

Herald Union



Vol. X, No. 25

Serving the military communities of the 104th Area Support Group

Sept. 16, 2003

Inside



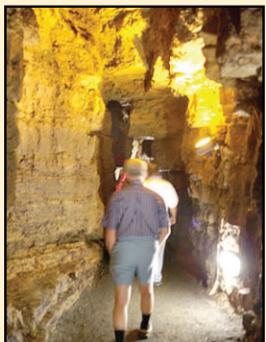
Baghdad family reunion
A Giessen soldier celebrates a get-together of relatives in Iraq. See page 3.



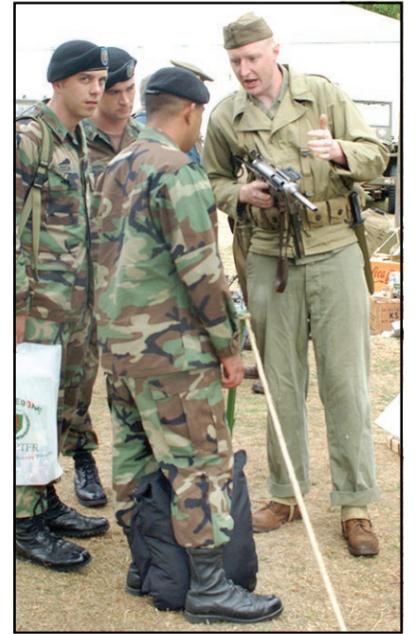
Welcome home
Hanau soldiers and families celebrate the homecoming of 71st Ordnance Company soldiers. See page 4.



Scenic Steinau
Fairy tale town offers adventures above and underground for all ages. See pages 14 and 15.



School back in full swing
Young people across the 104th Area Support Group returned to class Sept. 2. See page 27 for a look at the new school year.



Photos by Anemone Rueger

Army past, present and future

Models display Women's Army Corps uniforms, circa 1943, at the 2003 Land Combat Expo in Heidelberg. This year's expo, held at the Village Pavilion from Sept. 9-11, once again featured a wide range of exhibits, speakers and workshops offering professional development opportunities for U.S. Army Europe soldiers, civilians and family members. Visitors had the chance to see the latest in innovative technology and learn more about serving with U.S. Army Europe. Photo right: a re-enactment member wearing a World War II Military Police uniform describes his weapon to visitors. On Sept. 11 guest speaker Maj. Gen. Franklin L. Hagenbeck, 10th Mountain Division commander, described the link between the terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, combat in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom. As a result of the U.S.-led war on terrorism "al-Qaida is no longer a corporate entity ... they have the capability to carry out small attacks, but on the large scale we can handle them." Speakers reminded listeners that continued vigilance is vital to making the world safe for future generations.

Army transformation

Installation Management Agency leaders describe ongoing efforts to improve quality of life for soldiers, families

By Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Army transformation, the civilian personnel system, and ongoing efforts to standardize and streamline operations within the U.S. Army Installation Management Agency were among topics addressed during the 2003 Garrison Commanders' Conference in San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 3-5.

Area/base support battalion commanders and command sergeants major from Baumholder, Wiesbaden, Giessen and Hanau were among some 340 IMA leaders who gathered to discuss ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for soldiers and families in installations around the world. Individuals from each of the agency's seven regions were also recognized for outstanding achievement during an IMA Stalwart Award ceremony.

"We gather today as one organization, one corporation, that can truly plan for the future," said Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., deputy IMA director, in welcoming leaders to the conference. Sakowitz described IMA's establishment in October 2002 and strides taken in its initial year to enhance the capability of the Army's some 181 installations worldwide to tackle all mobilization requirements while ensuring the well-being of soldiers, families and civilians as soldiers

deploy.

"Thanks for making it through the tough, first year," said Maj. Gen. Anders B. Aadland, IMA director.

"We say 181 installations, but it's more like 200-300 with many smaller sites included," said Aadland, explaining that the challenge of installation managers worldwide is to "take limited resources and be more effective."

"It still remains to be seen how we will handle military construction issues as the Department of Defense takes on Army restructuring issues in Europe," said Brig. Gen. Guy C. Swan III, chief of the Army's Legislative Liaison.

"We must continue to change," said Philip W. Grone, principal assistant deputy under secretary of defense for installations and environment. "What we've seen in the last decade is nothing short of extraordinary. ... Our military capabilities have become more lethal and agile. ... Our installations need to change in order for transformation to succeed.

"We have never before looked at our overseas installations in the context that we are looking at them today," said Grone, explaining that while Congress awaits guidance from Pentagon officials on future needs, the Overseas Basing Review is not being rushed. "We're still examining all options in the Overseas Basing Review because the secretary of defense wants it done right."

Another part of the force review is looking at places where joint stationing may be a viable option such as an Army unit serving at an Air Force base, Grone said.

Deciding on the future shape of the U.S. Army in Europe is a very complicated process with many considerations, said Russell Hall, IMA Europe Region director, explaining that predicting when the process would be completed is not

See Army transformation on page 3



IMA Europe Stalwart
Patricia Simoes

Commentary

Second thoughts

Touched by veterans' pride, patriotism

Commentary by K.C. Bertling
221st Base Support Battalion installation volunteer coordinator

As an installation volunteer coordinator I meet often with a wide variety of groups to promote volunteerism and foster connections within the community. I recently visited an organization that is very prominent in our society — the Veterans of Foreign War.



The particular meeting I attended was with VFW Post 27, based in Wiesbaden, and I was very much touched by their patriotism. Generally they meet once a month in a local restaurant to gather for dinner and a few beers or a glass of wine and discuss issues. They begin their official meeting with a prayer and the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

While many are still active duty soldiers, most members are retired military working in Europe as Department of the Army civilians or contractors. Some may have retired twice, once from active duty and once from government employment, and now enjoy their golden years. Whatever their status or which stage of life they are experiencing, I must say their love for America has never faded away — and never will.

They're so proud to share the war stories and recount the funny things that have happened to them during their prime years spent as American soldiers. We all have memories and fun stories to share, but theirs are filled with courage and the spirit of America. I could see the patriotism and pride in their eyes — they were willing to give their lives for America, and I know they would defend her again to the last breath.

They will never be ashamed to stand up for America in public places — to say a prayer or pay tribute to our flag, the flag that represents America, a country that attracts all humankind to her banner.

On the way home my eyes filled with tears of joy and pride for being an American and having had an opportunity to sit with them at their dinner table. I would like to say my hat's off to the VFW for their patriotism and continuous service to America. What a blessed group of people they are.

Anyone interested in more information about the VFW can contact Joe Mulligan, VFW Post 27 commander, at Joe.Mulligan@104asg.army.mil.

Leaders must take care of soldiers, family members

By Gen. B.B. Bell
U.S. Army Europe commander

Thousands of dedicated U.S. Army Europe soldiers are currently deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Liberia and elsewhere. The family members of most of these soldiers have remained in USAREUR to await their return. Some, however, have chosen to return to the continental United States for extended periods. This affects the soldier's cost of living allowance entitlement.



Deployed soldiers continue to collect their full COLA entitlements unless one or more of their family members return to CONUS for more than 30 consecutive days. If some of a soldier's family members are in CONUS for more than 30 consecutive days, the soldier's COLA entitlement must be reduced proportionally on the

31st day. If all of a soldier's family members are in CONUS for more than 30 consecutive days, the soldier's COLA entitlement must be reduced to the "without dependents" rate on the 31st day.

Whenever a soldier's family members return to CONUS for more than 30 consecutive days, commanders must submit DA Form 4187 to reduce the soldier's COLA entitlements to authorized levels. Similarly, when family members return from CONUS, the COLA should be adjusted back to original levels. Commanders are required to establish procedures to ensure that the unit processes the DA Form 4187 as required.

Commanders and leaders have a legal and ethical duty to take care of deployed soldiers and their family members. This duty includes following applicable regulations governing COLA entitlements and adjusting those entitlements when required. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service will eventually recoup improper COLA payments — often when the soldier is least prepared to handle a sudden loss of pay. This ultimately hurts rather than helps the soldier. We can avoid this by ensuring that our deployed soldiers are paid correctly. It's a command responsibility.

Did you know? Everything rides on tire safety

Studies of tire safety show that maintaining proper tire pressure, observing tire and vehicle load limits, avoiding road hazards and regularly inspecting tires for cuts, slashes and other irregularities are the most effective steps drivers can take to avoid such tire failures as tread separation, blowouts and flats.

Paying attention to vehicle tire conditions can improve vehicle handling, improve fuel economy, lengthen tire service life and, most importantly, protect drivers and passengers from breakdowns and accidents.

Properly maintained tires improve the steering, stopping, traction and load-carrying capability of vehicles. Underinflated tires and overloaded vehicles are a major cause of tire failure. Maintain proper tire pressure, observe tire and vehicle load limits, avoid road hazards and regularly inspect tires to avoid flats and other tire failures.

Tire information placards and vehicle certification labels contain important information regarding tire and load limits. They are permanently attached to vehicle door edges, door posts, glove box doors or inside trunk lids. Drivers should be familiar with the important information they contain including recommended tire size, tire inflation pressure, vehicle capacity weight and front and rear axle weight ratings.

Tire inflation pressure is the level of air pressure in a tire that provides its load-carrying capacity. Tire inflation pressure indicates the pounds per square inch required to properly inflate the tire. It affects the overall performance of the vehicle and is a critical factor in driving safety.

Manufacturers of passenger vehicles and light trucks

determine tire inflation pressure based on a vehicle's design load limit, the greatest amount of weight a vehicle can carry safely, and the vehicle's tire size. The figure is sometimes referred to as the recommended cold inflation pressure. Because tires are designed to be used on more than one type of vehicle, manufacturers also list the maximum permissible inflation pressure on the tire sidewall. This number indicates the maximum amount of pressure that should be applied to the tire under normal driving conditions.

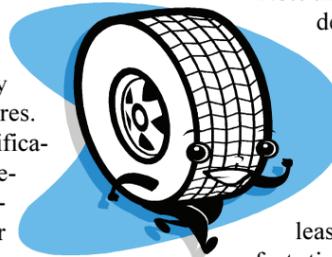
Most tires naturally lose pressure over time. They can also experience sudden loss of pressure when driven over potholes or when striking a curb during parking procedures.

Note that with radial tires it is usually not possible to determine underinflation by visual inspection.

Check tire pressure at least once a month to be sure that proper pressure is maintained.

A tire pressure gauge should be used to determine tire inflation pressure. To properly measure inflation pressure, take readings after the vehicle has been at rest for at least three hours. Heat generated by driving affects tire pressure, and an accurate reading cannot be made immediately after the vehicle comes to rest.

If tire pressure is too high, slowly release air by gently pressing on the tire valve stem with the edge of the tire gauge until correct pressure is achieved. If tire pressure is too low, note the difference between the measured pressure and the recommended pressure. The difference is the number of pounds of air pressure that must be added. Check all tires to make sure they have the same amount of air pressure, except in cases where the front and rear tires are supposed to have different amounts of pressure. (Courtesy of 104th ASG DoL)



Herald Union

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Newsflash

AKO passwords

Defense Department employees are reminded they will soon be required to use their Common Access Card to log on to the email networks. To do so they must have an Army Knowledge Online account which requires a six to eight digit Personal Identification Number. People who need to establish an account should visit the U.S. Army website at www.army.mil, click on "Army Knowledge Online" and follow directions to log in.

SSSCs closing

The Self Service Supply Centers in Hanau and Baumholder will be closed Sept. 29-30. The centers will resume normal hours Oct. 1.

Davis Award

Lt. Col. Patrick D. Sargent, 421st Medical Evacuation Battalion commander, is the first U.S. Army service member to be awarded the prestigious General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Award by Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. In the past the award has always gone to Air Force personnel. It is presented annually to the field grade officer who has exhibited outstanding performance in professional and community service. The award honors Davis, the Air Force's first black general. "Being honored with this award is absolutely one of the highlights of my military career," said Sargent. "Gen. Davis was the preeminent officer, gentleman and combat commander — being honored in his likeness with this award is a very humbling experience." (*Europe Regional Medical Command Public Affairs Office*)

Case lot sale

Commissary shoppers can reap savings during the third annual worldwide case lot sale Sept. 19-21. Check with your local commissary for exact dates of the two-day sale (some stores are closed on Sundays).

Counseling Centers Open House Sept. 25

All four Counseling Centers in the 104th Area Support Group will hold Open Houses Sept. 25 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in celebration of National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month. Learn more about substance abuse treatment available in your community. The centers are located at the Baumholder Health Clinic (Wing 8744, mil 485-1710), Friedberg Ray

Barracks Building 3635 (mil 324-1710), Hanau Pioneer Kaserne, Building 3 (mil 322-8911) and Wiesbaden Army Airfield Building 1526 (mil 337-1710).

Girl Scout leader sought

Girl Scouts USA of Giessen and Friedberg seek an overseas committee chairperson. Call Marcia Smith at civ (0641) 44553, (0162) 158 7501 or the USA Girl Scouts Overseas-North Atlantic at civ (0621) 487 7025.

Medals, decorations

Army veterans and their families will now have an easier time tracking and receiving medals and decorations thanks to an automated system used by the Clothing and Heraldry Product Support Integration Directorate. The new web-based system eliminates extensive paperwork, reduces processing time and allows veterans to find out the status of requests or to make address changes online at <http://veteranmedals.army.mil>. Requests for medals are initiated through the National Personnel Records Center at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>. (*AMSSB Public Affairs Office*)

Officer courses

The 7th Army Reserve Command's 3747th Multifunctional Training Brigade offers accredited non-resident Command and General Officer Courses at various locations in Germany to active and reserve component officers. The course consists of four sequential phases over a two-year period. The Officer Education System Battalion conducts Phases I and III in weekly evening or monthly weekend sessions, which run from October to May of each academic year. Phases II and IV are conducted during two week cycles in June of each academic year. Officers must be in the rank of major or captain (promotable) to qualify for the course. For more information call Lt. Col. Gary Cleland at mil 466-2931, Lt. Col. Tom Ball at mil 373-7432 or Lt. Col. Bob Isbell at civ (06151) 69-7256. (*7th ARCOM Release*)

MP Ball Oct. 4

The U.S. Army Europe's annual Military Police Ball will be held Oct. 4 at 5:45 p.m. at Heidelberg's Village Pavilion. Call Lt. Meghan Giddings at mil 381-8172.

Baghdad reunion

Family joins Giessen soldier in Iraq

By Sgt. Mark S. Rickert
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

When their plane touched down in Damascus, Syria, Teresa and Lateef Al-Saraji met a friend waiting on the hood of his run-down taxicab. The car didn't look promising, and the curtains over the windows brought the dangers into perspective.

They crossed into Iraq and moved on toward Baghdad. The car coughed and sputtered most of the time. There weren't many gas stations along the way to refuel the car, and it was too dangerous for the passengers to get out and stretch their legs. Even with the odds stacked against them, the couple finally arrived safely in Baghdad.

It must have seemed strange to the 1st Armored Division soldiers at Camp Ultimo when fellow soldier Sgt. Kristin L. Cruikshank, a food preparation specialist with the 16th Engineer Battalion, met her mother and stepfather at the front gates of the camp.

It all began 13 years ago while Cruikshank's mother was having lunch at a restaurant in Columbus, Ohio. Teresa met Iraqi refugee Lateef Al-Saraji while he busied tables. Lateef had fled Iraq during the first Gulf War, and got the job shortly after coming to America.

Teresa and Lateef soon married, and for the next decade Lateef could visit Iraq only in his dreams. Because of Saddam Hussein's border policy for refugees, Lateef thought he would never see his family again. That all changed when his stepdaughter's unit moved into Baghdad.

When Cruikshank arrived in theater, she took the opportunity to



Photo by Sgt. Mark S. Rickert

Sgt. Kristin L. Cruikshank, a food preparation specialist with the 16th Engineer Battalion, stands with her mother, stepfather and uncle after reuniting in Baghdad Sept 3.

meet the family she'd seen only in pictures. She met with an interpreter, and gave him a phone number where her in-laws in Baghdad could be found. A day later Cruikshank's Iraqi relatives came to the camp.

"The interpreter couldn't stay long," Cruikshank said. "So after he left we spent hours struggling to communicate."

After picking through a translator's dictionary, they learned they could communicate better through pictures, and soon they were taking turns with a notepad and a pencil. "We drew all kinds of pictures," said Cruikshank, laughing at the thought. "That worked a lot better than the dictionary."

By the time Cruikshank's mother and stepfather arrived, she and her Iraqi relatives were well acquainted. When they all met at the front gates, the rest of the camp watched in amazement.

"When I saw her, I hugged her, and I didn't want to let go," said Teresa. "The soldiers just watched

us with their mouths hanging open."

"I felt that they've been watching over her and protecting her," said Teresa. "I was really scared when I found out that Kristin was going to Iraq. But when I learned that the family was close, it made me feel a lot better."

Now after a decade of strife the Al-Saraji family is together for the very first time. For Lateef, things couldn't get much better. "It's like a dream come true," he said. "I think I'm still in shock."

The reunion won't last forever, and Cruikshank will have to say goodbye to her mother and stepfather soon. As for the rest of her family — they'll be sticking close together. Thanks to some string pulling by Cruikshank, her Iraqi family has a shop set up at Camp Ultimo.

"I'm glad that they're watching out for her," said Teresa. "I feel like they can protect her here and keep her safe. It makes me feel better, knowing that my family is close together."

Army transformation

Continued from page 1
possible at this time.

A revised civilian personnel system was another topic at the conference. "DoD's new National Security Personnel System would no longer be step- or time-based, but rather based on performance," said Rita Barnum, chief of IMA's Civilian Personnel Branch.

"IMA is leading the Army's transformation," said Geoffrey Prosch, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Army for installations and the environment. "I can't think of a more important mission today than what you are doing," said Prosch, adding that before the

establishment of IMA "there was no synchronization.

"Your installations are the nucleus. They are also battle stations because that's where the troops mobilize and the families remain and live," said Prosch. "Our goal is to eliminate inadequate housing for our soldiers and families by 2007."

Privatized housing

"About 82 percent of continental United States-based Army family housing will be privatized," said Grone.

Other news from the conference included word that overseas contracting commands would be incor-

porated into the Army Contracting Agency this October and that users of Army information technology would be the recipients of increased bandwidth resulting in faster service and more secure networks by 2006.

The conference included an awards banquet Sept. 4 recognizing 34 outstanding nominees from IMA — individuals singled out for outstanding performance and dedication to excellence during IMA's inaugural year. Patricia Simoes, 221st Base Support Battalion public affairs officer, was honored as this year's IMA Europe Region Stalwart winner.

News and features

71st Ordnance soldiers back from Iraq

By Dennis Johnson

414th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

After a six-month deployment, the eight-hour delay in their expected arrival didn't seem to bother or surprise 79 soldiers of the 71st Ordnance Company. The company returned to Hanau's Hutier Kaserne Aug. 29 around 1 a.m., not the scheduled 5 p.m. arrival time because their aircraft was delayed after its initial loading in Kuwait City.

Nine soldiers, mostly traveling with Space Available status, had to stay behind. Their gear had to be located and removed before the aircraft could finally take off for Germany. The jet landed at Ramstein Air Force Base at 8:30 p.m. and the soldiers boarded a bus for the last leg of their long journey home.

About 50 family members, friends and soldiers gathered at Hutier Kaserne around midnight to welcome the soldiers home. On

arrival the soldiers enjoyed refreshments provided by the Family Readiness Group, and were welcomed by Beth Johansen, wife of the 485th Corps Support Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Paul D. Brown.

The 71st Ordnance deployed March 4, originally to Kuwait, then to Logistical Support Area Bushmaster and finally to LSA Anaconda, which is located at Balad, about 80 kilometers north of Baghdad. "The 71st Ordnance is a missile maintenance company. We're backup support for the 1st Armored Division and support for the 1-27th Field Artillery based in Babenhausen," said Capt. Kevin Nix, company commander. "We work on Multiple Launcher Rocket Systems, specifically the Tow, Dragon and Avenger launcher systems." The full company comprises 129 troops, he said.

"Seventy-nine soldiers came back last night; others had come ahead due to PCS and

ETS. We had 30 personnel located with the 1-27th FA, and 11 are still there. They were slated to return in October, but now due to mission requirements they might stay as long as March," said Nix.

Before returning to Germany the soldiers attended a redeployment briefing organized by Army Community Service. The chaplain in charge raised "the issues of redeployment and reintegration into the family. He recommended not to set your expectations too high, to spend time alone with your spouse and each child, and to make some time for yourself alone. The chaplain also discussed alcohol issues for the single soldiers who might not have anyone in Germany to meet them, and warned that it would take time to establish a new routine," said Nix.

In their first week home the 71st Ordnance will go through medical screenings, debriefings and spend time getting their

personal needs attended to. Soldiers will retrieve their personal goods from storage and pick up their cars at the storage lots. A unit-movement officer will make arrangements for the company's vehicles and equipment to be sent to Hanau. Until their equipment arrives the soldiers will have two weeks of leave to reintegrate with their families and just decompress. After the two weeks leave their equipment should arrive and they'll "make an inventory and complete the process of standing the company up again," said Nix.

"It was an eye-opener for a lot of soldiers. They were so glad to be back with their families, who they were separated from for six months. They also have a great feeling of pride in their duty. But a piece is still missing, with part of the 485th still there," said Nix. The remaining 485th CSB soldiers will stay in Iraq until March 2004.

Local firemen answer call to support Grafenwöhr

By Cassandra Kardeke

221st Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

When the call came, the Wiesbaden Army Airfield Fire Department was ready.

Already on alert status in response to the record heat wave and drought that struck Europe last month, Wiesbaden firefighters were ready to go Aug. 19 when range fires at the Grafenwöhr training areas resulted in a call for help.

"Range fires are not an unusual thing here at Graf. We have between 50-100 range fires in a normal year," said Herbert Proessel, Grafenwöhr fire chief. However this summer's unusually dry weather and the resulting fires put an extremely heavy burden on Proessel's small fire department of 40 people.

"As soon as we received word they needed help, we took a look at our situation and what we could afford to offer," said Daniel Corzelius, Wiesbaden Army Airfield's airfield acting fire chief at the time. In less than 16 hours help was on the way. Two trucks manned by Bjoern Weirich, Alexander Wuest, Heiko Hess, Joerg

Spangenberg and Klaus Strieder headed east immediately.

"We had one truck to spare, but after receiving approval we stopped off in Hanau on our way to pick up a pumper truck provided by the 414th Base Support Battalion," said Corzelius.

Within 15 minutes of their arrival the Wiesbaden firemen were put to the task and began putting out their first range fire. It took over six hours. The firemen remained in Graf for eight days assisting around the clock in capacities ranging from filling water tanks to physically putting out range fires.

"It was a new experience for us, and we learned a lot about forest and wild fires during our assistance," said Wuest.

"This was something completely different for our firemen because they don't usually handle what Graf firefighters go through on a regular basis," said Corzelius.

The Wiesbaden firefighters returned home tired and weary Aug. 24, saying they would not forget the experience, but most of all the friendships made with fellow firefighters they were able to help.



Photo by Dennis Johnson

Never to be forgotten

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) George Miller (at lectern), 4th Brigade chaplain, delivers the invocation during a Sept. 11 commemoration ceremony held at Hanau's Pioneer Chapel. Flags flew at half-mast across the 104th Area Support Group as communities conducted ceremonies to mark the second anniversary of the terror attacks on the United States, remember the fallen and rededicate the nation to the struggle at hand.

Program helps workers cope with range of problems

By Timothy Block

414th Base Support Battalion Employee Assistance Program coordinator

Employees experiencing problems that affect their job performance now have a place to turn for help.

The 104th Area Support Group now has an Employee Assistance Program to work with people who have more than just alcohol or drug abuse problems. EAP coordinators are in place to address issues such as divorce, finances and the demands of elderly parents that can affect job performance. Coordinators provide assistance, coaching and referral to other services.

"The whole goal really is to increase productivity in the workplace because once you take care of some of these

problems, then people can work more effectively," said Carrie Hicks, EAP coordinator for the 284th Base Support Battalion.

The EAP developed as part of the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1986 to provide test-designated position employees with positive resulting drug tests, as well as others with drug and alcohol problems, a place to go for help, treatment and referral, said Hicks. It is open to civilian employees and family members — basically anyone entitled to on-base health care.

Individuals can enter EAP through supervisor referral, as a test-designated position employee with a positive drug test, or by contacting the office directly. The latter is best, said Hicks, because almost anything discussed with a coordinator is confidential and will not appear in an employee's official file.

"That's the big selling point of the program: its confidentiality," said Hicks.

A supervisor may use the EAP to assist employees who are experiencing changes in job performance or behavior. "It's our role at that time to sit down with the employee and find out what's going on," she said.

Once an employee contacts the EAP, he or she decides what needs to be done in coordination with the coordinator. Options include short-term counseling, long-term treatment or referral to another agency. If an employee requires medical treatment and carries private insurance, EAP coordinators can work with the insurance company.

For more information about EAP or to receive assistance contact your community Army Substance Abuse Program.

Diploma mill scams target soldiers

By Cassandra Kardeke
221st Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

You know the old adage: "If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is."

Unfortunately, sometimes the sound of a good thing is just too hard to pass up, as it was for several 1st Armored Division soldiers deployed to Southwest Asia.

"Several soldiers have been scammed by diploma mills when seeking means for continuing their education," said Eugene Hickman, director of the Wiesbaden Education Center.

These so-called diploma mills promise soldiers a degree without doing any course work. Soldiers are promised college credit for

life experience and are told that they can obtain a bachelor's or master of science degree in less than six months, for a fee. There's the catch — for a fee.

"The bottom line is that no valid school would ever offer a degree under those circumstances," said Hickman.

The two schools that have attracted attention use names similar to those of well known institutions of higher learning. These are Trinity College and University and Ashington University. "Trinity does not list an address on its website. This is a warning in itself to anyone considering enrollment," said Hickman. Trinity also lists the Association for Online Academic Excellence as an accreditation organization; however, accord-

ing to Hickman, this organization is non-existent. Ashington's diploma mill is located in Metairie, La., and can be found as a link through the Trinity College home page. It also claims accreditation from the same non-existent agency.

"Soldiers need to be reminded that credentials or course work or a combination of the two from an unaccredited school will not translate into promotion points, nor be accepted by an accredited school," Hickman said. It is also illegal for a soldier to submit a diploma from unaccredited schools. A list of accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education can be found at www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/accreditation/natl agencies.html.

If you don't know whether the education source you are using is a diploma mill or not, ask yourself these questions:

- ⌘ Can a degree be purchased?
- ⌘ Is little, if any, attendance required of students?
- ⌘ Are few assignments required?
- ⌘ Is a very short period of time required to earn a degree?
- ⌘ Does it have a name similar to well-known colleges and universities?
- ⌘ Are degrees based solely on experience or resume review?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, it is more than likely a diploma mill. Don't be taken in. If in doubt contact your local Education Center.

Actor visits fans at airfield

By Cassandra Kardeke
221st Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Several fans and movie buffs got a chance to meet actor Gary Sinise during a short visit to Wiesbaden Army Airfield Sept. 3.

Thanks to the Armed Forces Entertainment program and the United Service Organizations, soldiers, civilians and family members at several European installations, including patients at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, were able to meet and receive autographs from Sinise.

"This guy is my hero, and the fact that he's out here supporting us just makes me respect him even more," said Spc. Jerry Harris, 221st Base Support Battalion. Several fans felt the same way, which made

the wait at the dining facility worth while. "He seems just like an ordinary person. It was a pleasure to finally get to meet him," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Wanda Malvik, 1st Armored Division Legal Office.

"Luckily I had the time to do this. It feels good to support our soldiers, especially during this time," said Sinise.

Well known for his portrayal of Lt. Dan in the movie "Forrest Gump," Sinise first began visiting troops in Iraq through a Vanity Fair and USO tour earlier this summer. Knowing he would have extra time while attending a film festival in Italy, Sinise called the USO and asked to visit installations in Italy and Germany.

"I knew I didn't have to be back in the United States until the follow-

ing Friday for another film fest in New York, so I just asked the USO to hook me up," he said.

Although never having served in the military himself, Sinise has been a longtime supporter of the armed forces. During the early '80s Sinise's theater put on a production of "Tracers," which is based on soldiers' experiences during Vietnam. Sinise spent a lot of time with veterans to get a complete background for the production.

"I was just as involved as the cast of the production. We visited veterans hospitals and spoke to a lot of veterans before producing the play," he said.

Following that production Sinise auditioned for several military roles in movies such as "Platoon," but didn't receive a part until



Photo by Cassandra Kardeke
Raydene (right), Jacob (center) and Heather Wolney chat with actor Gary Sinise while he signs autographs at Wiesbaden Army Airfield Sept. 3.

the opportunity to portray Lt. Dan in "Forrest Gump."

"Everything I had learned about

soldiers and the time I had spent with veterans helped me build on the character of Lt. Dan," he said.



Photo by Beate Zuber

Labor Day European-style

While most American military families celebrated the nation's Labor Day, so too did local nationals who work for the U.S. government. During a Labor Day celebration of their own, local national employees throughout the 221st Base Support Battalion participated in a game of soccer at Mainz-Kastel Storage Station. For the past 35 years the Works Council has planned a Labor Day outing for local national employees to celebrate their service to the U.S. government.