and helping to give it to them.” The muscles in his jaws tightened.

My Soldiers? My country? Freedom? Damn right I’d die for them.”

I have read and heard many times over the years an Army should reflect the best values of its country. It is mid-September as I write this, and if the media is to be believed, America is deeply and bitterly divided as we stagger and stumble toward November’s general elections. As I see it, there is no reasoned debate; only rancorous demonizing; patriotism smothered by political platitudes; media and money overshadowing meaning and morals.

I wish for a country which reflects the best values of its Army. 🇺🇸

Editors Note:

We would like to thank Jeff John and John Connor at GUNS magazine for allowing us to reprint this article.

We want your stories, photos, and ideas.

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115thFiB_PAO@Kuwait.swa.army.mil

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