

A Soldier's view of Iraq duty

Soldiers perform mission with pride and support from the home front

Commentary by Spc. Joseph Roche

Company C, 16th Engineer Battalion

It's been nine months since we deployed to Iraq. Like everyone else the Soldiers of Company C, 16th Engineer Battalion, are working hard to make Operation Iraqi Freedom a success.

Often you, our families and friends, don't hear from us because we are so busy. Everyday, with thoughts of you in our hearts, we make sacrifices that give you every reason to be proud.

Overcoming challenges that would overwhelm many other people, the 16th Engineer Battalion is accomplishing several missions a day that are critical to the reconstruction and security of Baghdad. Everyday we are greeted with more cheers, waves and "thank-you's" from countless Iraqis who see our efforts up close.

Company C has been leading the way by sweeping through troubled areas in search-and-seizure missions confronting the remnants of Saddam's regime. Many operations have scored dramatic successes capturing weapons, explosives and huge amounts of enemy weapon caches. The company has also conducted missions to clear unexploded bombs in a field where Iraqi children were playing.

The Assault and Obstacle Platoon combines with 1st and 2nd Platoon to go where others don't dare and collect the explosives, guns and detainees. They carry out daily logistics and supply missions all over Baghdad and beyond.



Photo by Spc. Joseph Roche

Pfc. Kidd and Spc. DeGeorge of Company C, 16th Engineer Battalion, pull security during a house search.

Further advancing Baghdad's security goals, the platoons have also carried out traffic checkpoints at strategic locations. These require intense professional execution because of the inherent potential threat involved.

Each platoon rotates soldiers to secure and augment dozens of critical infrastructure sights, sometimes in the worst parts of Baghdad. We go where the need is greatest. Some sites have been repeatedly attacked, so Company C meets the enemy's challenge to arrive in force and protect it, setting up Iraqi guards to assume further security. When we do this, such as at power plants scattered throughout the city, we see the defeated frustration of would-be enemies forced to accept our strong resolve, and we see the outpouring of deep gratitude from the many more Iraqis who benefit and appreciate our risks on their behalf.

We always travel in convoys fully prepared and alert to meet danger. We look out for each other so that we will all return home to you. When you don't hear news from Iraq, it isn't because nothing is happening. We're always on the move around Baghdad several times a day. No news means we're doing our job, helping to free the people of Iraq.

Such high-intensity work is very difficult to maintain. Our medics are vital in keeping us going under the worst conditions, often at great risk to their own lives. Behind the scenes, our mechanics perform the most difficult equipment maintenance no matter how little sleep or how much heat is beating down on them. All of Company C has been successfully servicing decades-old equipment. But we do it together, relying on the skill of our mechanics, and it gets done well. They are the miracle workers who make all of us safer, because our equipment performs under some-

times very rough conditions.

Also behind the scenes are the volumes of administrative work each platoons' operations personnel do. It is a never-ending process that makes all of our missions possible and successful. They are our connection to America's vision, stability and support. Mostly unrecognized, they keep everything in order and organize the paperwork the company requires each day.

Also unrecognized but vital is the work of all Company C Soldiers guarding and enhancing the defenses of our base on Baghdad Island, Camp Ultimo 24 hours a day. We always maintain full security here. We work hard to improve living conditions with more facilities being added all the time. Guard and security is in addition to our other missions. Sleep deprivation, high intensity stress and long hours of grueling work are daily realities for us. We are on the front line in the War On Terrorism.

You should know that our mission is becoming smoother each day despite the hardships. We increasingly handle it more efficiently and effectively.

We are working hard to make the best of a difficult year. It would have been impossible to believe this when we first got here, but some of us are going to miss this island when we leave.

Never are you, our family and friends, far from our thoughts and hearts. Your sacrifices and support are more important and appreciated each day. It is important for our peace of mind that you also remain calm and relaxed over what we do. We gain from the strength you show for us. Your love and support add powerfully to our peace of mind. Knowing we have our friends and family safe, supporting us, and ready for our homecoming, allows us to focus our attention with greater resolve and determination to continue the mission.

Semper Ultimo.

Spotlight on sports

Super Bowl night

The Ironside Lanes bowling center in Giessen hosts Super Bowl XXXVIII Night Feb.

1. Everyone is invited to come in and watch the game on two large screen televisions and/or bowl while watching the game on the additional TVs over the lanes. An all-you-can-eat Nacho and Taco Bar is available for \$5 per person. Kick off time is 10 p.m. For more information call mil 343-6172/7702.

Groundhog Day Run Jan. 31

The 284th Base Support Battalion's Sports and Fitness Of-

fice hosts a Groundhog Day five-kilometer run and three-kilometer family fun walk Jan. 31. Registration is from 9:30-10:45 a.m. The race begins at 11 a.m. The cost is \$15 or 15 euros including a T-shirt. Medals will be awarded to the top three in each age category (male and female).

Trip to Black Forest

Outdoor Recreation offers a skiing or sightseeing trip to the Brocken Mountain near Goslar Jan. 24. Cost is \$59 and includes rental of equipment. A skiing and sightseeing trip to the Black Forest takes place Jan. 31 to Feb. 1. Cost is \$99 per person and includes one overnight. For details call Cory Dye at mil 343-8202.

284th BSB – Friedberg, Giessen



Photo by Capt. Sean Kirley

Task Force distributes food

Members of the Al Soor Mosque help pass out food and school supplies donated by the Task Force 1st Armored Division to needy families living in the southeast of Baghdad. The soldiers of the Iron Dukes 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, and the War Eagles of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment join together to deliver more than 4,000 kilograms of food including beef, lamb, chicken, turkey and bread.

Community spotlight

Outprocessing briefings

The next Community Outprocessing briefing takes place Jan. 27 at 10 a.m. at the Old Ironsides Theater on Ray Barracks in Friedberg. Briefings are mandatory 75-90 days before rotation or separation. Spouses of deployed Soldiers are invited and strongly encouraged to attend the briefing. For details call mil 343-8077.

Job search workshop

The 284th Base Support Battalion's Army Career and Alumni Program hosts a job search workshop Jan. 20-21 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Building 7 on the Giessen Depot. The workshop teaches participants the job search process including networking, researching civilian industries, writing resumes and interviewing. ACAP also offers mandatory pre-separation counseling by appointment. Soldiers in the rear detachment may attend the briefing

up to a year before their ETS date or two years before retirement. Soldiers returning from the deployment to leave the service or retire must attend a mandatory ACAP pre-separation counseling session. This class will give the Soldier an overview of benefits and entitlements and lasts about one and a half hours. For more information call Claire Sowinski at mil 343-9332.

Reunion training

The 284th Base Support Battalion Army Community Service hosts a Return and Reunion program for spouses of deployed Soldiers every Tuesday from 9-11 a.m. in Friedberg and from 1-3 p.m. in Giessen. The program provides a forum to prepare spouses for the change and altered expectations that result from a lengthy deployment separation, enabling family members to recognize and deal with the resulting changes. For more information call ACS in Giessen at mil 343-7618 or Friedberg ACS at mil 324-3465.

284th BSB – Friedberg, Giessen

Community spotlights ... Community spotlights

Volunteer thanks

The Community Mail Room 452 in Giessen extends a warm thank-you to Allen Davenport, Joseph Scott, K.C. Brown, Christopher Mackay, Stephen Moore, Blake Seidel, Harley Haanz, Salvador Martinez, Charles Ehrhart, Jonathan Madsen and Stephen Meyers for volunteering at the CMR during the holiday season ensuring that customers received their mail on Christmas Eve.

Dietician sought

Choctaw Management Services Enterprise seeks a part-time registered nurse or dietician for its Women, Infants and Children-Overseas Program in the 284th Base Support Battalion. A four-year degree is required. Anyone interested in providing education and supplemental foods to families in the 284th BSB can call Mary Schrank at civ (06033)925 736.

Employment at the chapel

The Giessen Protestant and Gospel services seek piano players, a watch care coordinator and watch care workers. For details about salary call the 284th Base Support Battalion Chaplains Office at mil 343-8020.

Bingo at high school

The Giessen Booster Club hosts Polish Pottery Bingo Feb. 6 at the Giessen High

School. The doors open at 6 p.m. and the games start at 6:45 p.m. Ten games will be held plus several door prize games. Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$8 or at the door for \$9. Everyone is welcome.

Weekend child care

The 284th Base Support Battalion Child and Youth Services host a **Super Saturday morning child care** service Jan. 24 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Bad Nauheim Child Development Center. The service is available for all CLEOS-registered children age six weeks to 11 years old. Respite cards for E-4s and below will be accepted. Reservations are required. To make reservations call the Bad Nauheim CDC at civ (06032) 83536. A **Parent's Night Out** is scheduled for Jan. 30 from 6:30-10:30 p.m. at the Giessen CDC for CLEOS-registered children age six weeks to 11 years old. To make reservations call the Central Registration Office in Giessen at mil 343-7028/8216.

ASAP hours

The 284th BSB Army Substance Abuse Program Community Counseling Center will only provide clinical services in Giessen Monday and Tuesday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and in Friedberg Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. until further notice because of a staff shortage. For details call the ASAP in Giessen at



Photo by Petra Roberts

Williams named Executive of the Year

Lt. Gen. William E. Ward (left), U.S. Army Europe deputy commander, congratulates Jutta Williams, housing chief of the 284th Base Support Battalion Directorate of Public Works, for being named Department of the Army Installation Management Agency Housing Executive of the Year 2003. Russell B. Hall, IMA-Europe director, presented Williams the prestigious award during the recent Base Commanders Conference in Giessen. "I am honored and proud. But without the support of my staff, my superiors and the BSB this would have not been possible," said Williams.

mil 343-7867 or in Friedberg at mil 324-1710/2714. Both offices will be closed Jan. 26-30 for training. For assistance call mil 324-1710/2715.

AFAP needs community input

Army Community Service staff members encourage community members to participate in the Army Family Action Plan Conference to be held Feb. 17. AFAP provides Soldiers and families a chance to let leaders know what is working, what needs to be improved and how to fix problems to improve quality of life. Issues can be dropped off at any of the drop boxes throughout the community. For more information call ACS in Giessen at mil 343-7618 or in Friedberg call mil 324-3465.

Auto detailing specials

The Friedberg and Giessen Auto Skills offer **Special No. 1** cleaning including interior vacuum and shampooing carpets for \$25 or **Special No. 2** cleaning including vacuum, shampooing plus glass cleaning and interior wipe down for \$35. This offer applies to sedans only. For details call Friedberg at mil 324-3216 or Giessen at mil 343-7050.

Recycle cleaning products

Both Self-Help Stores in Giessen and Friedberg accept partially used household cleaning products and reissue them free to other housing residents. When you move, bring your cleaners to the Self-Help Store rather than throwing them

in the garbage (it's illegal and bad for the environment).

Stress management

A Stress management class will be offered Feb. 2 from 10-11:30 a.m. at the Army Community Service offices in Giessen and Friedberg. Call mil 343-7618 for details.

Shows at Giessen's Keller Theatre

The Giessen Keller Theatre hosts "What's The Mata Hari," a comedy by Tony Dunham, performed by the Confederacy of Fools Jan. 23 and 24 at 7:30 p.m. "Shirley Valentine" will be presented Jan. 30 and 31 at 7:30 p.m. For details call mil 343-8515.

Tax Centers open in January

The Giessen and Friedberg Tax Centers will open in late January. If you are filing taxes for a Soldier deployed to Iraq, a current general power of attorney is required. A tax center will open in Baghdad and in Balad for Soldiers who do not have spouses in Germany. Soldiers who are deployed have 180 days after they return to file their taxes without penalty or interest. This automatic extension also applies to their spouses. All other Soldiers in Germany have until June 15 to file their taxes.

Bulk trash pickup

The next bulk trash pickup date is Feb. 6. Christmas tree pickup is included. Place trees and bulk trash items next to the refuse container the night before the pickup.

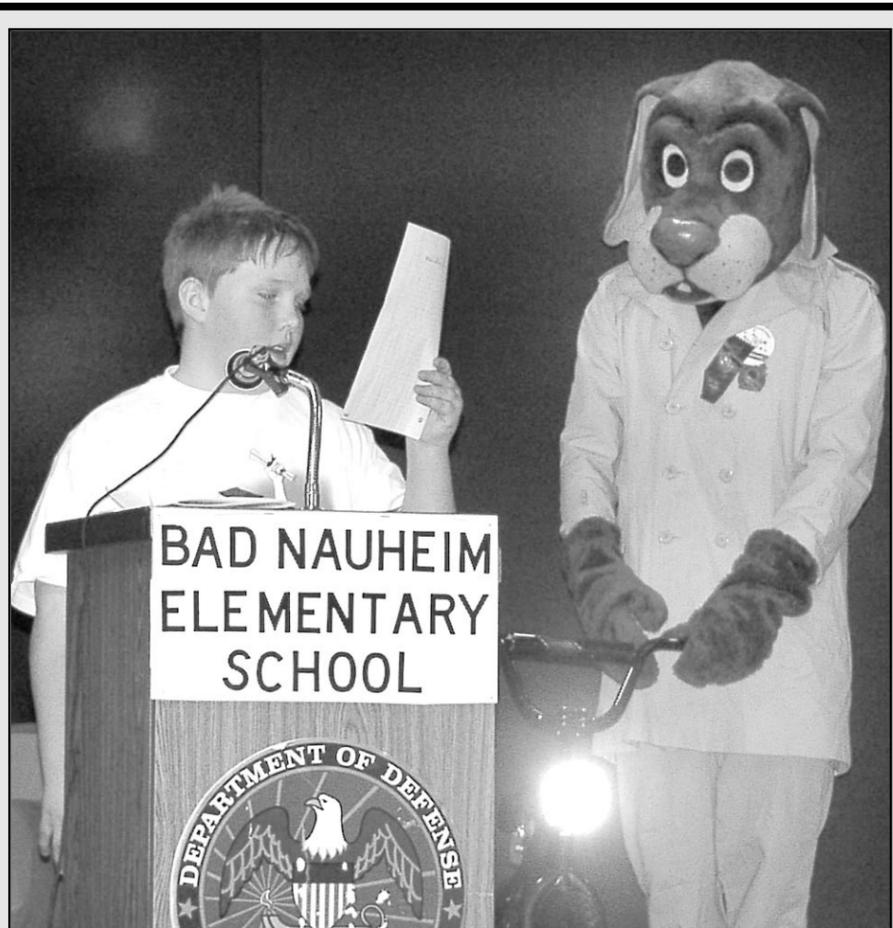


Photo by Alexandra Williams

DARE to say no to drugs

McGruff looks on as fifth-grader Frederik Lindsey of Bad Nauheim Elementary School reads his winning essay to fellow students and parents during the first Drug Abuse Resistance Education graduation of this year. Lindsey and 14 fellow students underwent a 10-week program teaching them about the danger of drugs, peer pressure and crime.

Leaders go extra mile for Soldiers

Keeping morale up essential at Gator Company

By Alexandra Williams
284th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Since their arrival in Iraq last May 1st Sgt. Luis Gonzales and Capt. Patricia Fitzgerald have done their best to improve living conditions for Company A, 501st Forward Support Battalion, Soldiers.

"It was not easy when we first arrived," said Gonzales who recently returned to his home in Butzbach for a two-week Rest and Recuperation leave. "We are located in the former Police Academy that was pretty looted when we first moved in. We hired local nationals to help us clean up the place.

"We had no phones or Internet access to stay in touch with our families, plus, we had to get used to the extreme heat, and basically learn to drink enough and to eat," he said.

"Nine months later we are hosting a shooting range, an Internet cafe, a small restaurant

"On a deployment you really get to know most of your Soldiers pretty well." – 1st Sgt. Luis Gonzales, Company A, 501st FSB

and a gym over there," he added.

"The morale in our company is pretty high. Not only because our quality of life has improved but also because we have weekly gatherings for our Soldiers," he said.

Recognizing Soldiers' birthdays is one of the highlights on Fitzgerald's and Gonzales' list.

"Once a month the company gets together, and each Soldier who had a birthday that month will get a little cake that we make out of the MRE packs," said Gonzales.

Other events include the "Gator of the Week" and the "Tail of the Week" award ceremony.

"The Gator of the Week is awarded to Soldiers who did exceptionally well throughout the week and includes a monetary reward of \$25 from the commander and first sergeant," he said.

The Tail of the Week is awarded for mishaps.

"Capt. Fitzgerald and I both have a plastic alligator on our vehicle and the tail of her alligator fell off. This gave us the idea for the Tail of the Week award. We are not doing this to offend anyone but to get together and talk about our mission — what kind of mistakes happen and how to avoid them the next time," Gonzales said.

"On a deployment you really get to know



Command Sgt. Maj. Sam Perrotta of the 501st Forward Support Battalion and 1st Lt. Evan Buckler of Company A joke around upon Buckler's promotion to first lieutenant in December. Company A leadership celebrates promotions and birthdays on a monthly basis.

most of your Soldiers pretty well. Sometimes you find out things are not going too well for them personally — for example that some of the troops no longer have contact with certain family members or even with their entire family. One of my Soldiers told me that she had no contact with her father. Without her knowing about it, I wrote him a letter, telling him about the deployment, how his daughter

was doing and how she missed talking to him. A couple of weeks later he sent a letter to her and now they are in touch again," he said.

"I also write weekly updates to the families in Germany letting them know what is going on," said Gonzales.

"It's just important to us to keep up the morale of our Soldiers and families because it will help us complete the mission," he said.

Mechanics put vehicles back in the fight

Story and photo by Spc. Ryan Smith
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Soldiers who are badly wounded or seriously ill while on duty in Iraq are sent to combat support hospitals for treatment. When vehicles are seriously damaged or require extensive repairs, they go to "the third shop," such as the one



Staff Sgt. William Brown, Company B shop foreman, tightens loose valves on a HMMWV at the shop at Provider Forward Operation Base in Baghdad.

operated by the Soldiers of Friedberg's Company B, 501st Forward Support Battalion, at Provider Forward Operating Base in Baghdad.

"Our mission is to bring deadlined vehicles up to speed," said Staff Sgt. William Brown, shop foreman with Company B.

Any 1st Brigade Combat Team unit vehicle, from a HMMWV to an Abrams tank, that is considered deadlined and unserviceable by its unit's motor pool shop is sent to the Company B shop. "Any vehicle in 1st BCT — you name it — we fix it right here in our shop," Brown said.

Their bread and butter business is not performing routine maintenance or tune-ups. Company B mechanics specialize in vehicles that have been hit by rocket-propelled grenades and other explosive devices. They repair them and send them back into service.

"We're like a combat support hospital for HMMWVs and other vehicles," Brown said. "We do major repair work."

Mechanics turn wrenches in the shop, but the heart of the operation is in the office where Sgt. Willie Jones, Company B automated logistical specialist, juggles orders and tracks the parts the mechanics need to get the job done.

"Soldiers need these vehicles to accomplish their mission," Jones said. "Our job is to keep these vehicles mission-capable." Jones' piece of the puzzle is expediting orders to ensure that parts get to the mechanics when they need them.

The experience has been rewarding, said Spc. Anthony Dickerson, a tracked-vehicle mechanic. He has improved his skills by getting to work on a wide variety of vehicles rather than just the track vehicles he specializes in.

"We do a little bit of everything. It's great to show what we've been trained to do," he said. "It's satisfying when you get a piece-of-crap vehicle in here and no one thinks you can fix it. Then we do the repairs and it's on the road again in a few days or weeks."

ACS classes

Newborn Care class

The New Parent Education and Support Program hosts a Newborn Care class Jan. 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Butzbach Outreach Center in Building 6543. Anyone interested in the class but unable to attend can arrange for a home or office visit. For more information call Tamara Smith or Katherine Rogers in Giessen at mil 343-8076/9311.

Parent and Me Playtime

A Parent and Me Playtime will be hosted Jan. 28 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Friedberg ACS, Jan. 30 from 10 a.m. to noon in Giessen and Feb. 3 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Butzbach Outreach Center. For more information call ACS in Friedberg at mil 324-3465, in Giessen at mil 343-7618 and in Butzbach at civ (06033)925 329.

Recipe swap

The Bad Nauheim Outreach Center hosts a Recipe Swap Jan. 27 from 10-11 a.m. Everyone is invited to join the group for fun and networking. Bring your favorite recipe. For details call the Outreach Center at civ (06031) 813566.

Soup's On

A Soup's On/Hearts Apart luncheon takes place Jan. 23 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Friedberg, Jan. 27 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Bad Nauheim and Feb. 3 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Butzbach. This free lunch is open to family members, Soldiers and civilian employees.

414th BSB – Büdingen, Hanau

Community notes . . . Community notes

Army Family Action Plan

The Army Family Action Plan needs your ideas. AFAP is a grassroots program for resolving issues affecting Army quality of life. The annual 414th Base Support Battalion AFAP Conference will be held Feb. 10-11 at the Community Activity Center, Building 1351 on Fliegerhorst Kaserne, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. If you have an issue you would like to address or would like to be a conference volunteer contact Rick Krenz at mil 322-5308.

Sweetheart's Dinner

Delight your lover with a romantic dinner for two at Club i on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, from 6-9 p.m. The menu includes one glass of Burgundy wine, German cucumber salad, beef tenderloin in Burgundy sauce, vegetable medley, potato croquettes, rolls with whipped butter, Black Forest cake and coffee. All ladies will be greeted with a flower. The cost is \$40 per couple. Reservations are required by Feb. 11. Call mil 322-7266.

Comedy After Dark

Performers from America's top stand-up comedy shows, such as BET Comic View and Showtime at the Apollo, are coming to Club i on Fliegerhorst Kaserne Feb. 21 at 10 p.m. for a night of non-stop laughs. Tickets are \$15 at the door or \$10 in advance. This show is for adults only.

Ski the Hintertux

Join Hanau Outdoor Recreation to ski or snowboard in Hintertux, Austria, Feb. 6-8. The cost is \$145 per adult, \$99 per child (age 5-12) and \$30 per child (age 5 and under). There is a \$25 fee for a single room. Price includes round-trip transportation and one night in a hotel with breakfast and dinner. The bus departs Friday evening at 10 p.m. from Outdoor Recreation and returns to Hanau Sunday evening around midnight.

Ski Garmisch

Join Hanau Outdoor Recreation to ski or snowboard in Oberammergau and Garmisch, Feb. 13-16. The cost is \$169 per adult, \$139 per child (age 5-12) and \$40 per child (age 5 and under). There is a \$30 fee for a single room. Price includes

round-trip transportation and three nights in a three-star hotel with breakfast. Other meals, equipment and lift passes must be purchased separately. The bus departs Friday morning at 8 a.m. from Outdoor Recreation and returns to Hanau Monday around 6 p.m.

Ski the Black Forest

Join Hanau Outdoor Recreation to ski or snowboard the Black Forest Feb. 24-25 and Feb. 28-29. The cost is \$109 per adult, \$89 per child (age 5-12) and \$69 per child (age 5 and under). There is a \$20 fee for a single room. Price includes transportation, one night in a hotel with breakfast and dinner. Equipment and lift passes must be purchased separately. The bus departs Saturday morning at 6 a.m. from Outdoor Recreation and returns to Hanau Sunday evening around 9 p.m. For all ski trip information contact Hanau Outdoor Recreation in Building 459 on Old Argonner Kaserne. Or call civ (06181) 88-8891 or mil 322-8891.

Nutrition nuggets

Join the Women, Infants, Children-Overseas staff every third Tuesday of the month from 12-12:30 p.m. at the Wolfgang Outreach Center, Building 514, at the Wolfgang Shopping Center for discussions on hot topics in nutrition. Bring your lunch and a friend. Registration is not necessary and participation is free.

Jan. 20 — "Nutrition and Smoking Cessation." Quit smoking without putting on the pounds.

Feb. 17 — "Label Reading." What does the fine print on those labels really mean?

ASG phone book

The new 104th Area Support Group "Info Connection" Telephone Guide is now available. Pick up a copy at Army Community Service, the Community Mail Room or wherever you see *Connection* magazine.

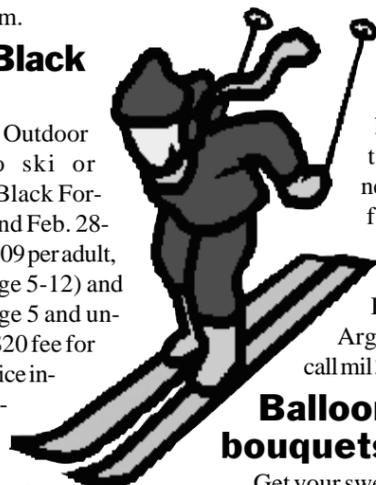
Basic Car Care

Learn about basic car maintenance at Hanau Auto Skills every Saturday at 10 a.m. Topics include changing your oil, fixing flat tires, checking fluid levels and brake pads

for wear. Class size is limited to 20 people, so call Hanau Auto Skills at mil 322-8247 or mil 322-8625 to register.

Play audition

Auditions for "I Ought to be in Pictures" will be held Feb. 23-24 at 7 p.m. at Hanau's Five Pfennig Playhouse. Actors and technicians are needed. For more information contact the Five Pfennig Playhouse in Building 405 on Old Argonner Kaserne or call mil 322-8031.



Balloon bouquets

Get your sweetie a balloon bouquet for Valentine's Day at the Hanau USO in Building 4 on Pioneer Kaserne. Call mil 322-8725 or civ (06181) 56119.

Tax Center

The Hanau Tax Center seeks people to volunteer for the 2004 tax season. Volunteers must possess a valid ID card. Positions include receptionist and volunteer income tax assistants. Tax assistants must be available for Volunteer Individual Tax Assistance Training Jan. 23-26. The Hanau Tax Center will open Feb. 2 and prepare tax returns, including electronic filing, until June 15. They'll be open Monday to Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Thursday from noon to 8 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The center is located in Room 14, Building 2 on Pioneer Kaserne. For more information call Capt. Brian Adams or Spc. Jim Wallner at mil 322-8993/9577.

Winter games in Büdingen Jan. 23

Enjoy exciting winter-themed indoor games for children and adults Jan. 23 at the Büdingen Army Community Service Outreach Center. Play "Frosty" — wrap players in toilet paper like snowmen, try a Shoe box Relay Race, Snowball over the Mountain, Snowball Making, Snowball Throw and the Snowball Relay Race. Refreshments will be served. The games begin at 3:30 p.m. The Outreach Center is located in Building 2207 on Armstrong Barracks. Call mil 321-4786.

Healthy Pregnancy, Healthy Baby

A Red Cross Healthy Pregnancy, Healthy Baby course consists of four sessions on the first four Wednesdays of the month from 5:30-7:30 p.m. For more information contact Kristi Kolthoff at mil 322-1760 or civ (06181) 88-1760.

Community CPR and First Aid

This two session Red Cross course offers CPR on the first day and First Aid on the second day. Class dates are Feb. 21 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Feb. 22 from 1-4 p.m., May 15 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and May 16 from 1-4 p.m. Call Kristi Kolthoff at mil 322-1760 or civ (06181) 88-1760.

Community CPR Challenge

This is an opportunity to take the written and skills tests to become CPR certified. If you fail the challenge you must take the class. CPR Challenge dates are Jan. 24 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., March 25 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., sometime in April and June 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Call Kristi Kolthoff at mil 322-1760 or civ (06181) 88-1760.

Tutorial assistance

Pioneer Education Center offers free academic tutorial assistance in preparation for GT improvement, academic test, basic skills, general college courses and prerequisite study for service schools. The tutor will be available Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6-9 p.m. Family members are welcome. Contact the Pioneer Education Center at mil 322-8380.

Computer Lab

The Pioneer Education Center in Building 11 has computers available in the Computer Lab for educational purposes. These computers can be used to complete online computer courses, conduct educational research, and Army correspondence courses. The lab is open Monday to Thursday from 1-9 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m. to noon and 1-5 p.m. Contact the Pioneer Education Center at mil 322-



8380 for more information.

Army Family Team Building

Army Family Team Building will be conducting a Family Readiness Group Leader's course Jan. 20-21 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The training will be held at the Wolfgang Outreach Center, Building 514, at the Wolfgang Shopping Center. The course prepares individuals for the challenges of leadership and arms them with knowledge from more seasoned spouses. All FRG leaders, liaisons and anyone interested in learning more about the role of an FRG are welcome. Call mil 322-5308.

'The Difficulties of Love'

The Hanau Middle School Shakespearean Actors Troupe presents "The Difficulties of Love," two plays by William Shakespeare, "Twelfth Night" and "Love's Labours Lost." Performance dates are Feb. 6, 13, 20 and 27 for "Twelfth Night." Performance dates are Feb. 7, 14, 21 and 28 for "Love's Labours Lost." Ticket prices are \$4 for the performance or \$10 for the performance and dinner. Dinner times are 5:30-6:30 p.m. and the curtain rises at 7 p.m. For information or tickets contact Chris Swanson at Hanau Middle School at civ (06181) 906-9737.

Technology Day

All Hanau schools will host Technology Day Jan. 26. The community is invited to visit the schools during normal school hours to learn all about the latest school technologies.

Spelling Bee

The Gelnhausen Elementary School Spelling Bee finals will be held at the school Jan. 21 at 9:30 a.m.

Awana Club

The Awana Children's Club, sponsored by the 414th Base Support Battalion Protestant chapels, meets every Tuesday from 6-7:45 p.m. at Argonner Elementary School on Old Argonner Kaserne for games, songs, puppets, scripture and fun. The club is open to children in kindergarten through sixth grade. Call Vickie Horton at civ (06181) 569 0670 for more information.

Get the latest news online at www.hanau.army.mil

414th BSB – Büdingen, Hanau

Program lets Soldiers 'help their own'

Army Emergency Relief has served Soldiers and their families in war and peace since 1942

By Claudette Marshall

414th Base Support Battalion Army Emergency Relief officer

Army Emergency Relief is a private non-profit organization whose mission is to provide emergency financial assistance to active duty (single or married) Soldiers, retirees (based on longevity or disability) and their family members. U.S. Army Reserve, National Guard and their family members with ID cards may also be eligible if the service member is ordered to active duty for at least 31 consecutive days. Non-military ID card holders are ineligible for financial assistance through AER even though the Soldier is willing and able to repay a loan.

Developing a budget

AR-930-4, AERs governing regulation, defines an emergency as a condition that arises suddenly, is unforeseen, urgent and requires immediate attention. Poor financial planning which leads to one's inability to pay essential bills is not necessarily considered to be an emergency within AER guidelines. It's recommended that each individual or family develop a monthly budget and include an emergency saving fund as a part of that budget. Assistance with developing a budget and other financial services are offered through the Financial Readiness Program at Army Community Service.

In general AER can provide assistance with emergency financial needs for food, rent, utilities, some funeral expenses, some medical and dental expenses, travel expenses and personally owned vehicle repairs. AER cannot finance ordinary leave or vacations, pay for non-essentials, pay fines or legal fees, liquidate or consolidate debt, provide ongoing

assistance, purchase a home or finance home improvements, purchase, rent or lease a vehicle, cover bad checks or pay credit card bills.

Before financial assistance being offered the applicant must provide a current military ID Card, the most recent end of month LES, substantiating documents for the request being made and a completed AER application signed by the active duty Soldier's commander. The sponsor must make the request for the financial assistance unless he is unavailable due to deployment, TDY, field exercise or is overseas. In this instance the family member must provide a current general or special power of attorney which states the family member may "institute, start, open or establish an account in my name."

AER financial assistance can be provided in the form of a loan, grant or a combination of both. Ninety-four percent of AER financial assistance is in the form of loans which are interest free. A grant does not have to be repaid and would be considered if it's determined that repayment of a loan would cause undue hardship on the sponsor's family. At times a combination of a loan and grant is considered. Loans are usually repaid in the form of allotments within 12 months, but repayments can exceed 12 months under special circumstances.

Help while away

If a sponsor or family member needs assistance while away from the sponsor's duty station, then the sponsor or family member can contact any AER office or the Relief Society of another branch of military service. Upon returning to their assigned duty station the soldier must contact the AER officer to complete the process. If a sponsor or family member has a financial emergency that is time sensitive and has to be resolved before the next regular business day then

he or she can contact the American Red Cross Office in Stuttgart at mil 431-2334 or civ (07031) 15334.

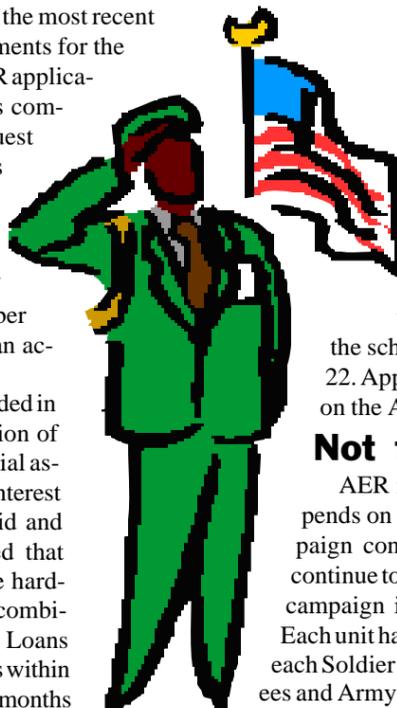
AER also provides assistance with education by providing scholarships. The Spouse Education Assistance Program provides a scholarship provided to dependent spouses of Soldiers on active duty assigned to Europe. The dependent spouse must reside with the Soldier at the assigned location. The Maj. Gen. James Ursano Scholarship Fund is for dependent children, stepchildren or legally adopted children of Army Soldiers on active duty, retired or deceased while on active duty or after retirement. The children must be unmarried for the entire academic year that the scholarship is offered and be under the age of 22. Applications are available at the AER Office or on the AER website.

Not federally funded

AER is not a federally funded program and depends on the full repayment of loans and AER campaign contributions for the program to be able to continue to provide assistance. The annual fundraising campaign is usually held between March and May. Each unit has a representative responsible for soliciting each Soldier for contributions to AER. In addition, retirees and Army civilians are encouraged to donate. AER is a program where Soldiers help their own in the time of need. For questions on eligibility, the AER campaign, education programs or for additional information, stop by the Army Emergency Relief Office located at Army Community Service in Building 9 on Pioneer Kaserne. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., except Wednesday when the hours are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The AER Officer can be reached at mil 322-8097 and civ (06181)88-8097.

The AER Office is closed on weekends and federal holidays. Visit their website at www.aerhq.org.



Results of 2003 customer survey

Survey finds most customers satisfied

A customer satisfaction survey conducted in the 414th Base Support Battalion between July and September of 2003 revealed that 83 percent of those surveyed are satisfied or very satisfied with the programs, services and support provided by the community. Organizations that received particularly high marks in the area of customer service were the Self-Help Store, Army Community Service, Pioneer Gym and the Housing Office. All of these facilities are located on Pioneer Kaserne. Additionally, community members ranked customer service at the AAFES Post Exchange very high. Residents weren't satisfied with everything in the community and provided a lot of valuable feedback through the survey. The top five improvements that community members said they would like to see were:

1. Improved opening hours at the PX, commissary, shoppettes, banks, library, clinics, CMRs and gyms.
2. Improved customer service.
3. Improved youth/children activities.
4. Improved housing program (renovated housing and better trash services).

"Complete resident satisfaction is our main focus. We're working hard to create a culture where every community member works together to make Hanau a great place to live and work. We want everyone to be proud of his or her home away from home in Hanau."
- Lt. Col Amy L. Ehmann

414th BSB. "We're working hard to create a culture where every community member works together to make Hanau a great place to live and work. We want everyone to be proud of their home away from home in Hanau."

Already the 414th BSB is making strides to answer the community desires. In December over 150 members of the Base Support Battalion staff completed customer service training.

The community will see a big increase in youth and children activities in the near future and plans are underway to convert the skating rink at the Wolfgang Shopping Center

5. Improved child care program.

Additional programs and services that residents reported they would like to see offered:

1. More youth/children/family activities.
3. Paintball facilities.
4. ATM on Underwood Kaserne.
5. Shuttle bus service.

Hanau leaders are very focused on improving the Hanau community. "Complete resident satisfaction is our main focus," said Lt. Col. Amy L. Ehmann, commander of the

into a Kid's Zone. Work should begin on that project around March 2004. Also skateboard parks were built at Fliegerhorst and Büdingen. Housing is also continuously under renovation. Recently new trash systems were introduced in the housing areas. Many quarters are receiving new dishwashers and all of the family housing buildings were painted on the exterior over the summer.

There are limitations in what the community can provide however. "A swimming pool is beyond our resources," said Ehmann. "But we can provide better information on pools available in the local area. The Atlantis Indoor Water Park in Obertshausen is just a few miles from Hanau, for example." The Directorate of Community Activities has been researching a paintball program. But this again is an instance where the funding is currently not available to support the program. Shuttle bus services exist and plans are underway to market the program better or improve the hours of operation. (*Information for this article compiled by the 414th BSB Customer Service Team*)

Survey results

From a total of 492 surveys: 147 people were "Very Satisfied" = 29.9 percent; 259 were "Satisfied" = 52.6 percent; 46 were "Dissatisfied" = 9.4 percent; and 37 checked nothing = 7.5 percent.

414th BSB – Büdingen, Hanau

Getting an inside look at U.S. Army

German reserve officers tour Underwood Kaserne

Story and photos by
Dennis Johnson
414th Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs

A group of German Reserve Officers from Reservistenkameradschaft Frankfurt visited the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of the 5-7th Air Defense Artillery on Underwood Kaserne.

Approximately 20 officers and enlisted soldiers attended, led by German Reserve Oberstleutnant Jörg Bannach, who in the civilian world is a senior prosecutor with the Hanau District Attorney's Office. The visit was arranged by Maj. Brian Nomi, an attorney and reserve officer, who spent six months working at the Hanau Legal Center, and now, has returned to his law firm in Los Angeles.

The Hanau Legal Center has maintained a close partnership with both the German Air Force ADA unit, Flugabwehrraketengruppe 14, stationed in Nidder-Kaserne, Schöneck and Reservistenkameradschaft Frankfurt over the past years.

The officers were from all branches of the German military which was apparent by the various head gear worn. "Most air defense is covered by the German Air Force. Only a little is covered by the Army. So as most here are from the Army, this'll be something new for them. We have officers from all branches, including the Navy, and ranks from enlisted to full colonel," said Bannach.

Lt. Col. Samuel T. Piper III, 5-7th ADA commander, welcomed the visitors and explained a bit about the casern. "It's a small casern. The fence is just over there. There are about 750 soldiers in our battalion and most of the battalion has been on the move, like most of the Army," he said. "Most of our units went to Israel, but two batteries went to Turkey in case they were needed to protect a northern front in the recent conflict with Iraq."

Piper then handed over the German soldiers to Capt. Joseph Davis, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery commander, for the tour.



Capt. Joseph Davis, HHB commander, explains the mission and capabilities of a Patriot firing battery.

Davis led the group around Underwood Kaserne and gave the group an introduction to the equipment used by a Patriot Firing Battery. They were shown the communications platoon which links the five firing batteries to the battalion headquarters, the medic platoon which provides emergency medical care and given an overview of how the Headquarters Battery supports the battalion operations.

The group was able to view the Patriot launchers and the "big four" of a Patriot firing battery — the radar, the engagement control station, the electronic power plant and the antenna mast group. They were not able to see any real missiles as none are kept on Underwood Kaserne.

At the point along the tour when the group came to the communication trucks, Davis "volunteered" the nearest specialist to explain how the communications relay group keeps the often widely spaced firing batteries in touch.

Spc. Amelia Hollenberg of HHB explained how they facilitate the

voice and data communication between the batteries and then returned to her position before her truck awaiting the Friday afternoon inspection.

The German ADA system is the French and German-built Roland missile system, which is different from the American Patriot.

"It tends to be a short-range system, whereas our Patriot is more long range," said Davis. "The Patriot's actual capabilities are classified, but it has a pretty long reach. The Patriot is effective in two types of air battles; it works against 'air-breathing' threats like helicopters, airplanes, drones and even cruise missiles, and also against tactical ballistic missiles. It can be used against virtually anything that flies."

"The German officers asked really intelligent questions," said Davis. "You could tell they weren't just being briefed but had a real interest in our systems."

One German officer asked about the "near-explosion" method of destroying missiles versus the "direct

hit" method. Another asked for an explanation of how the ground-based radar guides the missile and then hands over control at the last seconds to the missile itself.

And the question that always comes up, "How much do these cost?"

"The old ones cost about a million; I have no idea what the newer ones cost, but I'm sure it's more," Davis told the visitors.

After the tour, Bannach thanked the Americans. "Maj. Nomi and Capt. Davis, we are very thankful to visit. It was very interesting to see the American systems. And we know Maj. Nomi will be going home soon, so this is for a little memory of your stay in Germany," said Bannach as he presented Nomi with a beer stein emblazoned with the shield of Hesse.

Davis concluded the tour by saying, "I would like to add all of you to my long list of German friends." And in a sociable ending to the day, the group arranged to meet off post for an end-of-the-week drink together.



Spc. Amelia Hollenberg explains how they facilitate the voice and data communication between the batteries.

Hanau Tax Center offers online filing, free help

By Spc. James N. Wallner

Hanau Tax Center paralegal specialist, tax representative

Tax time is here again.

Free tax preparation and electronic filing of your federal and state tax returns will again be provided at the Hanau Tax Center, a free service available to all ID card holders.

The Tax Center opens Feb. 2 at 9 a.m. and will stay open through June 15, the deadline for tax filers overseas who do not owe money. If you owe taxes, you must pay by April 15.

Hours will be Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Thursday from noon to 8 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Walk-in service is available for taxpayers not claiming rental properties or family child care deductions. Appointments may be made starting March 1.

The tax center is located in the basement of Building 2

on Pioneer Kaserne.

Stop at the reception in Room 14 to sign in or take advantage of the drop-off services. With drop-offs you leave all of your tax information with the receptionist and return 72 hours later for your finished return. This service is only available for 1040EZ and 1040A customers.

People who can use this service at times other than lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., should do so to reduce their waiting time and help those unable to visit at other times.

Deployment should not adversely affect a person's tax situation in any way. Internal Revenue Service officials are aware of the problems deployed soldiers have filing their tax returns. If you or your spouse are deployed or have been deployed recently, you have an automatic extension.

The Tax Center offers free tax preparation in addition to free federal and state filing. When coming for tax service bring all W-2 wage and earnings statements and any interest

or income statements including rental income or retirement income. Also bring Social Security numbers or taxpayer identification numbers for all members of your family or any person who may be on your tax return such as a day care provider or parent you are claiming as a dependent.

If you are filing a joint return, both filers must sign two electronic filing forms. If you are a joint filer and your spouse will not be accompanying you, have these before coming to the office or bring a power of attorney to sign for your spouse.

You must have all appropriate forms at the time of sign in. If not, you'll be asked to return when you have everything needed.

All tax center services are free including electronic filing for federal and state income tax returns.

E-filing allows you to receive a faster refund. For more information call mil 322-9577 or civ (06181) 88-9577.