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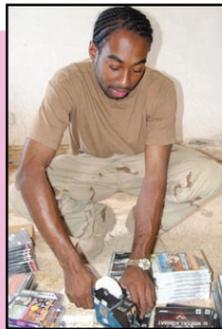
Reader feedback

"I'm not concerned so much about what the teachers are teaching, but what they'll be learning from their peers," said Giessen's Lisa Durhan in this week's survey on what parents should be concerned about regarding their children's education. See page 2.



Serving soldiers in Iraq

Baumholder's Demetrious Lott is one of many local civilian employees working alongside soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom. See page 7.



On the gridiron

High school football fans have been treated to some first-rate competition this month. See page 28.



Herald Union



Vol. X, No. 26

Serving the military communities of the 104th Area Support Group

Sept. 30, 2003

First troops get R&R

Frankfurt welcomes soldiers on leave from Iraqi Freedom

The first Operation Iraqi Freedom soldiers on Rest and Recuperation leave began arriving in Frankfurt Sept. 26.

Under the Department of Defense R&R program, service members and DoD civilians on 12-month orders in Iraq and Jordan supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom can take up to 15 days leave, excluding travel time, to visit family or friends in the United States or Europe. Participants have the choice of traveling free from Iraq to airports in Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Los Angeles or

Frankfurt. Travel beyond those points is at their own expense.

"I learned about my husband's homecoming yesterday," said Valerie Carter from Giessen, who was at Rhein-Main Air Base with her seven-week old baby. Her husband was among 20 or so service members from the 104th Area Support Group who landed at the airport after a six-hour flight from Kuwait and who will spend their 15 days of R&R leave in Europe. Other passengers went on a connecting flight to Baltimore-Washington

International Airport to join their families there. "We are very happy, and we are ready to go home," said Carter.

"The 104th ASG and its base support battalions will support the return of soldiers during the R&R leave, get them from the airport to their community, support them in any needs during their leave and get them back to the airport to get to their forward deployed units," said Lt. Col. Steve Steininger, 104th ASG chief of staff.

"We know that only a certain number of soldiers can go at any given time, but the opportunity will be made available to as many soldiers as possible," he said.

"Our mission here is keeping our soldiers safe and making sure they are getting the max out of the 15 days," said Col. George A. Latham II, 104th ASG commander. (Editor's note: See page 2 for a message about the R&R program from Gen. B.B. Bell, U.S. Army Europe commander.)

During the initial trial period up to 270 people a day will enjoy R&R travel, Central Command officials said. As the program matures it may be expanded to as many as 800 a day. Because of the small scale of the initial part of the program and the fact that some units will return to their home bases before everyone is able to participate, not everyone serving in Iraq will be able to

See R&R on page 3



Photo by Anemone Rueger

Spc. Mark A. Setser, 1-1st Cavalry, gets a look at his seven-week-old daughter, Mary, while his wife, Reni, greets him at Rhein-Main Air Base.



Photo by Karl Weisel

Reinhard Gross, administrative director of the Hessen Parliament, describes the legacy of Prof. Dr. Theodor Heuss, German federal president from 1949-1959, to 104th Area Support Group visitors.

Inside Hessen

State parliament visit underscores long-standing German-American ties

By Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group
Public Affairs Office

"I want to thank you very much for all of your contributions to the safety and security of our common alliance," said Norbert Kartmann, president of the Hessen Parliament. Kartmann expressed his gratitude for the strong bonds between the citizens of Germany and the United States while hosting a delegation of senior leaders from the 104th Area Support Group to Wiesbaden,

Hessen's capital, Sept. 17.

"Hessen, in its current form, was established in 1945 by the American military... so our American friends were, so to speak, its midwife," said Kartmann.

The parliamentary president was among several speakers, including Hessen Minister President Roland Koch, who underscored the close ties between the United States and Germany during the day-long Hessen seminar.

"Following the breakdown of

See Hessen on page 14

DoD computer users urged to update AKO data

By Karl Weisel and Bob Purتمان

104th Area Support Group and U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Offices

Department of Defense employees have a little more time to get their Army Knowledge Online accounts and passwords in order before being required to use their Common Access Cards to log on to military email. While it was announced several weeks ago that the technology and hardware would be in place by October of this year, officials are now shooting for the end of the year in U.S. Army Europe.

"We expect the system to be in place by

the second quarter of the fiscal year," said Holly Nichols, 104th Area Support Group systems administrator.

"DoD employees need to make sure they have an Army Knowledge Online account and that when they get their CAC cards they remember their AKO password and the AKO account email address," said Nichols.

While most users will use the format "first name.last name@us.army.mil" for the AKO email address, some users will have a slightly different address since some people have the same first and last names such as in the case

of "John Smith," she said. In that instance an employee might select an address such as "John.Smith2@us.army.mil."

The requirement for local national employees to also have CAC cards and AKO accounts has been temporarily put on hold while officials resolve privacy issues.

A DoD mandate requires all computer-using personnel to be capable of digitally signing email by Oct. 31, but because USAREUR has units stationed all over the globe the timeline has been pushed back, USAREUR officials said.

"Our first goal is Dec. 31, 2003," said



Happy Barranco, USAREUR Public Key Infrastructure program manager. "We will focus on the garrison communities in the central region first. We will then move to the Balkans where they have just implemented the CAC issuance capability. When units redeploy in theater we will process them. Units that are deploying will be set up before they leave."

People with questions about setting up an AKO account or obtaining a CAC card should call or stop by their local ID Card Office. To log on to Army Knowledge Online browse to the Army home page at www.army.mil.

Commentary

Feedback: What should parents be concerned about regarding their children's education?



Master Sgt. Salvador Martinez
284th Base Support Battalion

"Me as a parent, I want to make sure they get everything they need in school. I also want to make sure they do their homework and are serious about it. I tell my children to shoot high — to be good students. Parents are a big influence on their children. They show them what it takes to be successful."



Mary Ramsey
221st Base Support Battalion
Equal Employment Opportunity Office

"Involvement. Parents should be involved and know what their children are doing. If they have homework; assist them with that homework. Be involved in the school, go on field trips and know what's going on in their lives."



Sgt. Harold Babb
Company B, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry

"Making sure they get the basics down during the first couple of years and that the teacher is properly teaching the basics is important. If they don't get the basics down it will be a reoccurring thing that they'll have to deal with each year. Getting a good teacher early on is also important — one who teaches properly and from the heart."



Pam Dennis
39th Finance Battalion

"Here in Europe parents must make sure the schools are up on their classes, that students will earn the credits they need to compete in the States. Parents need to make sure the curriculum is up to standard so that their children can meet the standards back in the States."



Bianca Linen
Giessen family member

"I'm concerned about reading, about the learning and that they are well taken care of. I think in the States the schools are more strict and they learn more."

USAREUR commander describes R&R program

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



Now that the Department of Defense has approved a Rest and Recuperation Program for soldiers serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, it is necessary for us to ensure its success. Many soldiers involved in OIF will be given a well-earned opportunity to enjoy time out of harm's way.

If these soldiers arrive in the European theater for R&R, it is important the reception we give them and the support we provide is top-notch, efficient and commensurate with the dedication and service they have been giving our country.

Leaders will maintain absolute command and control (C2) of their soldiers as they move from the Iraqi theater of operations to the European theater. Rear detachment commanders will have representation at the aerial port of debarkation (APOD) when soldiers arrive and will establish positive accountability of and accept C2 over these personnel. Soldiers may reunite with their families at the APOD or ride back to the base support battalion drop-off point using the transportation provided once initial control and processing requirements are met.

Soldiers must understand their chain of command will monitor their safety, wellness and discipline during their R&R leave. Alcohol consumption is prohibited while in a travel status or while still in duty uniform. Legal consumption of alcoholic beverages will not occur until the soldier is in a leave status and out of duty uniform. Potential over-consumption of alcohol by soldiers on R&R, and the tragedies to which that can lead, must be of constant concern to our leaders.

Commanders must be prepared to receive

and support arriving personnel. Returning soldiers may need access to their privately owned vehicles and ready boxes in temporary storage. Single soldiers will need access to barracks rooms. Other soldiers may need help with obtaining transportation while on leave. Commanders and agencies must also be prepared to provide support to soldiers on R&R leave who are not based in USAREUR. In the next several days I will sign a memorandum officially establishing the full range of USAREUR command and subordinate unit support requirements for the R&R Program.

The U.S. Army Europe G1 has staff proponentcy for the R&R Program. The USAREUR homepage at <http://www.hqusareur.army.mil> provides a link to our R&R homepage. This link has been activated to coincide with DoD's R&R announcement. This link should be your first point of reference for obtaining current information on R&R. The R&R homepage has an R&R guide that will be given to soldiers and DoD civilians as they arrive in Europe. This guide provides important telephone numbers and information on support agencies and transportation available to personnel on R&R in Europe. The website also provides continuously updated information related to R&R procedures, entitlements and standards of conduct; and safety notices published by Headquarters, Department of the Army, the U.S. Central Command, Coalition Forces Land Component Command and USAREUR. Our goal is to keep deployed soldiers, civilians and their families informed on the R&R program and the support available to them in USAREUR.

Now that an R&R program is approved, early preparation and coordination are the key to ensuring soldiers have a successful R&R leave. I charge all leaders with making their soldiers' R&R a safe and happy event for them and their families. We will give these soldiers the support they require to enjoy their leave, restore their mental and physical stamina, and remain safe.

Letter to the editor: Women in the infantry

Dear Editor,

I was very disturbed when I read your article about a female filling an infantryman's role (Aug. 5 *Herald Union*, page, 11, "Female soldier fills infantryman's role"). How can you say a female is doing what an infantryman does by just standing there searching Iraqi women? An infantryman's job is not just standing there at a gate or patrols. The

infantry fought their way all the way to Baghdad fighting 24 hours a day, carrying hundred-pound rucks and moving under fire carrying wounded soldiers. How can any man or woman say that woman is ready for the infantry for just standing at a gate searching women?

Sgt. Bryan Morrow
Company A, 1-36th Infantry

Herald Union

The *Herald Union* is an authorized unofficial Army newspaper published under the provisions of AR 360-1 for members of the 104th Area Support Group. Contents of the *Herald Union* are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. government or the Department of Defense. The editorial content is the responsibility of the 104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office. No payment will be made for contributions. This is a biweekly publication printed by *The Stars and Stripes* in Griesheim, Germany. Our office is in Building 1205 on Hanau's Yorkhof Kaserne. Circulation is 13,000 copies. For advertising rates contact Sean Adams at civ (06155) 601-203, mil 349-8203 or adamss@mail.estripes.osd.mil.

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News flash

Give to CFC

It's that time of the year again to decide which charities of your choice you want your hard-earned money to help support. This year's Combined Federal Campaign Overseas runs from Oct. 1 to Dec. 10. Last year, contributors gave some \$11,267,754 in donations. See your local unit keyperson or visit the CFC-Overseas website at www.cfcoverseas.org.

Tobacco cessation course

The Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine-Europe Department of Health Promotion and Wellness will hold a tobacco cessation "train-the-trainer" course Oct. 16 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Welcome Center, Room 205, on Wiesbaden Army Airfield. Individuals must have been tobacco-free for at least six months and agree to conduct a class in their community at least once a year. Call mil 322-9509 or civ (06181) 88-9509.

Iraq casualty

Staff Sgt. Kevin C. Kimmerly of Battery B, 4-27th Field Artillery Regiment, was killed Sept. 15 in Baghdad, Iraq. Kimmerly, age 31, of North Creek, N.Y., was on patrol when his vehicle was hit by a rocket propelled grenade. Kimmerly died of his injuries.

New commander

Lt. Col. Ricky R. Sims will assume command of the American Forces Network Europe from Lt. Col. Michael G. Edrington in a ceremony at the AFNE Europe Headquarters in Frankfurt Oct. 7 at 10 a.m.

Health benefits briefing

Representatives of the American Foreign Service Protective Association, sponsors of the Foreign Service Benefit Plan, will give a briefing on their federal employee health benefits program, long-term care insurance, dental insurance, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and FedFlex Oct. 20 at 1 p.m. at Hanau's Evening Star Theater on Pioneer Kaserne.

Lighting campaign

Motor vehicle owners are encouraged to get their cars inspected in October before the onset of winter weather. During Germany's Motor Vehicle Lighting Equipment Campaign all auto repair shops on the economy, Army and Air Force Exchange Service Car Care Centers and U.S. Forces Vehicle Inspection Stations will provide free lighting inspections including headlights, tail lights fog lights, turn signals, windshield wipers, exhaust systems and tires. AAFES Car Centers with brake analyzers will also test brake systems. Any repair work to correct deficiencies will be charged to the vehicle owner. (IMA-E Public Affairs)

VA seeks former POWs

The Department of Veterans Affairs is asking former prisoners of war not currently using VA benefits to contact VA to find out if they may be eligible for disability compensation and other services. The administration is pressing to get even more compensation and medical care benefits for former POWs. For more information contact your local VA office or visit VA on the web at www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/POW. (VANEWS)

Help wanted

The 221st Base Support Battalion Equal Opportunity Office seeks volunteers for their Native American Special Emphasis Committee. Share your knowledge or passion of Native American culture with other people. Meetings are held every Tuesday at 9 a.m. on Wiesbaden Army Airfield. Call mil 337-5897 or civ (0611) 705-5897 for more information.



IACS deadline nears

New ID access system to go into service Oct. 20

Many people still need to register for the new installation access control system that will change how access is controlled at military installations.

The Installation Access Control System is a personnel access verification program that combines a software application and central database to capture and to store a fingerprint, photograph and specified access privileges for each individual requiring access to Army in Europe installations.

Those individuals who have not yet registered must do so immediately or face the inconvenience of delays when attempting to access post. The end of the transition period is less than a month away.

Over the past seven months staff at the area support groups and base support battalions have worked hard to register all personnel in their communities.

"We have already registered more than 150,000 personnel at the 160 IACS field registration offices located throughout the theater," said Maj. Kevin J. Sickinger, IACS project manager at the Army in Europe Office of the Provost Marshal.

"Over the next 12 months, all of our installation access control points will use IACS gate scanning devices to instantly verify authorization to access our facilities."

Considering the administrative requirements required to transition to this new program, a 10-month transition period was established.

"However we are fast approaching the end of this grace period, and beginning Oct. 20, the only authorized access documents for unescorted access in U.S. Army Europe will be Department of Defense ID cards and the IACS-produced USAREUR/USAFE Installation Pass," Sickinger said. "All other pass and ID forms will be obsolete."

Army in Europe Regulation 190-16, "Installation Access Control," was published Dec. 5, 2002 and provides detailed guidance on how to register in IACS.

For more information on IACS registration, contact your local Installation Access Control Office or consult your BSB homepage. (Courtesy of the Installation Management Agency-Europe Public Affairs Office)

Some DSN numbers to change

Hanau to get new phone numbers

Hanau's Cardwell, Hutier, Francois and Yorkhof Kasernes will be getting new DSN telephone numbers starting Nov. 6.

On that date all DSN lines on those installations will have the new DSN prefix of 323, with the following exceptions —

■ All numbers starting with "1xxx" will keep the old DSN prefix/number (such as 322-1xxx);

■ If your current DSN number begins with an 8 it will change to beginning with a 2 (instead of 322-8xxx it will become 323-2xxx);

■ If your current DSN number begins with a 9 it will change to starting with a 3 (former 322-9xxx becomes 323-3xxx);

■ If your DSN number now starts with a 5 you will get a totally new number.

After the switchover all civilian in-dial will change from the current (06181) 88-xxxx to the new (06181) 180-xxxx with the exception of numbers currently starting with "1xxx" which will keep the old commercial dial-in of (06181) 88-xxxx.



Photos by Anemone Rueger

Soldiers from 1st Armored Division and other units are briefed before being released to join their families or continue on to other destinations on R&R leave at Rhein-Main Air Base. Photo left: a youngster has his hands full while welcoming soldiers back for R&R leave to Germany.

R&R

Continued from page 1

take advantage of the program, officials added.

"U.S. Central Command thinks quite a bit about the readiness of its forces," said Marine Corps Maj. Pete Mitchell, a Central Command spokesman. "When it was determined that U.S. forces were going to be spending 12-month tours in Iraq, the first thing we thought about was providing for the welfare of these forces, because providing for their welfare is improving readiness."

Soldiers and families are advised to stay tuned to the American Forces Network Radio and Television and to check

the USAREUR home page, at www.per.hq.usareur.army.mil/rr, for the latest up-to-date information on the program. Soldiers and families should check with their rear detachment chain of command for confirmation of inbound soldiers. For force protection reasons no information on flights or manifests may be listed on the USAREUR website or given out through the R&R email hotline — rrinfo@hq.hq.usareur.army.mil. (Information for this article courtesy of the 104th ASG's Anemone Rueger, John D. Banusiewicz of the American Forces Press Service and USAREUR Public Affairs)

Calls from Iraq High tech equipment to improve service for soldiers placing health, morale calls

By David Ruderman
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs
Office

In response to an unprecedented volume of telephone traffic, officials announced the upcoming installation of Automated Call Attendant machinery to improve service to soldiers stationed in Iraq who place health, morale and welfare calls to family members in Germany.

"We're hiring new operators and putting in new equipment," said Lt. Col. Darrell D. Fountain, 102nd Signal Battalion commander. "We were getting people calling our local Network Service Centers. The complaint was mainly that when the husband downrange tries to call the operator, it just rings and rings. What that means is that the soldier was in the queue to that operator and not getting through. We hear you and we understand you, and this is what we're doing to make it better. We won't be able to service everybody, but we'll increase the number of people we service."

More calls will get through with the introduction of two ACAs in October. One will be set up in Heidelberg and the second in Vaihingen near Stuttgart. Each system will handle up to 60 calls simultaneously routing them to the public telephone network, thereby reducing traffic on the Defense Switched Network system and allowing it to handle more incoming calls.

"It's the same thing they do in the States now," said Fountain. "That operator doesn't have to be sitting in Hanau to take care of a Hanau customer. We saw a need, and the time was right to deal with the surging number of morale calls."

That surge resulted from thousands of soldiers being deployed to Iraq and the Gulf as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In May 2002 dial service attendants, U.S. Army Europe's telephone operators, processed over 12,800 calls of which about 25 percent were morale calls. In May 2003 they handled over 93,000 calls of which about 75 percent were morale calls, eight times as many, said Capt. Ryan Levier, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 102nd Signal Company, commander.

There are six Dial Service Attendant centers in Europe, including sites at Würzburg, Grafenwöhr, Vaihingen and Heidelberg. The Heidelberg center presently routes about 4,300 calls daily, and operators Europe-wide route about 21,000 calls daily. While the expanded capacity will increase the number of soldiers getting

through to loved ones back home, morale calls remain a privilege, not a right, said Levier.

"U.S. Army Europe Circular 25-22 allows for the use of U.S. government telecommunications systems for morale purposes. Deployed personnel and their family members may use government telephone systems to place morale calls on a non-interference basis. Calls can be made during non-peak hours, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central European Time, for not more than two 15 minute sessions per week as network usage permits," he said.

"Morale calls are like Space Available travel," said Fountain. "You get a call as the system permits. But just as you wouldn't build new aircraft to handle Space A flights, we're not going to expand the network to handle morale calls. We're relying on commercial systems to supply the infrastructure we all use."

Callers who reach an ACA will be guided through their calls by a series of automated voice prompts. Callers will hear their target number ring 10 times. If no one picks up, the call will be terminated and the caller asked to try again at a later time, freeing up the system for another caller to try. When connected, callers will have up to 15 minutes for a conversation. After 12 minutes the caller will be notified that he or she has three minutes left, and the call will terminate automatically.

"You like talking to a person, but the ACAs are faster," said Fountain.

The installation of ACAs is an initiative of 102nd Signal's higher headquarters, the 2nd Signal Brigade, as it continues to consolidate operations across Europe. At the same time there is a continuous open hiring action in place for operators to work in the Heidelberg service center. Six have been hired recently, and positions are still available. Individuals interested in the position should contact their Civilian Personnel Advisory Center for information.

Fountain said the Signal community counts on customer feedback to let them know how they are doing and point out problems in the system. Customers should call their local Network Service Center with specific information about calls that didn't go through. Pinpointing the time and place of service breakdowns helps technicians determine and fix problems. The number to dial is 119.

"If and when you have a problem, let us know. The 'when' and 'what' of what went wrong can help us to fine-tune the system," he said.



Photo by Karl-Heinz Burkhardt

Paying tribute together

Lt. Col. Steve Steininger, 104th Area Support Group chief of staff, joins Hünfeld city officials and German military reservists in commemorating the victims of the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The ceremony was held at a memorial stone which memorializes the long-time presence of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment which served in the area during the Cold War. "We mourn today together with our American friends, and we will never forget how they secured freedom and prosperity in our land from the Rhein to the Werra (rivers)," said Pastor Eugen Kutzka.

Patriot Express Transportation officials clarify pet shipment policy

The Air Mobility Command has released two passenger policy brochures explaining the Patriot Express and pet shipment.

Patriot Express is a contracted commercial charter flight that provides duty travel for authorized military service members and their dependents traveling on official business. The Patriot Express also provides "Space A" travel opportunities to and from the continental United States for those customers traveling at their own leisure.

Many services are provided by Patriot Express which are not available to coach class travelers on a commercial flight. Travelers are served business class meals along with many other services which are more appealing than the everyday commercial travel fare. Special meals can be ordered 24 hours in advance of flight time, hot towels are available after each in flight meal, children receive a fun kit and the flight is topped off with a blockbuster movie, officials said.

Patriot Express offers a pet shipping service that allows the Permanent Change of Station family the opportunity for their pet to travel with them. Pet shipment is not allowed for service members on leave or in a temporary duty status.

In accordance with AMC policy, a pet is defined as a dog or cat. Also, there is a restriction of a maximum of two pets per family. There is a maximum weight of 150 pounds that cannot be exceeded when shipping pets, and this includes the pet and the kennel. AMC officials will not issue a waiver for weight or type of pets.

AMC has a "grandfathered pet policy" that allows the shipment of more than two pets if pet spaces are available and the mem-

ber has documented proof that AMC shipped pets overseas before Sept. 1, 2001. To arrange for additional pet space, the member must contact Scott Air Force Base's Passenger Reservation Section by email at PETALLOCATIONS@SCOTT.AF.MIL or by fax at mil 779-7876, civ (618) 229-7876.

Fifteen days before AMC flight departure travelers with two pet spaces booked can request additional pet space through their local Transportation Office. Once the additional pet space is confirmed, the Transportation Office will issue the member a confirmation that must be presented upon request by the authorities at the AMC terminal. Pets moved under the Space Availability Program are not eligible to move under the "Grandfathered Pet Policy" back to the continental United States.

If a pet cannot be moved because of limited space, the customer should submit a request to Scott Air Force Base, Passenger Reservation Section. Nonavailability statements for passengers will not be issued by AMC due to a pet space request. If a pet cannot be moved by AMC, the member will incur all costs and responsibilities for arranging shipment of the pet.

The passenger is responsible for all pet shipment requirements which include immunization, quarantine fees, documentation and all country entry requirements.

For more information on AMC, Patriot Express programs and pet shipment, log on to the following website, <https://amclg.scott.af.mil/cgi-bin/index.pl?dd=/don/lgtp&ti=HQ+AMC/LGTP+-+Pa>. (Courtesy of the 104th Area Support Group's Directorate of Logistics)

221st BSB – Wiesbaden, Wackernheim, Dexheim



Spc. Peter Seites (left) and Sgt. Thomas Hartwell inspect a two-and-a-half-ton truck in Iraq. Photo right: 19th Support Center soldiers work on vehicles during weekly maintenance at their base in Balad, Iraq.



19th Support Center

Wiesbaden unit keeps things rolling in Iraq

Story and photos by Patricia Simoes
221st Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

The 19th Support Center, part of the 3rd Corps Support Command, manages supplies and maintenance parts for all units deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. From food, water and uniforms to tank and helicopter parts this is the “go to” unit in the theater.

Now settled in Balad, Iraq, the unit has been deployed since early in the year and moved from Camp Virginia, Kuwait, to Balad during the Easter Holiday.

Members of the unit report that living conditions are improving considerably. “When we got here there was junk and broken glass everywhere. Now the newest DFAC (dining facility) is even in a real building,” said Sgt. Thomas Hartwell, a vehicle mechanic in the unit. “It’s amazing how far we’ve come.”

Hartwell, who has a wife and three daughters in Wiesbaden,

said email access is a lot better now than before. He also receives a couple of packages with gifts and photos from home every month as well as letters.

“Being away from family is the hardest part,” said Hartwell who was a Marine vehicle mechanic during the Gulf War in the early ‘90s. “Showers are the best amenity we have here now — but I miss having a personal toilet.”

Sgt. 1st Class Valerie Irving, Aviation Maintenance Branch noncommissioned officer in charge for the unit, said the teamwork is the best part of the deployment. “When we got here, rank didn’t matter,” she said. “We all worked together to make this place comfortable. Now we keep our eyes open to make sure folks are all right emotionally. We take care of each other.”

Spc. Peter Seites, a unit supply clerk who’s been in the Army for a couple of years, said that when he learned about the deployment, he was ready for it. “I miss my family,” the

Michigan native said. “But this is impressive — on the drive from (Camp) Virginia to Balad we saw on the side of the road all the Iraqi people — the kids would come up to the vehicles, but the older people kind of just stared or approached us pointing to their mouths asking for food.”

When the unit first got to Balad, the shots in the middle of the night used to wake him up. “After the fifth time hearing shots, you sleep right through it,” he said.

Seites’ mother learned how to use email, and they communicate once a week, he said. After the deployment he wants to spend some time at home. “When I’m not working I play Playstation 2 — I just got Madden 2003,” he said. “A lot of people are playing that here.”

Most people spend their downtime emailing, calling, playing Playstation 2 and watching movies,” he said. “The PX has a lot of stuff, but we can also order from *Amazon.com*. I’m also a mail clerk — we get a lot of stuff from *Amazon.com*.”

Getting together on Iraqi soccer field

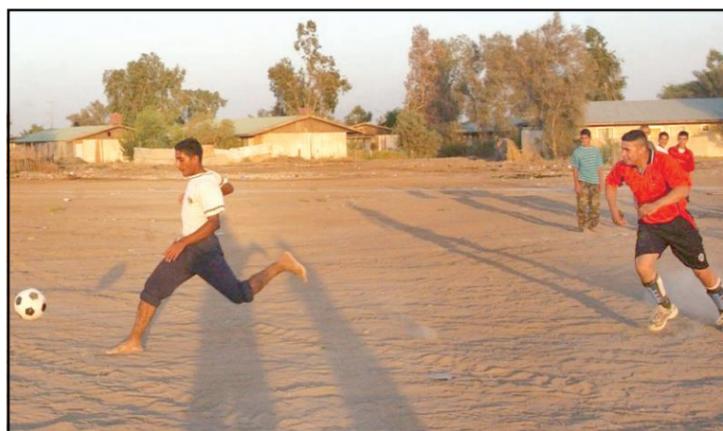
Story and photo by Pfc.
Derrol M. Fulghum II
1st Armored Division Public
Affairs Office

Soldiers from 141st Signal Battalion tested their mettle against their Iraqi neighbors Sept. 13 during an evening soccer match at the Airport Village on Baghdad International Airport.

The competition was intense, yet friendly, as Americans and Iraqis competed for goals on the dirt field. Without grass like they’re used to, it was a bit different for the signal soldiers, but they held their own right up to the end.

“The guys formed their team about a month after arriving, and they practice every week,” said Lt. Col. Christopher Argo, 141st Signal Battalion commander. “They pooled their money and bought their own uniforms out on the economy.”

The Iraqis, however, didn’t even bother with cleats. Some wore shoes, but many played in their



A 141st Signal Battalion soldier pursues an Iraqi player from the Airport Village Team during a friendly soccer match in Baghdad Sept. 13.

bare feet.

This was the first game between the Iraqis and 141st Signal, but the Iraqis play American teams comprised of soldiers quite frequently. If they challenge Americans, they play among themselves at least once a week.

With an enthusiastic crowd cheering them on, the two teams battled for a little over two hours

before finally running out of light. A final score of 2-0 put the Iraqis on top, but American spirits were not diminished.

“I think they’d have played until they’d either won or dropped dead, if I’d let them,” Argo said.

“They’re very competitive, but they realize this is a great way to establish rapport with our neighbors,” he added.