



FRG FAMILY READINESS GROUP

Newsletter Date
January & February



From the Desk of the Commander, 1244th Transportation Company, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait

Dear Family, Friends, and concerned parties,

We have been surviving the torrential rains of this country with some humor and frustration. We would not have believed it had we not seen it ourselves. Our culverts and ditches have overflowed and at times we are up at 0100 to 0300 sand bagging to keep our tents and soldiers from floating away. Just last evening we received over 4 inches of rain. We have really learned the importance of tarps and the usefulness of a simple garbage bag over our bedding and clothes.

The holidays have come and gone and the majority of our troops were able to spend some quality time with their loved ones. We have one rotation left for soldiers to depart for some R&R. This will occur on the 21st and 22nd of this month. We have had to split the rotation because of flight issues with departing troops. Nevertheless, your soldiers will be home shortly. We coordinated to have some wonderful Chinese food brought in for a respite from the chow hall for Christmas which everyone seemed to enjoy. New Years was uneventful. We were lucky that the locals do celebrate the holiday and we were able to see some fireworks from off post from our location. The dining facility provided some sparking cider that we enjoyed (and pretended slightly) that it was the real stuff. We did not have missions the next day, so everyone was able to get some deserved rest.

We are continuing to make a disc with pictures for the families. We are adding to the original disc that we tried to send earlier to the FRG. There were complications with the mail system, I ask your forgiveness and patience with the process. SSG Bennett has been gracious enough to compile the information on his personal computer and I think everyone will enjoy the presentation.

Some of our troops activities:

- SPC Aaron Hughes and SPC Gregory Brown were promoted to Corporal
- 1LT Alex Galicia and SFC Sasha Garber were appointed Command and Control element of the Battalion Recovery Team (BaRT)
- SPC Nicole Ramirez, SPC Sebastian Gawron, CPL Andrew Lang, SGT Gary King, and SGT Carissa Ryback were "coined" by the 32nd Group Commander, Luis R. Visot, for their accomplishments and work ethic in maintenance
- SGT Luis Aguayom Marquez for winning the donation from the Indian Princess organization of Chicago
- The maintenance team were recognized as the "best in the 32nd Transportation Group" by CW4 Rose
- SFC Allan Naanes was appointed the Truckmaster for the company
- SFC Julie Scott was appointed the 1st Platoon Sergeant
- SFC Roberto Ruiz was promoted to First Sergeant
- SSG Ricardo Antunez, SSG Manuel Flores, SGT Robert Jones III, SGT Edson Rocha, CPL Andrew Lang, CPL Radame Melendez, SPC Matthew Palm, SPC Raul Magana, SPC Sebastian Gawron, SPC Martin Kempf, SPC Daniel Frederick, SPC Cory Porter, and SPC Kelly Sounthala were awarded the Mechanic's Badge with "Wheeled" device for working successfully as Organization and Direct Support mechanics for a period of more than six months continuously
- All members of the unit (in country) have been awarded their Combat Patch for the 143rd Transportation Command
- Most members have been submitted and approved for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM), Armed Forces Reserve Component Medal (ARCAM), Global War on Terrorism Medal (GWOT), Armed Forces Reserve Medal (AFRM), and National Defense Ribbon (NDSR)

Special Interest Articles:

- Comments from LT. Petersen Page 1,2

Comments from Caroline Perkins Page 2



Individual Highlights:

FRG Review Page 3,4

Birthday wishes Page 4

THANK YOU Page 4

Coming Events Page 5

FRG COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE Page 6



Our condolences to:

SGT Benjamin Watkins for the loss of his grandmother

SPC Juisell Lewis for the loss of her aunt

Well wishes, Good Health, and God Speed to:

SGT Ryan Anaya for her recent injury and MEDEVAC to Fort Mccoy

SSG Daniel Lundeen for his recovery and his return to theater on 14 Jan.

SGT Timothy Washington for his recent illness and return to theater 15 Jan

SFC Benjamin Cotto for his recovery while at Fort Knox

SSG Tom Curtis for his recovery while at Walter Reed Medical Center

SGT Maurice Richardson for his recent surgery while at Fort McCoy

SPC Steven Wells for his recovery while at Fort McCoy

SPC Martin Kempf for his recent MEDEVAC, surgery and recovery while at Fort Mccoy

1LT Galicia's brother's recent illness and recovery

SSG Marks' father-in-law and mother-in-law's recovery from their recent auto accident

SPC Brian Master's family during their recovery from illnesses

We are preparing to come home to Fort McCoy in April. We have been given a tentative date of the 15th (+ or - 48 hours). The 48 hours is due to the high amount of personnel that will be leaving theater at roughly the same time. This is the date we have been given "for now". Everything is subject to change. We are NOT being replaced by another company which makes our processes for leaving much easier. We have been preparing equipment for turn-in and exchange, cleaning, and maintenance. There will be a few personnel that will be Super Cargo. These 3 -4 personnel are volunteers (that is all I will accept) to ride on the boat to return our equipment to the states. I only accept volunteers because due to the amount of time that we have been away from home, it would be unfair / unjust to force someone when there are willing volunteers to meet this requirement. I hope the families understand and I will be happy to explain of necessary to any family member who writes to me.

Sincerely,

LT Rhonda L. Petersen

Commander

Holiday/ Christmas Party

Christmas Party 2003

I'd like to thank all that attended the 1244th Christmas Party. I am the special event chairperson and it was just that to me, a special and lasting one. As a parent of a soldier I've never attended any of the past gatherings. I've heard my sons two children talk about them and I consider myself fortunate to not only attend but to help put it all together. With the efforts and help of not only fellow council members but also other 1244 family members we were able to have a day of a holiday celebration. Getting together at our Pizza night prior to the party was an event in its self, We had the help of those that attended and had a Christmas wrapping party. We had some good laughs and had gotten our task completed. On the 14th it was nice to be together in a different way, feelings were shared and most of all the children had a good time.

Those that attended know that financially we would have not been able to hold this party without the help of many. The USO was our main backer for the event. We had in attendance the President of the USO Mr. Richard Bruder. It gave us a chance to thank him personally for all that his organization has done and will continue to do for the families of the 1244 Transportation unit. We also had the backing of many VFW's, personal individuals, private companies as well as other group organizations. I hope this shows are soldiers and families that people are aware and grateful for what our soldiers are doing for our country.

Putting this party together gave me a opportunity to talk to many of you that I've never met personally, I'm truly sorry that with all that had to be handled that I didn't have the opportunity to sit down and talk to you more. I hope in the future I have that opportunity. The Family Readiness Group has helped me thru this time of separation and worry, come and join us anytime that you can.

Special Events

Caroline Perkins

Family Readiness Group Year in Review

Bob Brown

2003 started simply, the 1244th remained at home although they were on alert for possible mobilization. Of course mobilization came quickly, but Family Readiness had not been planned for. After mobilization, the State Family Readiness office got into the act to help organize the 1244th's Family Readiness Group (FRG). Rather than Readiness the group could have used the term Support as we began operation a month after the soldiers left for Ft. McCoy.

The first weeks were a struggle, as we all know the soldiers remained at Ft. McCoy for 2 ½ months before deploying to Kuwait. People at home didn't think it would be a long deployment if there even were going to be a deployment, after all the US forces took Baghdad in such a short time. How to get families involved and how could the FRG council plan what was needed to support our families were the major issues facing us.

From the first the FRG Council started forming a Phone Tree, a means to contact our families with regularity with information and just "keep in touch". The "State" had rules and regulations we were told to follow on who we could call based on forms "completed" by the soldiers before they deployed. Contact forms were not signed, missing, incomplete, or not readable. But we pushed on a developed the Phone Tree we continue to use and hopefully we are contacting the "right" people. A newsletter was suggested, again what do we have to say to our families? The first couple of issues were irregular, as we got used to publishing content, style, format, and distribution improved. We now mail about 120 copies and have another 120 we notify by email for their reading on the internet.

The "State" told us we needed a Family Meeting, but until the soldiers deployed we asked why, and if we have a meeting what would be the purpose. After the mid-April deployment we scheduled our Family Meeting, lined up speakers and went forward. The attendance at the meeting surprised the Council. More parents attended than spouses, wasn't the FRG organized to support all families, didn't the spouses need the information we were trying to get out?

The Council planned Family Picnics at the Armory for June and August. Attendance was good but not what we hoped for. The families we were trying to bring together into a support network did not participate as we expected. The Council struggled over having programs at the Armory, was that the wrong location. Yes, that could be it, but after studying our families addresses the North Riverside is just about as centrally located as we could get. And if North Riverside is the home of the 1244th then it should be the home of the FRG.

As fall approached and there was no sign the soldiers would return soon, the Council shifted to a regularly scheduled Family gathering our Pizza Nights. Since September we have had a Pizza Night every other Friday evening. These are usually just a time to talk and share stories about our soldiers. We have had guests, from soldiers on leave, to representatives from the 733rd QM BN and others. If you have not attended a Pizza Night, try one you'll like it.

October offered an opportunity to have a Family Halloween Party in conjunction with a Pizza Night. Based on attendance at previous picnics and Pizza night we planned accordingly. Much to the surprise of the Council attendance was higher than anticipated, things didn't go as planned but the party appeared to be a success.

With the Holiday season approaching and no sign our soldiers would be home. The Council began plans for the season. Saturday, Nov 22nd, we held a Cookie Bake and Packaging. Packages of cookies and small gifts were prepared for all 1244th soldiers in Kuwait. We filled 16 large boxes with about 150 individual boxes that was quite a trip to the Post Office. Packages were sent later to the 1244th soldiers at bases in the US for medical treatment.

The 1244th FRG's year was completed with our best event, our Christmas Party. That party was no small undertaking. Halloween showed that people would participate in the "right" events. I won't go through all the planning and re-planning but suffice to say the party planner (Caroline Perkins) make plans and revised them many times as the situation continually changed. Funding an event of this type was an issue, however through the generosity of many people and organizations a hall, catered meal, music, and Santa with gifts were provided at no cost to our families. The Chicago area chapter of the USO was our primary sponsor but they were not alone and we thank everyone that supported our families and also we thank everyone that attended the Christmas Party for participating.

The generosity of the community was extended to several less fortunate 1244th families during the holiday season. These families were provided support usually by anonymous donors that included children's gifts, food, and clothing as well as monetary support.



In summary, from nothing the 1244th FRG started in March and finished the year with a very successful Christmas Party. Our families know that the FRG and Council are in place to provide support. We look forward to a swift return of soldiers and a return to normal life. But before that will happen will continue to have Pizza Nights, just to get together and the Council will look for other ways to support you, our families. The Council openly welcomes new members to help direct our efforts. We have seen a change in the Council make-up over the year and can always use new ideas.

Birthday Wishes

Congratulations to the following soldiers that have BIRTHDAYS in the month of January;

May, Donald Vera, Nestor Dudyca, Bryan Huerta, Bernardo, Hundahl, Sara Hernandez, Oved Molina, Wendy Herrera, Angel Jr Williams, John Scott, Julie Burgess, Ashely J Ramirez, Nicole Wirtz, Michael Jr Phipps, Ivory Basteau, Steven Berens, Williams Boleres, Alberto Young, Kenneth Campus, Joseph Harder, S Lynda Gallegos, Melvin Birkhead, Franklin Duffin, Jesse

Congratulations to the following soldiers that have BIRTHDAYS in the month of February;

Ryback, Carissa Sanchez, Jose Williams, Larry Lundeen, Daniel Gallegos, Albanidia Vargas, Jesus Krajefska, Anthony Menig, Patricia Curtiss, Thomas Garcia, Victor Rodriguez Lagunas, Susana

Thank you

The FRG council would like to extend sincere thanks to the following people for their generous contributions to our group. Thank you so much!

John Kozik
Chicago Ridge VFW Post 177
Algonquin-Lake-in-the-Hills Jaycees
Ladies Auxiliary VFW Post 11018 Bartlett
St Charles VFW
Wal-Mart in Niles
Marion Abbey
Tri State Fire Protection District
Village of Romeoville
Frank Padilla
Santa - Gene
Brookfield VFW
Summit VFW
Lisa Moeller-USO
Richard Bruder-USO

Ongoing thanks to all who attend the FRG functions and meetings and help everyone involved by sharing and making it personal. Thank you everyone!

Coming Events

FRG Council Meetings Every third Wednesday, 7PM at the Armory, Open to all, next meeting **Jan 21st**.

January 30th, Pizza Night at the Armory. Get together to share experiences during the current deployment.

Pizza \$3 for adults & \$1 under 10

Feb 20th, Pizza Night at the Armory. Get together to share experiences during the current deployment. Pizza \$3 for adults & \$1 under 10

Mar 12th, 7 PM Pizza Night at the Armory. Get together to share experiences during the current deployment. Pizza \$3 for adults & \$1 under 10

Apr 2nd, 7 PM Pizza Night at the Armory. Get together to share experiences during the current deployment. Pizza \$3 for adults & \$1 under 10

Apr 23rd, 7 PM Pizza Night at the Armory. Get together to share experiences during the current deployment. Pizza \$3 for adults & \$1 under 10

FRG Las sesiones del Consejo cada tercer miércoles, los 7PM en el arsenal, se abren en todos, reunión siguiente de enero el 21.

Enero 30th, 7 P.M. noche de la pizza en el arsenal. Reunirse para compartir experiencias durante el despliegue actual. Pizza \$3 para los adultos y \$1 debajo de 10

Febrero 20th, 7P.M. noche de la pizza en el arsenal. Reunirse para compartir experiencias durante el despliegue actual. Pizza \$3 para los adultos y \$1 debajo de 10

Marzo 12th, 7 P.M. noche de la pizza en el arsenal. Reunirse para compartir experiencias durante el despliegue actual. Pizza \$3 para los adultos y \$1 debajo de 10

Abril 2nd, 7 P.M. noche de la pizza en el arsenal. Reunirse para compartir experiencias durante el despliegue actual. Pizza \$3 para los adultos y \$1 debajo de 10

Abril 23rd, 7 P.M. noche de la pizza en el arsenal. Reunirse para compartir experiencias durante el despliegue actual. Pizza \$3 para los adultos y \$1 debajo de 10

If you have an email address, please let us know. This information is very important to us. Contact us by emailing the FRG at frg1244tc@yahoo.com as soon as possible. In the subject box write:

Family of 1244th email address request.

Be sure to include your full name, your soldier's name, your relation to the soldier, and your phone number so we can reach you if we have any questions. Thank you so much. **AS CONFUSING AS IT SEEMS WE ARE NOW BACK ON YAHOO!** EMAIL IS THE MOST EFFICIENT DISTRIBUTION OF THE NEWSLETTER AND OTHER INFORMATION.

<http://yahoogroups.com>

<http://www.il.ngb.mil.1244/trans>



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See us at:

We're on the Web!



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