



The **Blade**



63rd Regional Readiness Command, Los Alamitos, Calif., Fall 2004



Readiness and Retention

*Supporting the
Global War
on Terrorism*



**MPs Face Snipers in Iraq...Sergeant Major of the Army
visits Soldiers...Retention NCO 'Muscles' out Competition**

CG's Corner

Soldiers, families should be proud!

I am traveling to Iraq as I write this message and look forward to visiting with our troops.

As the War on Terrorism continues to be waged, the Soldiers of the 63d Regional Readiness Command are heading the formations at the point of the spear and defining leadership. They are finding that they are indeed the units and Soldiers of choice because they complete the missions as well or better than all others supporting the Combatant Commanders. All of us in the 63rd family and our friends should be proud of our Soldiers now serving in nine countries supporting the efforts in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan.

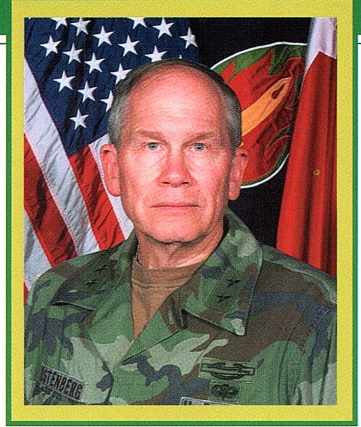
When our Soldiers deploy, I tell them that as they transition to active duty, we in the 63d RRC are no longer in their chain of command. However, "we have a separation, not a divorce."

I want to know where they are and what they are doing. I want to hear from them if there are family or personal issues at home that are not being resolved. Our Family Readiness, Employer Support Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and ambassador team are fantastic and able to resolve almost every issue. I mentioned this in our last *Blade* publication, and state again because we can not leave a 63rd family member behind. That is part of our "Warrior Ethos."

One Soldier I will visit is BG Donna Dacier who was deployed to be forward commander for the 335th Theater Signal Command. A month after she arrived in Kuwait and settled in, she was notified that she had been selected to command the 311th Theater Signal Command in Maryland and will be nominated by the president for promotion to major general. She has been a fantastic deputy commander. Her strengths and vision complemented our needs and readiness in the 63rd is at a record high thanks to her team and her leadership.

Replacing Dacier as my deputy commander is COL Charles Ebner, formerly our Chief of Staff. Congratulations to these two leaders. The Army has just improved by these moves. Thank you all for your service, past and present, and for your support and prayers for Soldiers and their families.

MG Robert B. Ostenberg
Commanding



Top Talk



Be ready and be disciplined!

As the new command sergeant major, I want to thank you all for such a warm and friendly welcome to the "Blood and Fire" team. I am proud to be here and look forward to serving you.

When you read this, it will be just after 9/11/2004. It's been three years since our country was savagely attacked by godless thugs that tried to bring America to her knees. Of course the "masterminds" behind the attacks against America, didn't understand that America is not really a place, it's a concept, an idea. This is why freedom can be spread all over the world; it means really spreading America everywhere.

This event found us woefully unprepared for the new battlefield that we would have to fight under. A battlefield where the enemy is everywhere, yet has no lines, uniforms, or easy way to identify them and no

clear fronts or supply lines. We also are in this for the long haul, not the short-term back-fill the Reserves were designed for.

Because of this, we in the Reserve components are now heavily relied upon, expected to train and deploy for an enemy we never equipped or trained for, with minimal resources, all the while learning to adapt to a higher optempo. It's time for each of us to be a well qualified, disciplined Fighting Soldier of One!

America must rely and trust that each of you is ready at all times. This includes everything from your Family Care Plan to physical readiness and conditioning to your personal attitude about the war-fight. It isn't an option anymore; you must maintain your complete readiness and be prepared to fight.

CSM Mark Wilsdon
Command Sergeant Major

The Blade



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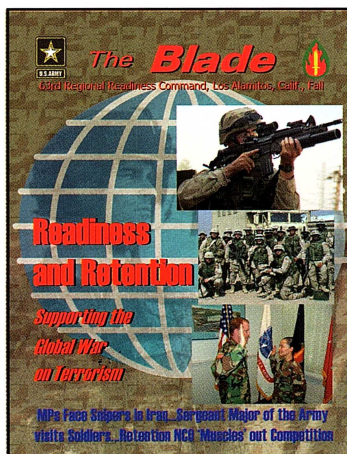
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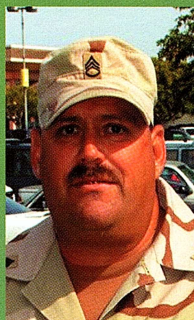
Pictures show 63rd RRC Soldiers involved in Iraqi Freedom and being sworn in for reenlistment, illustrating readiness and retention.

Back Cover:

A poster designed by a local graphics firm shows a Soldier on Iraq duty and lists the Blade points for mission success.

SOUND OFF!

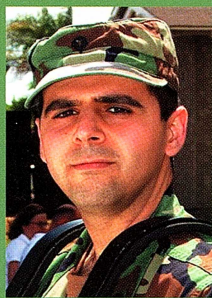
We are a nation at war. How has that affected you as a Reservist?



*SSG David Reid
314th Military
Police Company*

This is my third deployment. I went to Panama and Desert Storm and now I'm back from Iraqi Freedom. I have gained more insight into the world and am more aware of my surroundings after going out and fighting terror.

I am paying more attention to the news. I am more conscious of what is happening to our guys. I am anticipating being deployed and am making myself mentally ready. It is more on my mind and more real to me.



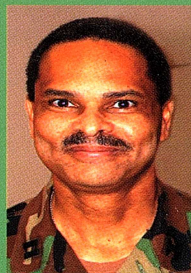
*SPC Sev Attarian
300th Army Band*

Since returning from Iraq, I have a better understanding of my specialty and what active-duty is like. I am now more aware of what is going on around me. I'm definitely more prepared if I get called up again.



*SPC Shiloh Aubel
437th Medical Company*

My perceptions of being an Army Reservist haven't changed. But my focus has always been being ready to go to war and do what I have to do; that includes serving and helping Soldiers.



*CPT Laurence Jackson
63rd RRC Surgeon's Office*

Army unveils new combat uniform

The Army recently unveiled a new combat uniform, based on a design tested by Stryker Brigade Soldiers serving in Iraq, and which includes about 18 changes.

The new Army Combat Uniform (ACU), features a wrinkle-free material and digitalized camouflage pattern. Current plans call for fielding to the total Army by December 2007.

The uniform will consist of a jacket, trousers, moisture-wicking t-shirts and brown combat boots. It will replace both the battle-dress and desert-camouflage uniforms

The bottom pockets on the jacket were removed and put on the shoulder sleeves so Soldiers can have access to them while wearing body armor. Buttons are replaced by zippers that open from the top and bottom to provide comfort while wearing the armor.

Patches and tabs are affixed to the uniform with Velcro to give the wearer more flexibility and save the Soldier money.

--From U.S. Army News Release

Reimbursement for R&R leave approved

The Army recently authorized reimbursement for Soldiers' Rest and Recuperation travel costs incurred between Sept. 25 through Dec. 18, 2003 while deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom.

Reimbursement is for Soldiers who paid out-of-pocket for commercial airline travel during the designated three-month period. Those eligible paid for their onward-travel airline tickets, that covered the initial U.S. airport they flew into from overseas to their final leave destination.

According to Army records, about 32,000 service members traveled during the period of eligibility and should file a claim with their servicing military finance office. For more information, please check the Defense Finance and Accounting

Service website at:
<http://www.dfas.mil/>.

—From U.S. Army News Release

Army's chief of staff releases book-reading list for military leaders

Army Chief of Staff GEN Peter Schoomaker, released a professional reading list recently to help Soldiers' understanding of war and politics.

Among the books are John Keegan's *The Face of Battle*, Ulysses S. Grant's *Personal Memoirs*; Stephen Ambrose's *Band of Brothers*; LTG Hal Moore's *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*; Rohan Gunaratna's *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*; and Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.

The list can be found online at the Center of Military History website: www.army.mil/cmh.

"I challenge all leaders to make a focused, personal commitment to read, reflect and learn about our profession, and our world," Schoomaker said.

—From Army News Service

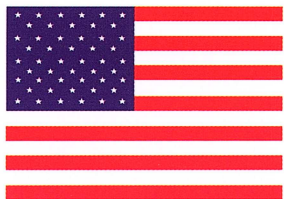
Army offers bigger enlistment bonuses

The Army is beefing up cash bonus programs for new recruits. Meeting the right criterion could net a recruit \$15,000 for a three-year enlistment and \$25,000 for four years in some high-priority jobs.

The maximum available for qualified recruits in non-priority specialties is for three years and \$10,000. Bonuses for three years were previously capped at \$6,000. Critical need jobs include infantryman (11X), cannon crewmember (13B), fire support specialist (13F), and petroleum supply specialist (92F).

College education can earn a qualified recruit even more money. A bachelor's degree could net an \$8,000 bonus; associate or two-year degree, \$7,000; and \$3,000 for high school graduates with 30 to 59 college semester hours. For additional info, please check: www.goarmy.com.

—From Army News Service



The Call to Duty

The call to duty is never fun, and is so stressful until it is done,
 A tearful goodbye to your loved one,
 Radio and television newscasts foresee the worst,
 And mothers and fathers worry about their child... their first,
 Protests in the streets make the transition even worse,
 This is our country, and we must place it first, there must be faith in what we stand up for,
 No reasonable person desires war,
 The truly intelligent person, knows strength and peace are inseparable, they know this deep inside their inner core,
 I place this uniform on my body, to protect those who cannot protect themselves, or are bound by religious confession,
 I put my life in danger, so others can live their lives without fear or oppression, It is not money or fame that guides me,
 But rather faith in my God, and my country,
 And the better good that my appointed leaders can see,
 I am a Soldier, a person with great pride, my job is not diplomacy, but rather supremacy, over any enemy who threatens my country, my homeland, the place of my family,
 In my Army I will confide, victory will be ours of this I am sure,
 I will come home a better Soldier, with this experience to share,
 I do this for my country for which I truly love and care.....

MSG Sal Alvarez
 349th General Hospital

Chaplain's Column

Standing firm and strong

by Chaplain (COL) John South

It has been a tough few years since Sept. 11, 2001. We all have seen the pain and loss of our friends and comrades in battle. But we must stand firm and strong until the mission has been completed and the threat has been broken.....

God teaches us from His Holy word that— Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces HOPE.

I pray for all of you: Lord, bring your calm to our anxious thoughts; bring your peace to the turmoil. Let this be a starting point for our growing trust in your goodness...Joshua tells us to be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go..... Let us also remember the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt, from his 1941 message to Congress: "This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women; and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere."

Soldier bytes:

- The Army has developed hotlines for Soldiers contemplating suicide. The numbers are (800) 464-8107 for those stateside and (800) 464-81077 (extra digit included) for overseas. The Army also has a workshop called Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. For more info: http://www.hooah4health.com/mind/suicideprev/suicide_awareness_plans.htm
- All Army Reserve Soldiers are required to enter information about their civilian job skills into the Civilian Employment Information data

base. This information helps the Army match civilian and Soldier skills. For info: www.2xcitizen.usar.army./mil/portal/.

■ The 63rd RRC will have a Safety Stand-Down during December training to evaluate command safety measures. This will include briefings and checking for drivers licenses and car insurance.

■ *Army Well-Being*, a new quarterly, eight-page magazine, addresses quality-of-life issues important to Soldiers, family members, retirees and civilians. See www.wblo.org.

Soldier dies during training for Iraq duty

The command grieves over the sudden death of CPT Sigfredo Pilipina, ammunition officer for the 483rd Transportation Battalion. Pilipina, 34, died Sept. 14 of a heart attack during a training exercise at Fort Lewis, Wash. His unit was called to active duty for deployment to Iraq. He is survived by his wife Marilyn and two children.



CPT Pilipina

NCO and Soldier of the Year winners named

SSG Ramon Flores Jr. of the 155th Corps Support Battalion was recently named NCO of the Year for 63rd Regional Readiness Command. SPC Rachel Wagoner of the 950th Maintenance Company won Soldier of the Year.



SPC Wagoner

A long walk down the hallway to a room full of command sergeants major tested the mettle of Wagoner, a radio repair specialist. Her military bearing and answers to general knowledge questions about the Army helped clinch the 22-year-old, full-time USC student's selection as Soldier of the Year.

Wagoner said her platoon sergeant and commander encouraged her to

compete for the previous battalion Soldier of the Year title and then the 63rd RRC award.

Meanwhile, maintaining a sense of humor helped Flores, a 36-year-old, AGR motor pool sergeant and husband, relieve some of his pre-board jitters. "It took a minute to set in when the board announced my selection," said Flores. "I now feel more responsibility representing the 63rd." CSM Joseph Tillotson, 164th Corps Support Group and presiding board member, praised all those who competed before the board.

"We know it's an intimidating process, but you are a winner by just showing up and letting us drill you,"



SSG Flores

he said. "It takes a great deal of preparation to meet the board; preparation is the key."

CSM Mark Wilsdon, 63rd RRC command sergeant major, presented Flores and Wagoner with NCO and Soldier of the Year certificates. Soldier of the Year runner-up, Spc. James Judge, 639th Transportation Detachment, also received a certificate.

Each participant received a command sergeant major coin from Wilsdon. Additionally, the soldiers met with BG Donna Dacier, 63rd RRC deputy commander, who awarded them two-star coins from MG Robert B. Ostenberg, 63rd RRC commander.

Flores and Wagoner represented the command in various events this year, including Armed Forces Day activities in Torrance, Calif.

Dacier leaves 63rd RRC for Kuwait duty; Ebner to be new deputy commander

BG Donna Dacier, deputy commander of 63rd RRC, has been deployed to Kuwait and is scheduled for a promotion and command position in Maryland.



BG Dacier

Dacier served as deputy commander of the 63rd RRC since October 2001, becoming one of a handful of female generals in the Army Reserve. She played a major role in transforming the 63rd's level of readiness from one of the lowest to among the best.

She departed the command earlier this year, after being hand-picked to lead the 335th Theater Signal Command in Kuwait. She is scheduled for promotion to major

general and to soon command the 311th Theater Signal Command at Fort Meade, Md.

COL Charles Ebner was selected to become the next Deputy Commanding General after nearly two years as the 63rd RRC chief of staff. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his position. Ebner has served in several staff positions with the 311th Corps Support Command, commanded the 304th Corps Material Management Center and has deployed to Taszar, Hungary, as part of Operation Joint Guard.



COL Ebner

Rental-vehicle reimbursement has conditions

Soldiers attending MOS or NCO-development courses may be reimbursed for rental cars only under certain conditions, according to command regulations.

Reimbursement is allowed if the Soldier has a statement of nonavailability of quarters or of rations, indicating that the Soldier will have to travel off-post.

A further justification would be if the installation has no public transportation on post. Documents must be from either the billeting office or school commandant.

For more information, please contact MAJ Robert Redford at (562) 795-2790 or David Sweatt at (562) 795-2223.

"The funding for NCO academies and other schools is very tight," Redford said.



"Blood and Fire"



Looking for a TPU Position?

**Command IG looking for
"A Few Very Good Soldiers"**

**Officer Positions Available:
CPT(P), MAJ, LTC**

**NCO Positions Available:
SFC, MSG**

- Positions available for Senior Officers and NCOs
- Flexible Battle Assembly Duty Sites
- Flexible Annual Training Options
- Defined Duty Assignments (Inspections, Instruction, Assistance, Sensing Sessions, Special Projects)
- Job satisfaction – Helping Soldiers resolve issues

Join the 63rd RRC IG Team!

For Details Call (562) 795-2218, 2767 or 2768

CAR talks about Reserve future

by MAJ Jorge Swank

63rd RRC Public Affairs Officer

In a world filled with hype, where "image is everything" it was refreshing to see substance rule over style. The setting was March Air Reserve Base, Calif. at a high-level meeting dubbed the "Super Bowl of Readiness."

LTG James Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve (i.e. the "CAR"), then stepped up, provided the context and pointed the way ahead for Reserve transformation.

Helmly often notes that he has had a love affair with Soldiers and the briefing day marked the anniversary of his enlistment in the Army. He noted, tongue in cheek that it "feels like a short 38 years ago." His poignant but powerful statement about serving our nation was driven home when he called for a moment of silence in gratitude for three 63rd RRC Soldiers who paid the ultimate price in Operation Iraqi Freedom, two killed in action, one in a tragic accident. He noted that war is our business and that we must refocus and redouble our efforts as we continue this global war on terror.

Helmly delivered a hard-hitting but fast-paced overview of the road ahead in his vision to transform the Army Reserve. He railed against "red-tape bureaucrats" and pounded home the criticality of the transformation as both a concept and an end state. Using the analogy and then showing a short video commercial of building a plane while in flight, Helmly noted that we cannot do one (transform the Army Reserve) at the expense of the other (support and fight the Global War on Terror).

He honed down to the core truths. "We are an Army of One" and this type of thinking, he noted, must be ingrained in what we say and do. His insistence on changing the term "mobilization" to "call to active duty" exemplifies how we all must change to adapt. He said, "Behavior drives culture and leaders must change behaviors."



WMD Scenario

Soldiers from the 355th Chemical Company, in full-protective gear treat a "patient" during an exercise with a scenario in which terrorists released a nerve agent at the New York, New York casino in Las Vegas. Dozens of decontamination specialists sorted and scrubbed "victims"

played by local citizens. Soldiers from the 6252nd and 6253rd U.S. Army hospitals and 163rd Ordnance Company participated as well. The exercise was evaluated by 5th Army officials and participants passed in every category. (Photo and caption by CPT Robert Naranjo)

Deployed Signal Battalion Soldiers to the rescue

Soldiers arrive at accident scene, take action

By CPT James Hall

319th Signal Battalion

CAMP VIRGINIA, Kuwait— When you think of Soldiers working in staff positions, you probably picture them sitting in offices answering phones and doing paperwork. For the most part, you'd be right, but not on a particular day in late April when Soldiers from 319th Signal Battalion were out getting their hands dirty and bloody, literally.

On the way back from Iraq, the Soldiers came upon a nasty traffic accident which had just occurred. An Army truck rear ended another vehicle to avoid some camels. The passenger of the rear vehicle was literally ripped from the cab of his truck, seat and all. The Soldiers of that unit were able to cut him free of his seatbelt, but were so shaken, they didn't really know what to do next. Lucky for them our Soldiers arrived.

CW1 Andrew Van Veen quickly assessed the patient's condition and began first aid. His training as a California Highway Patrolman was invaluable.

Assisting him was CW3 Jim Akers, who recently completed the Combat Life Saver course at Fort Bliss, Texas. As they began patching up the injured Soldier, SSG Shane McBride reassured him as well, distracting him from the pain.

"He was one tough Soldier," remarked McBride.

While all of this was going on, CSM Paul Belanger got on his cell phone and called for a helicopter medical evacuation (Medivac). Armed with a Global Positioning System device and years of aviation experience, Belanger was able to direct the helicopter to their exact location and guide it down in a very tight spot between power lines and light poles onto the highway.

SPC Nathan Short, from Alabama, was stabilized from his numerous leg injuries – a compound fracture of the leg, a compound fracture of the ankle, a huge open gash, and several abrasions as well as possible neck and back injuries. By the time the Medivac arrived, Short was just starting to go into

shock. The flight nurse started an IV and VanVeen and McBride assisted in loading the patient.

It is the opinion of this writer that Belanger, Akers, VanVeen, and McBride saved Short's life that day through their quick thinking, decisive actions, and calm demeanor. They lived the "Warrior Ethos" of never leaving a comrade behind.

'(They) saved Short's life that day through their quick thinking, decisive actions and calm demeanor.'



Soldiers from the 319th Signal Battalion in Kuwait assist another Soldier involved in a vehicle accident.

UPGRADES AND EXTENDED HOURS

Computer barons keep systems rolling during time of war

By Michael Libio

63rd RRC G-6

Computers nowadays seem to do just about everything you want them to. On the other hand, there are times when your computer just won't do anything at all. If you've experienced this problem, chances are, you've contacted some sort of help desk or technical support for assistance.

For the 63rd RRC, no other group is more familiar with providing computer support than the G-6 automation division. However, technical support is not the only service offered by this group; they also provide network services, hardware/software support, information security, web development and custom application support.

As the G-6 automation group maintains the overall health and integrity of the network system, they continue to plan for future upgrades to the system. Recent examples include installing high-speed "T1" lines throughout all facilities across the RRC, improving connection speeds up to five fold. Currently, the RRC is undergoing a changeover to what is called Active Directory, which allows much more flexibility to manage the network.

Michael Jefferson, senior network engineer, commented that "as our network systems continue to grow, we need to constantly provide the necessary versatility to overcome the business demands of our customers." Users may experience a little inconvenience during these upgrades, but the benefit far exceeds the small inconvenience imposed by them. "In no time, I am certain that, with our help, users will get through the learning curve quickly," Jefferson added.

When it comes to hardware and software support, names like Charlie Lasseter, Tom Trujillo, and SGT Anthony Lee are familiar to many in the command. In just the past few months, they've deployed more than 500 new desktops and laptops plus 50 new servers – (machines that provide services to other computers—such as email, file sharing, printer sharing) all this while supporting existing systems that come in for repairs, upgrades, and maintenance. "It gets pretty hectic here," Lee says when asked about working at the G-6 shop. "In a few days, all of these computers stacked around me will be configured and issued to the users, but a whole new set is waiting for us."

The technical support staff consists of both soldiers and civilians, full-time and part-time. Handling between 150 and 200 calls per day, the help desk responds to inquiries ranging from network accounts, profile issues,

email problems, and many other computer-related concerns. MAJ Thomas Carter, chief of the division, cannot emphasize enough how important the help desk is. "Help desk is our front-line representative," he said. "Through the calls they receive, they are able to provide us with direct feedback from our customers."

He added that with units mobilizing and demobilizing, the G-6 has never been as busy as he recalls. In fact, the G-6 staff has been directly affected by mobilization; Soldiers within the staff are being deployed themselves, without replacement. Most members work extended hours to meet the heavy demand. "We're undermanned, but lucky for us we have a tremendous talent pool helping us maintain operations afloat," Carter said.



SGT Paul Guevara is one of the G-6 tech support's newest members. With a bachelor's degree in computer information systems, Guevara saw the opportunity to join the G-6 team to further enhance his knowledge and skills. "I've been here for over 10 months now; this has been the best move I've made, not only for my military career, but also for (benefiting) the civilian side (here)," Guevara said. "It's great being a part of a very dynamic team. Every call I take brings in a new challenge, and I'm learning so much."

The G-6 is headed by COL Robert Impellizzeri at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, Calif. For immediate computer assistance, logon to the 63rd Intranet website (<https://063rsc-web1/dcsim/dcsim.htm>); it contains frequently asked questions and answers. To directly contact help desk, call (562) 795-2305. To inquire about G-6 job opportunities contact MAJ Carter via email at Thomas.Carter@usarc-emh2.army.mil or SFC Sergio Sossa at Sergio.Sossa@usarc-emh2.army.mil.

ANTI-TERRORISM

WE ARE A NATION AT WAR

Anti-Terrorism is Force Protection

- Stay alert - keep up your guard
- Avoid establishing patterns
- Report suspicious activity

63rd Regional
Readiness Command



www.usarc.army.mil/63rsc

The Soldiers Creed

I am an American Soldier

I am a Warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough,
trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy

the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.



I am an American Soldier

www.usarc.army.mil/63rsc



Story and photos SFC Kelly C. Luster

U.S. Army Reserve Public Affairs Office

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq — SGT Mark Estes recalled grimly an attack on his unit during duty on the highways.

He and fellow MPs were leading a convoy near Camp Taji north of Baghdad. A sniper behind a tree started firing an AK 47 at them .

“I was in the turret of the front humvee,” Estes said. “We turned around. I started firing a SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon) at him. Another machine gunner was also firing. Other insurgents from another building then began shooting at us from a building about 300 meters back. None of our guys got injured.”

It was an almost-everyday thing for Soldiers in the 341st MP Company, out of San Jose, Calif., extended three times for more than a year in Iraq. Their mission was escorting supply convoys or clearing makeshift bombs on the supply routes around Baghdad.

Insurgents attacked with rifle fire, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars or concealed bombs—commonly called “IEDs,” improvised explosive devices. Estes estimated the unit encountered about 100 such bombs and about 30 went off.

Often the unit drove armored humvees which helped protect them. Still, seven Soldiers received Purple Hearts for injuries.

Snipers ar

MP unit extended nearly everyday during missions on insurgent

The devices were hidden in a variety of ways: in fresh cement, under dead animals, buried in dirt or connected to a rail at the side of the road. The bombs were sometimes apparently detonated by remote control.

Sometimes a vehicle struck a bomb, Estes and others said.

“There’d be a loud ‘boom!’ and it would make your ears ring,” Estes said. “Sometimes shrapnel would go through parts of the humvee, though they had thick steel and four-inch glass windows. The humvee would rattle and shake or the tires would blow out and we would have to get a tow back.”

SSG Curtis Fuller, also with the unit, recalled another attack.

They were escorting some civilian contractors on one of the highways.



SGT Mark Estes calls into his headquarters and marks his location with a global positioning system after clearing the main supply route from Logistical Support Area Anaconda south toward Baghdad. Once cleared by the MPs, convoys move north and south.

and Road Bombs

*three times attacked
convoys, bomb-clearing
not-plagued roadways*

“An IED went off behind our lead humvee. It was a very big explosion. The civilians were driving (in back of them) in a Tahoe and it ripped through them like butter. One person was killed. It left a pretty good sized crater in the ground. We had the armored humvees. It seemed the terrorists were going after the softer targets.”

Clearing the roads, Estes said, involves “being briefed at about 6:30 in the morning and then driving the route to our checkpoint. We look for any hostile activity, enemy personnel, or anything that looks out of place from previous runs.”

Estes said that once they travel the route and are sure it’s clear, they radio back to the convoy commanders and let them know it’s safe.

If the MPs find something suspicious, such as a suspected bomb, along the route they radio back to their headquarters. They also stop traffic along the main supply route, which is like shoveling sand with a fork. The locals will stop for a short period of time until they become impatient. If traffic doesn’t move in short order, they will do anything to get around the blockage.

“Sometimes, if we’ve stopped traffic for some reason, the Iraqis will cross over into the opposite lane and travel in the wrong direction,” Estes said. “What they don’t realize is that what we are doing is trying to protect them as well as our Soldiers. We don’t want anybody hurt. What is sad is that it is their own people causing this.”

SPC Juan Cruz II often stands ready on the Squad Attack Weapon, in the turret of the humvee. “We work as a team and watch each other’s backs,” he said. “Now, I’d rather be on a patrol with my team than doing paper work. Even though it’s a little dangerous, it has made the time here go by so much quicker. And I feel like I am making a difference here.”

Cruz said he looks forward to going home and seeing his family. Cruz received the call he was coming to Iraq one week before his wedding. “I was mobilized the day after I was married,” Cruz said. “When I get time off, I call and talk to my wife. This has been very hard for her.



CPL Robert Hugman stands in front of a mounting traffic jam after Soldiers found a roadside bomb.

But she’s doing okay, especially since she knows when I’ll be home.”

Cruz isn’t the first in his family to serve in the Gulf. “My mom was here during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I have a very supportive family. They don’t want me here, but they support all the troops.”

Estes expressed parting thoughts.

“We do our job here as well as any other Soldier,” he said. “We don’t finish our day until the last convoy is safely back at Anaconda. Tomorrow... we’ll do it all over again.”

Readiness

63rd RRC jumps from low

Story by **SGT. Stephanie P. Abdullah**
302nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

What does it take to make a soldier deployable?

Our nation is at war and the 63rd Regional Readiness Command has been thrust right into the center, deploying about 7,000 Soldiers since 9-11.

The command has shot up from rock bottom to near top in readiness levels in the Army Reserve, officials have said. Command leaders have tightened up the organization and upped the communication to move Soldiers out like a finely tuned machine.

Leaders of the 63rd RRC say the command was at the bottom of the totem pole—No. 11 out of 11 RRCs—in readiness at the beginning of 2004. This was for issues including Soldiers not being accounted for properly or slotted correctly, medical issues, difficulties getting troops enrolled in and graduated from appropriate schools, non-participants, pending losses, just to name a few.

LTC Terrell E. Parker, chief of the command readiness team, said the key factors leading to the spike in readiness level—recently rated as No. 2 in the Army Reserve—were the launching of weekly teleconferences with the major subordinate commands, and holding units accountable to get Soldiers ready. The teleconferences were directed by BG Donna Dacier, then deputy commanding general.

“In these calls I had to be the tough guy,” said Parker. “I addressed the issues Soldier by Soldier. I asked the hard questions: ‘How come this Soldier hasn’t been to school?’ ‘Have you tried to recover this Soldier?’ ‘Why is this Soldier still on the books after X period of time?’ And we held the commanders accountable for their answers or lack thereof. We talked weekly Soldier to Soldier about Soldiers.”

Parker said improving the numbers can be looked at two ways: improving the statistics on paper or actually putting in the work to take care of Soldiers.

“My position is that we are affecting Soldiers’ lives if we don’t make sure they are qualified,” said Parker. “Why should they want to serve if they aren’t trained and not qualified to serve. Readiness is about having Soldiers in the right place at the right time *ready* to perform. It’s a lot more than climbing the statistical ladder.”



A key tool that leaders are using to maintain a high readiness level is the Individual Training Readiness System. This database contains all kinds of information on soldiers and is used to help identify problems and helps leaders work to solve them.

Parker says this is not an easy process because many data sources are used, which means there is a lot of data entry. Therefore, mistakes can happen. Behind every piece of data is a living, breathing soldier who may or may not be ready because of issues like physical status, training, dental concerns, and pay issues.

Pay is a readiness concern because if soldiers are not being paid they will stop drilling and thereby become non-participants. During the process of cross-leveling, pay tends to become problematic because of DA form 1380 not being completed and processed properly, said Parker.

for War

est to near highest

“Units have been confused about who pays the 1380,” Parker noted. “Is it the losing unit or the gaining unit? These are the types of issues we are able to address in the teleconferences.”

Furthermore, the seven-member command readiness team, proactively visits many subordinate units. “They go out and coach, mentor and manage people in the major subordinate commands,” said MAJ Kori Carrasco, readiness officer. “They’ll dig through every record to get a true picture of many Soldier issues, such as medical, dental, security clearances and DMOSQ (Duty Military Occupational Specialty Qualification).”

Going from worst to near first involved empowering unit leaders with command staff expertise and overall resources to accomplish their jobs. Each task was tracked from beginning until completion.

For example, command staff has ensured that unit leaders are now not only making physical-exam appointments for troops, but that they make sure the troops show up for appointments. Procedures are now in place to ensure the timely processing of security clearances, which could be another show-stopper. Unit commanders must get their soldiers MOS qualified.

Unit leaders are now being held accountable on an individual-Soldier basis when things are not happening like they are supposed to. Everyone has their role to play in keeping readiness up to standard. For example, thousands of soldiers serve in an Individual Ready Reserve status. The 63rd’s retention staff helped improve readiness this year by bringing 1,031 troops out of IRR status and into drilling status.

These procedures helped the 63rd rise to the top of the readiness chain by March 2004. MG Robert B. Ostenberg, commanding general, said that being high on the readiness chain doesn’t necessarily mean more deployments for the 63rd RRC, but it could mean more resources for the command.

“If there is equipment out there that we need or individuals that can help us, we will get them now

What is Readiness?

By COL Joe Charsagua

Deputy Commander for Readiness Training and Mobilization

Readiness is preparing units and Soldiers to mobilize and perform their mission. Everything we do is related to and affects readiness.

It includes aspects such as individual and unit training; preparing Soldiers through Soldier Readiness checks that include personnel, medical and dental readiness; administrative issues such as legal, financial requirements and security clearances. It also includes family readiness, spiritual readiness and keeping Soldiers trained.

Readiness includes effective management and use of all resources such as assigned weapons and equipment. Leadership is a driving force for improving readiness since leaders at all levels must motivate and lead their units and Soldiers to prepare for the eventuality of when our nation will come upon them for their expertise in war and national security issues.

Soldiers in the Army Reserve are not only fighting the Global War on Terrorism but also improving their readiness as we move from the past paradigm of *Alert-Train-Deploy* to *Train-Alert-Deploy*. The new model reflects the increased readiness, capability and relevance of Army Reserve Soldiers as part of the Army and the future force.

because we have great credibility,” Ostenberg said. “We just got three new Active Guard Reserve soldiers because of our productivity, when all other positions were frozen.”

‘I had to be the tough guy. I addressed the issues Soldier by Soldier. I asked the hard questions.’

--LTC Terrell Parker

Soldier retention: key to Army success in war

Story by SSG Marc Yablonka

State Military Reserve PAO

Photo by SSG Kent Ambrose

63rd RRC PAO

Has the catastrophe of 9-11 created a fundamental change for retaining Soldiers in 63rd RRC? Not necessarily, says LTC Anthony Daniell, command retention and transition officer.

"It has always been important to take care of our Soldiers," he said. "Our career counselors found out that if you keep a Soldier informed, tell him or her the options, provide that Soldier with the incentive to make good decisions, he or she will stay. Our focus has remained the same. We're just picking up the tempo now because there is a war going on. If we can possibly keep soldiers in the Army Reserve, that is our charge."

The charge has been altered somewhat, however, with the de-emphasis on retaining inactive Individual Ready Reserve Soldiers and emphasis on encouraging active Reservists to reenlist.

"Instead of looking for (inactive Reserve) soldiers, we're now trying to contact NPs (non-participants—no shows)," said SFC Larry Magana, area 6 manager, from his office in West Los Angeles. "We're now focusing on re-enlistments, their extensions, whatever we need to do to retain these soldiers. If for some reason, they don't want to be in their unit, as area manager I can say, 'Okay fine. We're going to reassign you to a different one.'"

And their efforts have paid off. The success ratio over the last two years has been a 78 percent "stick-rate"—people staying in service, according to Daniell.

"What happened in 2001 was very important. We knew the call was going to come out," said SFC Walter P. Level, the 63rd RRC retention and transition NCO of the Year for 2004. "Retention is definitely critical. We need to keep our strength up. We have to stay prepared."

Magana and Level also know that not every Soldier can be retained. "We never belittle those individuals," Level said. "We thank them for their service; tell them that if they find that they want to come back, to let us know. We give them a business card. They may call. They may not."

One thing which keeps Soldiers from re-enlisting is the fear that, while they are deployed, they will not be informed on a constant basis. "Soldiers do not get as upset about being deployed as they do about not being informed," Daniell stressed.

What they stay informed about are the options they have if they decide to be retained in the era of

the Global War on Terrorism.

"If a Soldier is seriously considering retention but is concerned about where he or she is stationed and wants a change; if he or she wants a different MOS, we can help that Soldier get what they want," said Magana.

"Let's say that you have a sergeant that's aspiring to be a staff sergeant," said Level. "He's already gone through Basic NCO Course. As long as we can communicate with the Soldier and the unit to get him slotted for that higher rank, as long as he's qualified in his MOS, the only thing that soldier would have to do is get boarded. We want to do everything possible to enhance that Soldier's career."

Because the needs of Soldiers reaching an enlistment expiration are varied, retention and transition NCOs go a long way, they say, to gain the trust of those they would counsel to re-enlist.

"They don't question our integrity because they know that we've done everything we can for them in the past (counseling on many issues)," Magana said. "We've gained their trust. We don't gain anything by their re-enlisting. We just do everything we can to fit the wants that they have."

Level added: "Each Soldier is different, so I treat them all differently according to their needs. All of this may sound rehashed, but you can link it to FM 22-100-Army Leadership."

Part of that leadership comes in the form of providing information to Soldiers on a timely basis.

"It is critical to provide that information so that a Soldier can make a decision he or she is willing to live with," said Daniell. "We want them to have everything they need to have a good career plan."

As career counselors themselves, Magana and Level go the extra mile to ensure that, whether on drill weekend or any other time, other Soldiers don't perceive them as people to be avoided. "When I come in that door, they don't say, 'Oh God, here he comes with his re-enlistment speech again.' I'll come in, we'll talk and I'll ask, 'Hey, what's going on?' We'll talk one on one. They'll look at us differently."

Very often, says Magana, he will compliment a Soldier whom he sees looking, in his words, "Squared away, his uniform pressed, etc. We just try to keep them motivated. We take some interest in them, we have rapport."

(Editor's Note: The Retention-Transition Soldiers in 63rd RRC are shown in the picture on this page.)
(Photo by SSG Kent Ambrose)

Retention NCO 'levels' rivals in bodybuilding shows

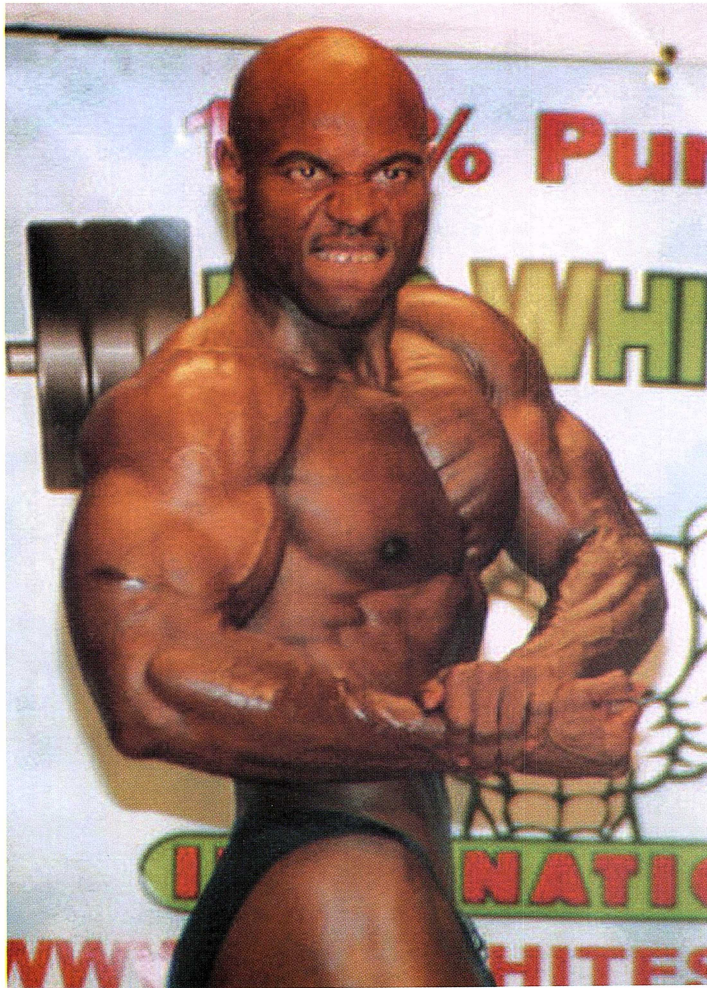
Story and photo by SSG Marc Yablonka

State Military Reserve PAO

SFC Walter P. Level takes the old U.S. Army slogan "Be all that you can be" seriously, both in and out of uniform. And when he's out of uniform, you are likely to find him pumping iron and competing in bodybuilding contests from Venice Beach to your TV screen at home.

Level is the command's Retention- Transition Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for 2004. But in his personal time, bodybuilding is his passion.

He recently won four awards at the All Forces National Body Building Championships in Anaheim, Calif.: 1st place, Heavyweight Novice ; 1st place, Light-Heavyweight division; 2nd place, Master's Division; and Overall Novice Champion.



SFC Level flexes his muscles in a recent bodybuilding competition in Anaheim, Calif.

Bodybuilding became a sport in the 1940s and remains popular to this day. It is for individuals who have the will to take their bodies to an extreme level. When the bodybuilder prepares for a contest, he or she is not only working to achieve a physique that is balanced and well-muscled, but vascular, with muscles and veins bulging, as well.

"In other words, I'm trying to get myself to look like a human anatomy chart. This is a challenge that not too many people wish to partake in," Level stressed.

That may be because many people confuse the kind of everyday weightlifting that is done in the gym with bodybuilding, at least as far as contests go.

"In weightlifting, the winner is determined by who lifts the most weight. In bodybuilding, it's who has the best physique," Level explained. "The connection is that both weightlifters and bodybuilders are very strong. In fact, some bodybuilders are great weightlifters."

And while most gym goes understand what goes into weightlifting from their own experience, many people do not understand the complexities of bodybuilding.

"To this day, many people do not realize what an athlete goes through in order to prepare for just one competition. Believe me, it's not just about being on stage flexing in front of people and wearing bikini underwear."

For Level, his devotion to the sport, which he began to practice in earnest 12 years ago—though his first competition was nine years ago in the Mr. Kansas Body Building contest in Kansas City—has garnered him awards as well as notoriety. On July 4th, he took second place in the Heavyweight Class at the Mr. and Mrs. Muscle Beach contest at Venice Beach. He was forced to compete as a Heavyweight because he was three pounds over the 198 lb. limit for Light Heavyweight.

While participating in the event, at which the media were well in attendance, the sergeant was approached by a producer for the Travel Channel, who quizzed him on bodybuilding. "She liked what she saw and I became the focus of her story," he said. It will air on the channel in February 2005.

Level, 36, draws an easy parallel between his life as retention and training NCO in the Army and bodybuilding. "With both you have to be committed and disciplined," he explained. "The Army is big on PT and height-weight requirements. I know that I have to stay within the Army's standards regarding this and bodybuilding definitely helps.....and cardio is a MUST!"

Miss America, Sergeant Major visit California Soldiers and

Story by SGT Jasmine Chopra
302nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Photos by SGT Jasmine Chopra and
SPC Michael Connors

LOS ALAMITOS, Calif.--Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth Preston and Miss America were among distinguished guests honoring Soldiers and their families at the Joint Forces Training Base here last summer.

The event was titled "A Tribute to the California Warfighters."

Scores of soldiers filled the base's Liberty Theater to hear U.S. Rep. Loretta Sanchez; Ericka Dunlap, Miss

America 2004; SMA Preston; MG Robert B. Ostenberg, commanding general of 63rd Regional Readiness Command; MG Thomas W. Eres, California adjutant general; and others pay tribute to the selfless service and personal courage of the state's Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers. National USO dance and song troupe, "American Spirit," performed as part of the event.

"You are the next greatest generation and must continue to work together for the betterment of mankind," said

Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) Kenneth Preston awards a special SMA coin to SFC Olajide A. Awotona, one of several Operation Iraqi Freedom vets present at the recent Tribute to the California Warfighters event.



of the Army families

*“American Spirit”
USO troupe performs
during the recent event
at Joint Forces Train-
ing Base honoring the
warfighters.*



keynote speaker Preston to soldiers like CPT Gustavo Murrillo, commander of the 137th Quartermaster Company, El Monte, Calif. From January 2003 to February 2004, Murrillo and his company provided field service support, convoy security, and helped build schools in Iraq.

“More than ever before, the role of Reserve Soldiers is crucial,” said Murrillo, also an attorney with the Department of Homeland Security.

Sanchez, who serves on the House Armed Services Committee, praised Soldiers from California and thanked their loved ones for supporting them. In December, Sanchez visited troops in Iraq. She assured Soldiers that she and other committee members are working tirelessly on legislation to ensure that the quality of life for Soldiers and their families is improved.

“You are the faces on the ground that represent the heart and soul of our nation,” she said of service members.

Dunlap, a vocalist who has entertained troops in Kuwait twice during her reign as Miss America 2004, said she felt excited to sing the National Anthem for Soldiers at the celebration.

“I’ve been told that I boost morale,” she said. But really, they (Soldiers) boost mine. They inspire me.”



Erika Dunlap, Miss America 2004, socializes with SPC Patrick Rodriguez of the 302nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.

I am being demobilized. What about my civilian job?

Federal reemployment act gives Soldiers right to reclaim job

From Army Reserve Association Law Review

Q: I am in the Army Reserve and was involuntarily called to active duty for 16 months. Now that my active duty period is nearing its end, what do I need to do to get my job back?

A: You have rights under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, called USEERA. You can find the complete text at www.esgr.com, the website of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), the Department of Defense organization that assists National Guard and Reserve personnel with civilian job problems. You can reach ESGR at (800) 336-4590. There are five basic eligibility criteria for re-employment rights:

- You must have left the civilian job for the purpose of performing service in the uniformed services.
- You must have given prior notice to the civilian employer that you were leaving for the purpose of performing uniformed service.
- During the employment relationship to which you wish to be restored, your cumulative period or periods of service in the uniformed services must not have exceeded five years. All involuntary service and some voluntary service are exempted when computing the five-year limit.
- You must have been discharged or released from the period of service, and you must not have received a punitive or other-than-honorable discharge or have been dropped from the rolls of your service.
- You must have submitted a timely application for re-employment.

It appears that you already meet criteria 1 and 3 and will soon meet item 4. Because your active duty has been involuntary, it does not count toward your five-year limit. Because your period of service has exceeded 180 days, you will have 90 days to submit your application for re-employment.

Q: Does that mean that I must wait 90 days to get my job back?

A: No. The 90 days belong to you, not the employer. When you submit your application, whether on the first day or the 90th day, the employer is required to act on it in a reasonably prompt manner (generally days, not weeks or months). If you are anxious to get back on the payroll at your civilian job, you should submit your application for re-employment right away. If you need

some time off, you should take that time off before you submit your application for re-employment. If you are planning to take time off before you submit your application for re-employment, you should ensure that you have health-plan coverage during the interim period. Because you were involuntarily called, you are entitled to continuing coverage under the military health-care system for a transition period.

Q: I want to take some time off before going back to work, but my employer's personnel office has stated that when I leave active duty my "military leave" becomes a "personal leave" and I will no longer continue accruing seniority, as if I had been continuously employed. Is the personnel office correct?

A: No. You are entitled to the continuous accumulation of seniority during the entire period of your military-related absence from your civilian job. This includes the period between leaving the job and entering active duty, the period of active duty, and the period between leaving active duty and returning to work.

Q: I have earned 40 days of leave from the Army Reserve during this tour of duty, and I have not used any of that leave. I may be home on terminal leave as soon as early October. Can I submit my application for re-employment while on terminal leave?

A: Yes, you can submit the application while on terminal leave, but the employer is not required to act on your application until you actually leave active duty. Until the actual release date, you do not meet the eligibility criterion of having been released from the period of uniformed service. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the 90-day clock on your deadline to submit your application for re-employment does not start ticking until the actual release date.

Q: You have said I must "submit an application for re-employment." What does that mean?

A: The essential message you must convey is: "I used to work here. I left this job for military service. Now, I am back from the military. I want my job back." Because you have been gone for over a year, you may find a new cast of characters at your place of employment. We strongly suggest that you send a certified letter to the employer's personnel office.

Army Reserve ambassadors: Serving Soldiers and our Army

By MAJ Jorge Swank
63rd RRC PAO

With already-distinguished lives of service to the nation, a group of influential advisors in California is working behind the scenes and out in front to serve the 63rd Regional Readiness Command and the chief of Army Reserve.

Who are these people? They are four Army Reserve ambassadors in California and a soon-to-be-appointed at-large ambassador. All, according to Army protocol are the equivalent of major generals when interacting with Soldiers and the American public. These gentlemen are:

- Richard Lundin—Northern California
- Ronald Markarian—Central California
- Howard Schwartz—Greater Los Angeles area
- Russell Park—Riverside and San Diego areas
- Anthony Reed—may cover California, Arizona and Nevada at request of the command

This year, all the ambassadors distinguished themselves by assisting during “Welcome Home” events for returning 63rd RRC Soldiers. Support included early and effective contact with local congressional offices, proclamations for returning heroes and critical logistical help. Reed, in particular, managed to set the standard for “Welcome Home” events and received direct praise from LTG James Helmly, chief of the Army Reserve; and Department of the Army public affairs officials, by coordinating a near-real-time web cast when the 257th

Transportation Company came home to Las Vegas. (See the command website for the streaming video of their return.) Two other ambassadors (Markarian and Lundin) teamed up to assist with the return of the 341st Military Police Company and 211th Transportation Company. Both units returned to San Jose to spectacular support from the local community. Schwartz, in his area, has ensured that local papers are aware of the Army Reserve and Park has delivered significant media attention to units returning home to San Diego.

Reed, a Vietnam veteran, recalled that his homecoming during the tumultuous Vietnam era did not include yellow ribbons or community support. Now in a position to give back, he wanted to make sure “our Soldiers were welcomed home in a manner befitting their sacrifice, bravery and courage.” (Reed has previously served as an ambassador for Nevada.)

Reed, who has worked for years in various government agencies, including time with Army Special Forces, understands that “the dynamics of our Army have changed...we are transforming...facing a determined enemy...We are at war...all of us must do our part and that includes reaching out to employers and the media.”

For more information on how the ambassador program can assist local commanders, please call the Public Affairs Office at (562) 795-2356, 2358 or email the office at 63d_pao@usarc-emh2.army.mil.

PAO Notes and Tips

Media-Interview Tips:

- Contact the Public Affairs Office first
- Stay in your lane; don't speculate
- You are only speaking for yourself, not the Army
- Don't reveal sensitive or classified information

From the PAO Guys:



MAJ Jorge Swank



John D. Wagner



Ted Bartimus



SSG Kent Ambrose

Community Relations Tips:

- Notify PAO in advance
- Needs military or patriotic tie-in
- Send written requests 90 days in advance for assets such as band.



Homecoming!

Soldiers return to open arms, celebration

Tears flowed as Soldiers walked into open arms of family members this year as more than a dozen 63rd RRC units returned home from Kuwait and Iraq duty.

Devin Harris, 14, hugged his dad, Sgt. Reuben Harris of the 211th Transportation Company, which reunited with family members in San Jose, Calif.

"I'm glad, I'm just so glad, I'm happy," Devin said.

More than 100 of the 211th Soldiers spent 20 months mobilized at Fort Bliss, Texas and were then sent to Ku-

wait and Iraq for movement-control duty, involving overseeing transportation of supplies to the front lines. Other units' duties including truck transportation, medical services and military policing.

The 257th Transportation Company, a truck-driving unit, returned to both Las Vegas and Tucson, Ariz.

"I'm happy to be home," said SFC Thomas Dimmick. "It was a lot of long hours. The average convoy to Iraq took three to five days."



Ssg James Smith of the 257th Transportation Company embraces his 8-month-old son, Malik, for the first time during homecoming at Las Vegas. (Photo by SSG Kent Ambrose)



Well-wishers greet Soldiers from the 211th Transportation Company (Marina, Calif.) as they de-plane at Fort Bliss. (Photo by John D. Wagner)

To view the 63rd RRC "Welcome Home" picture gallery and to watch streaming video, please visit the command website at <http://www.usarc.army.mil/63rsc/>



SPC Jose Lopez addresses media during the homecoming ceremony for the 341st Military Police Company in Irvine, Calif. (Photo by SSG Kent Ambrose)



SSG Samuel Anguiano of the 163rd Ordnance Company warmly greets a loved one. (Photo by SSG Kent Ambrose)



SPC Corey Comeau of the 257th Transportation Company Detachment 1 celebrates during Tucson, Ariz. homecoming. (Photo by John D. Wagner)



Blade Points

- **Stay ready & deployable**
- **Know warrior skills**
- **Live the Army values**
- **Be alert & be aware**
- **Think Safety**
- **Support your command**
- **Stay in the Army Reserve**