



Bulletin board

At the movies July 6-22

Movie plots

Spider-Man 2 (PG-13)—Two years have passed and mild-mannered Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) is still struggling with his dual identity as Spider-Man and an ordinary college student. His life-long yearning for M.J. (Kirsten Dunst) becomes even stronger as he fights the impulse to reveal his secret life and declare his love.

The Punisher (R) — FBI undercover agent, Frank Castle, is finally moving out of the field and into a desk job — and a normal life with his wife and son. Then Castle's world is shaken to its core by a nightmare he has long feared — his family is executed. Castle seeks to punish the murderers and finds the one thing he least expected — redemption.

Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) — Uma Thurman, a former assassin betrayed by her boss (David Carradine), is still bent on killing Bill in Quentin Tarantino's sequel. She's also determined to annihilate the deadly squad of international assassins, played by Lucy Liu, Daryl Hannah, Vivica A. Fox and Michael Madsen, that put her in a coma and wiped out her family and fiancé.

Garfield (PG)—In this film version of the popular cartoon strip, Garfield's owner, Jon (Breckin Meyer), takes in sweet but dimwitted pooch Odie, turning Garfield's perfect world upside down. Garfield wants only one thing, Odie out of his home and life. But when the hapless pup is kidnapped by a nasty dog trainer, Garfield feels responsible. Also stars Jennifer Love Hewitt and the voice of Bill Murray.

Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban (PG)—Harry Potter and his friends Ron and Hermione return as teenagers to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for their third year of study where they delve into the mystery surrounding an escaped prisoner who poses a dangerous threat to the young wizard. This third episode stars Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, Gary Oldman, David Thewlis, Robbie Coltrane and Emma Thompson.

Hellboy (PG-13) — Based on Mike Mignola's Dark Horse Comics series, this film version follows the adventures of Hellboy (Ron Perlman) who joins forces with other supernatural heroes to protect humankind.

Shrek 2 (PG) — After returning from their honeymoon, Shrek and Fiona learn Fiona's parents want to invite them to their kingdom in this sequel. The catch? Fiona's parents are unaware of the curse that struck their daughter and assumed she married Prince Charming. They are a bit shocked to learn their son-in-law is a 700-pound ogre. Stars the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, John Lithgow, John Cleese, Julie Andrews and Antonio Banderas.



Spider-Man (Tobey Maguire) battles Dr. Otto Octavius (Alfred Molina) in "Spider-Man 2." Of Azkaban (PG) 7 p.m.

- Baumholder, Wagon Wheel**
July 8 — Hellboy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 9 — The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 10 — Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban (PG) 1, 4 and 7 p.m.
July 11 — Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban (PG) 4 p.m. Connie And Carla (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 15 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 16 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 17 — Garfield (PG) 4 p.m. Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 18 — Garfield (PG) 4 p.m. Envy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 22 — Ella Enchanted (PG) 7 p.m.

- Büdingen, Little**
July 10 — Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed (PG) 3 p.m.
July 17 — Brother Bear (PG) 3 p.m.

- Dexheim, Rhein**
July 8 — Hellboy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 9 — The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 10 — Garfield (PG) 7 p.m.
July 11 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-13) 3 p.m.
July 16 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 17 — The Terminal (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 18 — Ella Enchanted (PG) 3 p.m.

- Friedberg, Old Ironsides**
July 8 — The Whole Ten Yards (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 9 — Troy (R) 7 p.m.
July 10 — E.T. The Extraterrestrial (PG) 2 p.m. Troy (R) 7 p.m.
July 11 — Walking Tall (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 15 — Hellboy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 16 — Shrek 2 (PG) 7 p.m.
July 17 — Shrek 2 (PG) 2 p.m. The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 18 — Connie And Carla (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 22 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.

- Giessen, Skyline**
July 6-7 — Van Helsing (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 9 — The Girl Next Door (R) 7 p.m.
July 10 — The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 11 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-



Uma Thurman hones her martial arts skills with the help of Gordon Liu in "Kill Bill Vol. 2."

- 13) 7 p.m.
July 13-14 — Troy (R) 7 p.m.
July 16 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 17 — Envy (R) 7 p.m.
July 18 — Van Helsing (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 20-21 — Shrek 2 7 p.m.
- Hanau, Evening Star**
July 6 — The Girl Next Door (R) 7 p.m.
July 7 — Hellboy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 8 — The Girl Next Door (R) 7 p.m.
July 9 — The Notebook (PG-13) 7 p.m. The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 10 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-13) 2 p.m. The Notebook (PG-13) 7 p.m. Connie And Carla (PG-13) 9:30 p.m.
July 11 — The Notebook (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 12 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 13 — The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 14 — Connie And Carla (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 15 — The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 16 — Spider-Man 2 (PG-13) 3 and 7 p.m. Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 9:30 p.m.
July 17 — Ella Enchanted (PG) 2 p.m. Spider-Man 2 (PG-13) 7 p.m. Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 9:30 p.m.
July 18 — Spider-Man 2 (PG-13) 1, 4 and 7 p.m.

- July 19** — Envy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 20 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 21 — Envy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 22 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.

- Rhein Main, Gardens**
July 7 — Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 8 — The Terminal (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 9 — Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban (PG) 7 p.m.
July 10 — Johnson Family Vacation 5 p.m. The Punisher (R) 7:30 p.m.
July 14 — The Notebook (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 16 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 17 — Garfield (PG) 5 p.m. Envy (PG-13) 9:30 p.m.
July 18 — Ella Enchanted (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 20-21 — Spider-Man 2 (PG-13) 7 p.m.

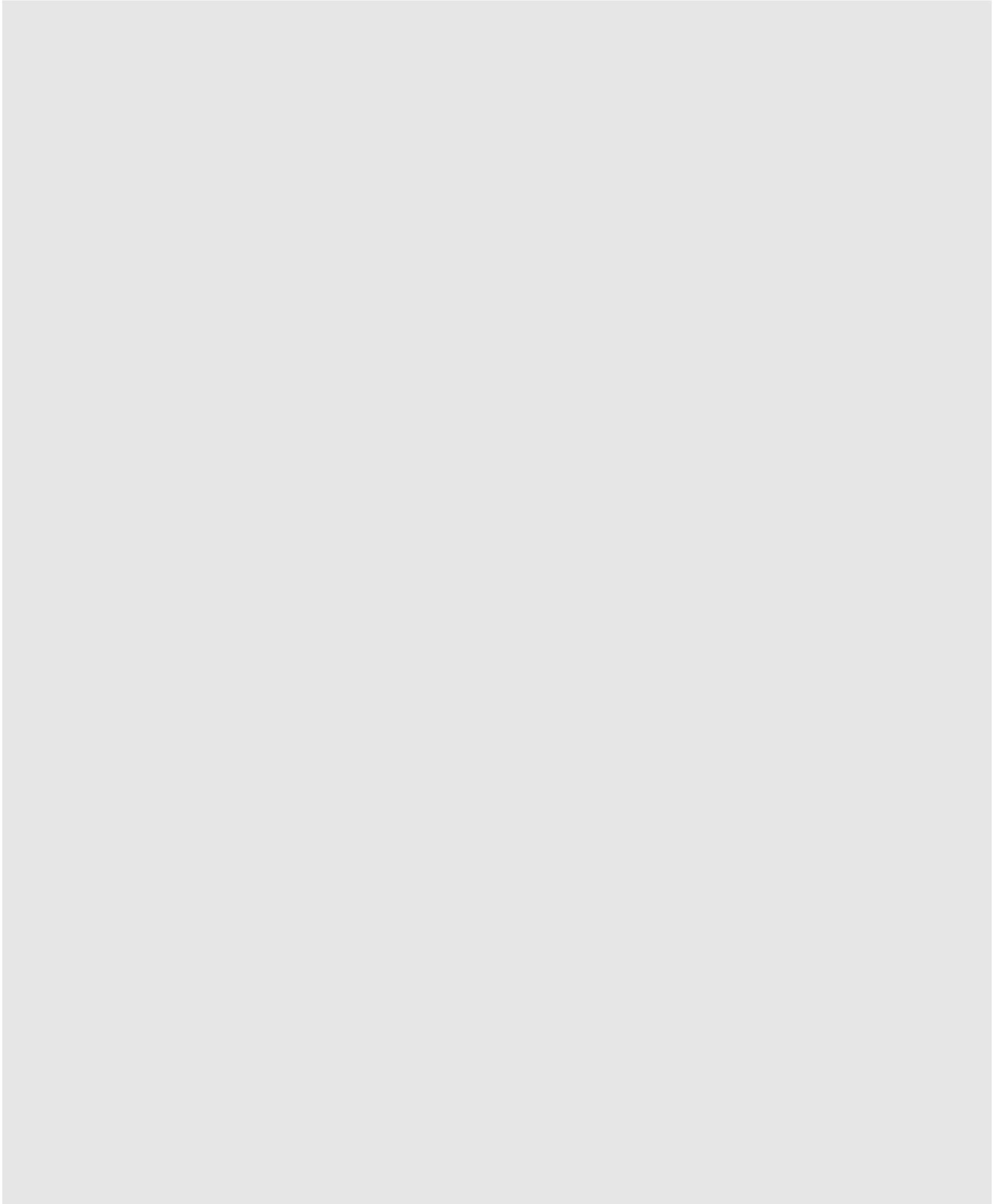
- Wackernheim, McCully**
July 7 — Harry Potter And The Prisoner

- July 21** — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
- Wiesbaden, Flyers**
July 8 — The Terminal (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 9 — Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 10 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 15 — The Punisher (R) 7 p.m.
July 16 — The Notebook (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 17 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 22 — Envy (PG-13) 7 p.m.

- Wiesbaden, Taunus**
July 6 — Hellboy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 7 — Walking Tall (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 8 — Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 9 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-13) 7 p.m. The Terminal (PG-13) 9:30 p.m.
July 10 — The Prince And Me (PG) 4 p.m. Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story (PG-13) 7 p.m. The Punisher (R) 9:30 p.m.
July 11 — Home On The Range (PG) 4 p.m. Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 12 — Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 13 — The Terminal (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 14 — Connie And Carla (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 15 — The Notebook (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 16 — Envy (PG-13) 7 p.m. Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 9:30 p.m.
July 17 — Ella Enchanted (PG) 4 p.m. Envy (PG-13) 7 p.m. The Notebook (PG-13) 9:30 p.m.
July 18 — Ella Enchanted (PG) 4 p.m. The Notebook (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 19 — Kill Bill Vol. 2 (R) 7 p.m.
July 20 — Envy (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 21 — Johnson Family Vacation (PG-13) 7 p.m.
July 22 — Spider-Man 2 (PG-13) 7 p.m.

Movies and times subject to change by local theaters. For the most up-to-date schedule visit the ASG's website (see address below).

Herald Union classifieds



Iraq —14 months later

127th ASB Soldiers recognized in Baghdad

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

More than 100 Soldiers of the 127th Aviation Support Battalion received awards from their commander, Lt. Col. Eric Smith, June 21. As the Soldiers stood in line to receive their awards at Baghdad International Airport, they might have thought the best award is that they get to go home first.

"This ceremony is to recognize the Soldiers who are redeploying as part of our advance party for their accomplishments during our mission in Iraq," said Capt. Christopher Caiozzo, the battalion adjutant.

"The majority of these Soldiers have been in Iraq going on 15 months now, and the first Soldiers are finally heading home. The main body should be leaving here in July. The 615th ASB of the 1st Cavalry from Fort Hood, Texas, replaced us in April, but we were extended 90 days to provide main supply route security and to act as a reserve force for the Baghdad area of responsibility," he said.

Variety of awards presented

The Soldiers received 127th ASB certificates of achievement, battalion coins and Coalition Force Land Component Command coins, with some of the Soldiers receiving multiple awards. "The intent is to recognize all the Soldiers, no matter what the award, for a job well done," said Caiozzo.

"You look over these guys and they're smiling just a bit. It [the 90-day extension of duty] was like 'you can fool me once, but you can't fool me twice,'" said Smith. "But the real smiles are coming."

"We're giving you some paper and bits of ribbon tonight,

Critical mission continues until last day

Range of support units keep helicopters flying

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

Helicopter crews in Iraq depend on two things to fly their missions and make it back in one piece: their own aviator skills and the vital support of their maintenance teams.

"We're the aviation maintenance troop and we support the two air troops," said Capt. Bill Bliss of 1-1st Cavalry, 1-501st Aviation Regiment, F Troop Task Force. "We provide primarily aviation maintenance, but we also supply fuel and ammunition for the Kiowa helicopters of Desperado and Axe Troops.

"I think the toughest part of our mission here was doing the same tasks day after day without becoming complacent. We've done an outstanding job of supporting, but I think it's become more difficult over these past few months. The majority of F Troop never left. We were lined up on the runway [to redeploy], but we never went anywhere," he said.

"I think it was more difficult out at the Forward Arming Refueling Point. Out there you do the same task day in and day out. There you strictly refuel aircraft and that's a very dangerous job, something that you cannot give less than 100 percent attention. Keeping that up is a challenge," said Sgt. Andrew Lucas, training NCO for F Troop.

During missions they refuel helicopters "hot." That means the rotor blades are turning and the engines are hot. If someone accidentally sprayed fuel, it could start a fire in an instant.

For F Troop, the days are much the same as they were before the extension. "For us,

and that's not much to recognize you for all you've done for us here in Iraq," said Smith.

"The Soldiers are really ready to go home," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Tillery, a 127th ASB platoon sergeant who attended the ceremony. "As long as we take it slow and safe, and get them all back, that'll be great. After the redeployment I'm looking forward to some rest and relaxation, and I'll travel around Germany a bit. But I'll miss the camaraderie, the team we've developed into."

Next morning, Soldiers of the 127th ASB were hard at work as they have been every day in Iraq. Spc. David Gardner was up to his elbows in a Blackhawk helicopter engine.

"We should be back in a month. I have a wife and kids so I'd like to be back with them, of course. Although I've only been here a month, with training I've been away from my family for a year because I 'reclassified.' I was infantry in the National Guard since 1996 and then I decided to join the regular Army. When I joined I knew I was coming to Iraq. My kids will jump on me when I come in the door," said the Illinois native.



Spc. David Gardner, 127th Aviation Support Battalion, works on a Blackhawk helicopter in a hangar at Baghdad International Airport June 23.

"Luckily for me they're still small enough for me to pick up all three at once."

"I've been given three jobs since I've been out here, but the only job I want is to be a husband to my wife," said Caiozzo. "A lot of guys here feel that way."

being the maintenance troop, the mission really hasn't changed. For the pilots, where they go, their mission has changed," said Bliss.

Some tasks have been added to the day-to-day routine, he said. They're packing up containers and packing up the offices, they're turning in spare parts to return to the supply system and drawing the spare parts they may need for the convoy to Kuwait. The two-day, 330-kilometer trip to Kuwait should roll by mid-July, barring any more serious uprisings



Pfc. Brian Seichter, 1-501st Aviation's Soldier of the Month for June, works on a High Mobility, Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle.

in the country.

"There're many challenges to leaving, but Soldiers always seem up to the task of redeploying. We have to clear everything American out of here because we're turning this part of the airport back to the Iraqis. It's their main airport and they're anxious to get it back," said Bliss.

"When we get back to Germany we'll do a 're-set.' That's when we check things we don't normally check, to make sure the aircraft are all safe to fly," he said.

"We provide all the aviation maintenance for the Apache helicopters," said Sgt. 1st Class John Nies, platoon sergeant for Delta Company, 1-501st Aviation. "We keep the blades turning and fix the stuff that's broke. There're about 70 troops in the company, 22 in the armament platoon, 25 in the maintenance platoon and 14 in the shops platoon. The maintenance platoon members are the overall Apache mechanics who pull off the big parts and put them back on."

The mechanics are supported by contractors at BIAP for

major repairs and the crew chiefs who are constantly checking the aircraft for "squawks."

"The armament platoon is very busy loading and unloading weapons. Anytime we bring a helicopter into the hangar it must be disarmed, for obvious reasons," said Nies.

The shops platoon handles perhaps the most complex mix of operations, with the most Military Occupational Specialties. They have mechanics with specialized skills to work on the aircraft's power plant, power train and rotor, avionics, electrical, hydraulics and air frame, the latter sometimes fixing bullet holes. A range of mechanics might take part in any given repair, from sheet metal to electrical systems, depending on the damage.

"Nothing has really changed. We started going full out last May [2003] and we've been going at it ever since. We packed up once in March, and now we're packing up again. It's a real difference with the heat," said Nies.

The daytime temperatures have been around 115 degrees and commanders have adjusted some work schedules so the Soldiers can avoid the hottest parts of the day. They moved formation up to 7 a.m. from 9 a.m. to take advantage of the relatively cooler morning hours.

"We were stunned by the extension, 365 plus. But they all believe in doing anything they can to protect the Iraqi people and put down any uprisings. The Iraqi people are right in the middle of it, getting hurt. They're [the Soldiers] maintaining a good attitude," said Nies.

Sports and leisure

Hanau soccer ace makes All-Army, CISM teams

Represents U.S. forces in military version of Olympics

By David Ruderman
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Sparks fly when Hannah Mabel stakes the field. A welder with Hanau's 502nd Engineer Company, Mabel is an All-Army soccer ace who recently represented all America's armed forces in Conseil International du Sport Militaire competition at Fort Eustis, Va., in late May and early June.

"Her achievement is at a really high level," said Doug Stanley, director of the Hanau Sports and Fitness program. "We have intramural play here and community level, and it's unusual for someone to go on from there to All-Army. Right there you're the cream of the crop."

Mabel played fullback for the All-Army team that trained and played at Fort Eustis, Va., May 8-16. From there she was selected to play with the integrated armed forces team that finished third in CISM competition that ended June 6.

"She was selected as one of the top women players — it's like the

Olympics of the military," said Stanley. "She's very athletic. She's into biking, skiing, hockey."

"I'm old school," said Mabel. "When I was growing up, kids didn't specialize. I was very lucky I lived in an outdoor area." Growing up in Los Alamos, N.M., in the hills above the Rio Grande Valley, she could ski in the morning and kayak in the afternoon, she said.

"Actually our high school had a clustering of athletic girls. The track team was the soccer team, was the basketball team. It kept everyone invigorated and healthy. I've always had amazing teams that made everyone on them look good."

The CISM experience was no exception. "It was the perfect form of diplomacy. This team had such class, classy officers for the most part. It was profoundly satisfying," she said.

"When she first came in she talked about playing in the women's pro team with Mia Hamm," said Stanley.

Mabel did play semi-profession-



Photo by Dave Fliesen

Hannah Mabel plays against the Air Force during the Armed Forces Championship at Fort Eustis, Va.

ally for a number of years, scuffling to make ends meet in between seasons, she said. A happy confluence of athletic and military connections that run in her family finally lured her into the Army and its athletic programs.

"My father competed during the Korean War for basketball and baseball, All-Army," said Mabel.

She enlisted in early 2003 and arrived at her duty station with the 502nd in May, while it was in recovery mode from deployment to Iraq. The unit is likely to return for another round in the future, and Mabel may be among those who go. If she does, her soccer skills would likely be an asset to the unit downrange as well.

"I think the wonderful thing about soccer is its accessibility," said Mabel. "You don't even need a ball, really."

She said she would have liked to take the time to play for German clubs, but thinks a future deployment might make that impossible. "It's kind of regretful, but I appreciate the urgency of the mission."

Take a hike

By Donald Seltzer
Special to the Herald Union

Full listings of volksmarch events in the 104th Area Support Group are on the web at 104thasg.hanau.army.mil.

Weekend of July 10-11

Sohren — This walk puts wanderers near Hahn airport in the scenic Hunsrück region. Drivers should make their way to B-



50 using the Rheinböllen exit of Autobahn 61 or B-421 from Idar-Oberstein or Bad Kreuznach and head toward Bernkastel-Kues. Sohren is at the bottom of a triangle formed by routes B-421, B-327 and B-50.

Start: Bürgerhalle **Saturday:** 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. (6 and 10 km) and 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. (20 km) **Sunday:** 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. (6 and 10 km) and 6 a.m. to noon (20 km) **Trails:** Fairly hilly, woods and fields **Award:** From previous events.

Wiesbaden-Naurod — This Sunday-only walk offers scenic trails in the Taunus region north of Wiesbaden. From Wiesbaden follow B-455 to Naurod. From points east take Autobahn 3 toward Köln, exit at Wiesbaden/Niedernhausen and continue a short two kilometers to the start.

Start: Kellershopfhalle **Sunday:** 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. (6 and 10 km) and 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. (20 km) **Trails:** Hilly, woods **Award:** From previous events.

Weekend of July 17-18

Arbergen-Panrod — This event is north of Wiesbaden in the scenic Naturpark Rhein-Taunus and well worth the drive time. Take Autobahn 3's Bad Camberg exit and an unnumbered road leading to Panrod. From Wiesbaden, alternately take B-417 toward Limburg and follow an un-

numbered road to Kettenschwalbach and Panrod.

Start: Palmbachhalle **Saturday and Sunday:** 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. (6 and 10 km), 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. (20 km) and 6-11 a.m. (30 km) **Trails:** Hilly, woods **Award:** From previous events.

Spall — This event offers an unusual late Friday afternoon trail in the area roughly between Idar-Oberstein and Bad Kreuznach. Drivers should pick up B-41 and head toward Waldböckelheim. Turn onto an unnumbered road heading north through Bockenau and Allenfeld to Spall. IVV directional signs will be posted from the Autobahn 61 exits of Rheinböllen and Waldlaubersheim.

Start: Fest tent **Friday:** 3-7 p.m. (6 and 10 km) **Saturday:** 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. (6, 10 and 20 km) **Sunday:** 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. (6 and 10 km) and 7 a.m. to noon (20 km) **Trails:** Fairly hilly, fields and woods **Award:** Children's outdoor chair.

Weekend of July 24-25

Frankfurt-Goldstein — This event is sponsored by the German-American VSV Frankfurt 1977 volksmarch club and easy to reach via car or public transportation. Take the Frankfurt-Niederrad (Bürostadt) exit of Autobahn 5. This exit is available northbound only. Southbound drivers should reverse direction at Frankfurter Kreuz and double back. Follow IVV directional signs to the start.

Start: Carl-von-Weinberg-Schule **Saturday:** 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. (6, 11 and 20 km) **Sunday:** 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. (6, 11 and 20 km) **Trails:** Mostly flat and stroller-friendly, woods **Award:** Waist pack.

Weekend of July 31-Aug. 1

Wiesbaden-Gräselberg — Enjoy scenic trails offering quality time with family or friends at this event. Take the Wiesbaden-Dotzheim exit of Autobahn 643 toward Schierstein and follow IVV signs to the start.

Start: Sportgelände des SC Gräselberg on Wörtherseestrasse **Saturday and Sunday:** 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. (5 and 10 km) and 8 a.m. to noon (20 km) **Trails:** Fairly hilly, woods and fields **Award:** From previous events.



Things to do

Western Night in K-town

The American-German Business Club will host American Western Night at the Kaiserslautern Garden Show July 17 from 7 p.m. to midnight. Country music, square dancing, rodeo rides, children's entertainment and American culinary specialties are on the program. Admission is €8 for adults, €5 for students and free to children under 12. Proceeds will go to the club's scholarship program. For details email kaiserslautern@agbc.de.

Calling all idols

The 26th Area Support Group will host a Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers "American Idol-style" competition Aug. 14. Tryouts will be held July 17 at Heidelberg's Patrick Henry Village from noon to 7 p.m. Aspiring stars can audition for \$10. Call mil 373-7809 for details.

Palatia Jazz Festival

The Branford Marsalis Quartet will play the Köth Wanscheid'scher Schlosspark in Dirmsten July 17, **Pibo Marquez and Luciano Di Natale** bring Latin rhythms to Schloss Wachenheim Aug. 6. and the **Till Brönner Band** play the Klosterruine Limburg in Bad Dürkheim Aug. 7. For information and tickets go to www.palatajazz.de.

Ironman triathlon

The city of Frankfurt will host the annual Opel Ironman Germany Triathlon July 11. Close to 2,000 competitors will swim, bike and run through the city and surrounding towns, finishing their race at the Römerberg.

'Kat and the Kings' on stage

Frankfurt's English Theater presents the musical "Kat and the Kings" through July 16. Call the theater at civ (069) 2423 1614 for reservations.

Sports and leisure



Children shoot rubber-tipped crossbows and rifles, one of many amusements available on the Hessenpark grounds.



Pfc. Henry Morant of Giessen's 16th Engineer Battalion poses for a photo with Hessian Minister President Roland Koch (left) and Karl-Heinz Weimar, the state finance minister.

State of Hessen fetes Soldiers, families

Story and photos by
David Ruderman

104th Area Support Group Public
Affairs Office

The State of Hessen hosted more than 2,000 American Soldiers and family members at Hessenpark June 24 for a midsummer fete.

"I welcome you to this traditional place," said Hessen Minister President Roland Koch, in remarks opening the Hessian-American Soldiers' Families Day activities. "We know there are many of you with Soldiers far away, with little information, but knowing they are facing danger, a difficult situation, some of them injured. It is maybe not a situation most people would be inclined to festivities, but we want to do what we can to make your being here as comfortable as possible, to see there are lots of people who want to communicate with you and show friendship."

"Germany over the years has been a great host and a great friend to the U.S. military, and Hessen in particular," said U.S. Ambassador Daniel R. Coats. "This is not an easy time for our Soldiers and their families who have answered the call to maintain freedom and to bring freedom to places far away. We welcome those who are back from Iraq. Our hearts and prayers go out to those downrange and hope to see them coming back in a few days."

"While today is a great day, it is not a unique day," said Brig. Gen. Vincent E. Boles, commander of the Wiesbaden-based 3rd Corps Support Command, representing V Corps and U.S. Army Europe. "What you see here today is the



Parents and children enjoy activities beside a reconstructed windmill in the park.

support you've seen since the deployment to Iraq and since 9-11. On behalf of Soldiers and families, I say we are going to remember what you've done for us, and we're going to take that memory back to every state in America where we come from."

Historical setting

A wide range of food and beverages were available free of charge to the American guests, as were amusements for children and tours in English of the Hessenpark grounds. The park is a repository of traditional Hessian architecture, agriculture, husbandry and crafts. It is made up of original dwellings and infrastructure salvaged during the postwar boom that saw the disappearance of much of the traditional life of farmers and small towns.

"I like it—it's very interesting," said Sgt. Thaddous Carr of 596th Maintenance Company. "You need to come here basically to appreciate it, walk around and look at the sights."

"It's beautiful," said Pfc. Patrick Carrasquillo, also of 596th Maintenance. "Everything's free, and I just like the scenery. I just can't wait till my wife gets here."

"It's a new thing to see," said Ella Garlits, strolling the grounds with her husband, Staff Sgt. David Garlits of Wiesbaden's 27th Transportation Battalion, "just the crafts, the old buildings, the culture. Especially with the political climate between the two nations, it's good to put that aside, be friends and enjoy the day together."

"It's nice — you can relax out here," said Pfc. Henry Morant of

Tim Hummel, of Hanau's 1-501st Aviation Battalion, was still on duty in Iraq. "I just thought it was so generous of the Germans to do this—all the freebies and things for the kids to do."

"We have had a really nice time. This is more than what I expected," said Aida Notto, whose husband, Vincent Notto, was still downrange with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of Giessen's 2-3rd Field Artillery. She relaxed on the grass with their children, 4-year-old Aisha and 8-year-old Shawn.

"I went walking around a little, the scenic route," said Pfc. Matthew Welch of 77th Maintenance Company. "There were about five of us, and it's really fun. The barbecue is surprisingly good. It's pretty much talking to friends from downrange, catching up."

Giessen's 16th Engineer Battalion, after posing for a photo with Koch and Karl-Heinz Weimar, the Hessian state minister of finance.

"It's really neat. I didn't even know this place existed," said Meredith Hummel, helping her 14-month-old daughter Maren negotiate a slice of fresh bread. Her husband, Capt.

"I like it because it's a lot more laid back than the States," said Spc. Derek McCarthy of 77th Maintenance, who cruised the grounds with his buddies. "There are lots of hills and valleys; it keeps your mind right and releases a lot of stress."

Like many Soldiers, McCarthy was still thinking about Iraq.

"I felt like some of the missions I was on served a purpose," said McCarthy. "I'd be ready to go again. I was on the road every day doing the mail mission. Yeah, you got shot at every day, but it was worth it even though it was scary at the time."

"It's far behind; it's way back there," said Spc. Charlotte Jackson of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Corps Support Command, waving one hand while holding a small steak in the other.

In addition to the tours and culinary treats, guests enjoyed a German jazz band and a traditional Hessian dance troupe. The 76th Army Band and the Galaxy Cheerleaders performed as well.

"What I like best is the environment and being back in the free world," said Pfc. Barbara Mobley of 596th Maintenance Company.

"I think it's wonderful," said Pfc. Heather Monet Jefferson, also of the 596th. "It's a great experience, just to enjoy the free time."

"The time to make friends is before you need them," said Deanie Dempsey, wife of Maj. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, 1st Armored Division commander. "I think if that's ever been true, it is in this case. You've shown us great generosity and support over this year, and we will always be grateful."