

The Sustainment Times

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NEW FORMATION



COMMANDER'S CORNER

Col. Donnie Walker

Dear 1st Sustainment Brigade Soldiers and Families,

It has been a fast month since Command Sgt. Maj. Miguel Rivera and I took the helm of the 1st Sustainment Brigade on Feb. 9, 2009. We have our Special Troops Battalion and Brigade headquarters actively engaged in the RESET phase of the Army Force Generation Process (ARFORGEN) and another, the 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, in various collective training stages of ARFORGEN with rapidly approaching deployment dates. We have also successfully relocated our Brigade HQs, STB HQs, HHC and Signal Company Operating Facilities, and motor pool from Custer Hill to Sustainment Drive culminating with an official Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on March 9, 2009.

In these beautiful, new facilities that are the first ever to be designed for an Army modular Sustainment Brigade headquarters, lie the resources and opportunities to successfully train and hone our warfighting skills, support the Division and Fort Riley with critical sustainment functions, and prepare our Soldiers and Families to support the Army in whatever capacity we are called upon to do in the future.

In line with this month's Newsletter theme, "A New Formation," the 1st SB finds itself with many new faces after bidding farewell to key leaders, officers, NCOs, and Soldiers. Our new arrivals join a combat tested and proven organization that has just completed remarkable feats during a 15-month OIF rotation. During OIF, the 1st SB established sustainment initiatives that were cutting edge and innovative by any ... true ... logistician's standards. I salute those accomplishments and am very proud of the achievements made by the Soldiers and leaders of the Durable Brigade. It is a shining example of our ability to write yet another extraordinary chapter in the storied history of not only this Brigade, but the 1st Infantry Division.

A chapter which entailed transforming this great organization from a Division Support Command to a Sustainment Brigade, moving it from Europe to Fort Riley, and then deploying it to Iraq when our Nation called. At its peak, the Brigade's task organization consisted of as many as seven



subordinate battalions and supported as many as 14 Brigade Combat Teams and five brigade-sized units.

But since our return home, our task organization has drastically changed. We have assumed operational control over both the Special Troops Battalion and 541st CSSB and gained administrative control (ADCON) over the Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion and 84th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion. We will also assume ADCON (-) of the 3rd Engineer Battalion as it stands up over the coming months officially activating and unfurling its colors in mid-October 2009.

The bottom line is that based on our new task organization and "new formations," we have many units doing different things in support of our Nation's continuing efforts in the global war on terrorism. So as your Commander, I continue to offer you the solemn guarantee that our philosophy will not waiver from:

- *Leadership governed by common sense,*
- *A genuine obligation to take care of Soldiers / Families,*
- *And a commitment to ensure the 1st Sustainment Brigade is ready to perform its wartime mission when called on to do so.*

In conclusion, I want all of you to rest assured that my wife, Hope, and I are honored to command this outstanding organization. We have already made the rounds to several of the company-level Family Readiness Group (FRG) meetings to introduce ourselves and meet the Families. We have been impressed by the support and energy we have observed in those sessions and hope that you all continue to participate and be active in the programs.

As many of you have already experienced, the networks established in our FRGs are critical to our Soldiers' success in a deployed environment. These networks enable our FRGs to focus on the task at hand by knowing that our Families and loved ones are taken care of back home.

It is good to have the 1st Sustainment Brigade back home in the heart of the Central Flint Hills Region of Kansas, and I look forward to serving with all of you in the months that lie ahead.

Duty First!
Sustain to Victory!

*Durable 6
Col. Donnie Walker
Commander, 1st Sustainment Brigade*



CSM TIME

Command Sgt. Maj. Miguel Rivera



Dear 1st Sustainment Brigade Soldiers and Families,

It is truly an honor to have been selected to serve as your Brigade CSM. I served under this Brigade for 12 months in Iraq and know the proud reputation they built as the best Sustainment Brigade in the Army. As our Brigade resets from the deployment, many personnel will PCS and our systems and processes will be reviewed and re-established to ensure proper support to the Division, Fort Riley, our units, and Soldiers.

These changes symbolize a "New Formation" for our organization which provides us great opportunities to learn, improve, and re-sharpen our technical and tactical skills. New Families also bring great ideas, based on their experiences, and the opportunity to build and create new friendships. Participation in your respective Family Readiness Groups is a good way to meet new people and share your ideas.

The first chapter of this Brigade was outstanding, and we are charged with the responsibility to ensure its continued success for all of our units. Some units are preparing for future deployments, and their training time will be critical to ensure mission success. All of our units are combat proven units, but this does not mean that we will lower our training standards. I expect hard, realistic training to be conducted to standard, in order to ensure our success and survival in combat. We owe this to ourselves, our Soldiers, and our Families.

Enjoy your time off ... enjoy this time with your Families. I know that many times we look back at how we spend our time off and wish we had spent more of it with our Families. I have four kids, and I can attest to that. Have fun, travel, participate in community events; all these things will ultimately make you a better person and Soldier.

In my short time here, I have been very impressed with our Soldiers' hard work and the support of many Families. My wife and I look forward to getting to know all of you and continuing to serve with you. Together we will Make it Happen.

Duty First!
Sustain to Victory!

Durable 7
Command Sgt. Maj. Miguel Rivera
CSM, 1st Sustainment Brigade

2nd QTR 09



5 1 SB leadership changes hands

Shortly after returning home from a 15-month deployment, the Brigade welcomed another change; a change in command.



11 EOD Soldiers give robotics demo

Soldiers from the 162nd EOD Co. show a group of Manhattan school children why robots can be a blast.

By Bob Cox

8 A humbling experience

A group of officers from the 541st CSSB walk away with a new lease on life after visiting a veteran's home in Winfield, Kan.

By 1st Lt. Rachel Elphinstone

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Cover photo by Sgt. Andrea Merritt



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1 SB leadership changes hands

Story by Bill Armstoring

Soldiers of 1st Sustainment Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, participated in a ceremony for a full command team change Feb. 9 at King Field House on Main Post.

Col. Kevin O'Connell, commander, 1st Sust. Bde., handed over command of the Brigade to Col. Flem B. "Donnie" Walker, Jr. With music provided by the 1st Inf. Div. Band, dignitaries and special guests from the Central Flint Hills Region and Army leaders sat in chairs on the field house floor, while Soldiers and friends filled the balcony bleachers.

O'Connell accepted the Brigade's unit colors from his brigade command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Cardoza. O'Connell then passed the colors to Brig. Gen. Perry L. Wiggins, commanding general of 1st Inf. Div. and Fort Riley.

As is tradition, Wiggins handed the colors to Walker, who passed them on to Command Sgt. Maj. Eugene Thomas, Special Troops Battalion command sergeant major. Thomas was filling in for incoming Command Sgt. Maj. Miguel Rivera, who was not able to attend the ceremony because of temporary duty elsewhere.

As early morning rain and strong winds hammered against the windows of the field house, Wiggins moved to the podium.

"Today's a bittersweet day, not because of weather, but because we're going to say goodbye to an incredible command team," Wiggins said. Making the day sweet, he said, was the command team replacing O'Connell and Cardoza.

"Donnie (Walker) is the kind of person you'd want following in your footsteps, because he's going to take what you've done, and he's going to build on that."

Wiggins also took a moment to say



1st Inf. Div. Post

goodbye to Cardoza, who is completing 31 years of Army service.

"And in this Year of the NCO, the noncommissioned officer, I think it only right that we recognize Command Sgt. Maj. Cardoza, and we extend to him a round of applause."

O'Connell assumed command of the 1st Inf. Div. Support Command in Kitzingen, Germany, which reorganized to the 1st Sust. Bde. at Fort Riley and deployed to Taji, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We want to thank everyone for your friendship and support before, during, and after our deployment," O'Connell said in his farewell address.

As incoming brigade commander, Walker commended Soldiers and leaders of the Durable Brigade for

their accomplishments under O'Connell's command. He also offered his guarantee to the Brigade.

"Our philosophy will be based on leadership governed by common sense," Walker said. Walker recently was a resident student of the U.S. Army War College, where he graduated with the Class of 2008. He is a veteran of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, in addition to Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

Soldiers of the 1st Sust. Bde. began returning to Fort Riley in December 2008, following a 15-month deployment to Iraq. During its deployment, the brigade oversaw logistics, financial management, and human resource operations throughout the greater Baghdad area.

ST

GRAND OPENING



1st Sust. Bde. / Merritt

1 SB OFFICIALLY OPENS NEW HEADQUARTERS

Story by Ty Abney

The weather may not have been warm and clear, but the sun was definitely shining on the 1st Sustainment Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, March 9 as the Brigade snipped the ribbon and officially opened the doors to its brand new headquarters and complex.

Brig. Gen. Perry Wiggins, commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley, said the unveiling was one more step being taken to improve capabilities of facilities and quality of life and work place for Soldiers.

“They’re custom digs,” Wiggins said. “The thought that went behind each one of these nooks and crannies was very detailed. From the layout of the halls, down to the individual Soldier’s personal equipment lockers, all are tailored to facilitate command and control, accountability and standardization, unit training, quality of work and life for the Soldier, and capability for the Brigade to accomplish their mission.”

The \$65 million complex took 14 months to complete and houses the Brigade’s 55,204-square foot headquarters, Special Troops Battalion, company operational facilities, and motor pool. The 1st Inf. Div. headquarters battalion and band also moved into buildings within the complex.

Col. Donnie Walker, commander of the 1st Sust. Bde., said the ceremony marked another milestone in the history of the Brigade and finally allowed the Brigade to establish its roots in the heart of the Central Flint Hills Region.

“In these beautiful new facilities, that are the first ever to be designed for an Army modular sustainment brigade, lie the resources and opportunities to successfully train, hone our war fighting skills, support the division and Fort Riley with critical sustainment war fighting functions, and prepare our Soldiers and Families.”

Walker also added the motor pool and cubicles are much more conducive to the workspace needs of Soldiers.

“I think certainly the motor pool is a state of the art facility,” Walker said. “That’s certainly a definite upgrade in the facilities we were working with down the street. So much more advanced equipment will help our Soldiers maintain their equipment in the long run.” **ST**



1st Sust. Bde. / Maude



1st Sust. Bde. / Merritt

THIRTY DAYS AND COUNTING

Story by Sgt. Andrea Merritt

About 90 days ago, the 1st Sustainment Brigade returned to Fort Riley after a 15-month deployment to Iraq. In the three months since the unit's homecoming, it has had to adjust to a mountain of changes.

After returning to Fort Riley from Iraq, the unit had to adjust to being in a garrison environment, various personnel changes, and changes in command at both brigade and battalion level.

Since the change of command ceremony Feb. 11, Lt. Col. Marvin Thornton has been welcoming all challenges while taking on his new role as commander of the Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade.

Thornton, who was a staff officer prior to being the STB commander,

expressed his excitement about his new responsibilities.

"After being a staff officer for the past nine years, it's good to be a commander because that's where the rubber meets the road as far as being with Soldiers, their Families, and helping with all the responsibility of training them to make sure they're ready to go to war, but at the same time, making sure their Families are taken care of," Thornton said.

Since the 1st Sust. Bde. recently came off of a deployment, the biggest priority is reset, which is defined as a set of actions to restore a unit's equipment and personnel to a level of combat capability equal with a unit's future mission.

The reset stage usually involves a lot of planning and training because a number of experienced Soldiers who deployed with the unit receive orders to other installations and

their incoming replacements have to learn their jobs.

"I understand where we are in reset, so I have to be very diligent about how I set my priorities because I have to balance the needs of the Battalion along with the needs of the Families and Soldiers," Thornton explained.

Since Thornton stepped into his position as the battalion commander one month ago, he has looked forward to leading his unit. He has also looked forward to getting to know his Soldiers as well as letting them getting to know him.

"(Soldiers) will see hands-on leadership. What I mean by that is they will see me out and about in their formations and no double standards ...," Thornton stated. "What they will get from me is someone who genuinely cares about Soldiers and their Families." **ST**



541st CSSB

A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE

Story by 1st Lt. Rachel Eliphinstone

“A humbling experience,” were the words that were spoken from the officers of the 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, who visited the Winfield Veteran’s Home in Winfield, Kan., Feb. 26.

Little did they know that during their visit, they would come away from the Veteran’s Home with a new perspective on life.

As they arrived at the home, they were met by a State Trooper patrol car that was there to make sure they arrived safely.

They couldn’t believe the welcome that was given to them, for they knew that they were not the special ones there. The special people were the Veterans residing in the home, who had sacrificed so much during the service to the Nation.

“It was a great honor for the company commanders and staff officers of the 541st CSSB to visit and share experiences with great American heroes who served in World War I, World War II, Vietnam, and Desert Storm,” said Capt. Shane Honan, the commander of the 24th

Transportation Company, 541st CSSB, 1st Sust. Bde.

The officers were escorted around the home by Jim Hays, the superintendent of the Veteran’s Home, and Linda Poyner, the clinical director. Hays and Poyner were pleased to have the officers visit the Veterans, especially during a time in the year when the Veterans are not often visited.

Hays and Poyner briefed the officers on the home. The officers learned that the home can accommodate 155 Veterans, but at the time they only had 150 living there. Of those 150 people, 127 of them were Veterans and 23 were spouses of Veterans.

It was amazing to the officers that 73 out of the 127 were Veterans from World War II, which ended more than 60 years ago. Most of those Veterans were drafted and did not voluntarily go to war like service members do today. They left Family and friends with no choice, and they fought bravely for their country.

During the visit, the first stop was a room filled with Veteran’s who were being awarded a Freedom Team Salute Commendation

package. This package included an official U.S. Army lapel pin, a Certificate of Appreciation, and a letter of thanks signed by both the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Army.

The package was a way for the Army to say a special “thank you” for the Veteran’s sacrifice and support of the United States Army.

Since the 541st CSSB was there that day, Lt. Col. John Silverstein, the commander of the 541st CSSB, 1st Sust. Bde., had the honor of handing out the awards to each Veteran. It was an emotional few moments for all of the officers as the Veterans either walked up or were pushed in a wheelchair to receive their award.

As the visit continued, the officers were blessed with the opportunity to sit down and have lunch with a Veteran. This was an opportunity for everyone to share their experiences about serving in the military. The officers were touched by the stories they heard, which left some of them a little teary-eyed and more appreciative of what they have in today’s Army. **» Pg. 14**

AROUND THE BRIGADE







84th EOD Bn.

EOD Soldiers give robotics demo to Manhattan school children

Story by Bob Cox

The 162nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company from the 84th EOD Battalion at Fort Riley treated about 120 Northview Elementary School children to some special demonstrations March 4.

The children are part of an after school program that focuses on academic and enrichment activities. Sue Mountford, the program's coordinator, was especially complimentary of the support given by the Fort Riley unit.

"Northview Elementary has the largest population of children from military Families in Manhattan.

Events like this are so important to building community relations and besides that, the demonstrations were very cool!"

Nine Soldiers from the 162nd EOD Co., a brand new EOD unit on Fort Riley, demonstrated their technical skills and various pieces

"I'm glad to learn about all this, but I'm really glad there are Soldiers who can protect us from these dangerous bombs."

of EOD equipment meant to protect civilians and Soldiers and save lives in a combat environment.

"Improvised explosive devices are the number one killer of Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Capt. Lucas Towne, 162nd EOD Co. commander.

"Besides protecting Soldiers and others from IEDs, identifying and disposing of enemy weapons caches, and protecting personnel and property from other explosive hazards are especially important in today's operational environment."

The children learned more about the Army and the important work done by EOD units at one of four different stations » **Pg. 14**



Stock Photo

CGMCG HOSTS ANNUAL ARMY EQUINE CONFERENCE

Story by Anna Staatz

Packing mules correctly and equine therapy aren't usually the first images that come to mind when the word "Army" is mentioned, but they are essential skills to a growing number of Soldiers.

The Commanding General's Mounted Color Guard hosted the annual Army Equine Conference Feb. 23-26 at Fort Riley, offering mounted color guards from around the Army a look at some of the ways the military is using horses to accomplish its missions.

Conference attendees spent an afternoon learning some basic skills on how to correctly pack equipment onto a mule. Retired Chap. Paul Schulz said there are about 6,000 mules currently in use by the Army in Afghanistan.

"Choppers can only get to about 18,000 feet," Schulz said. "The paths are too narrow for a vehicle, so the only way to get supplies to some areas is on foot with mules."

Schulz reviewed types of packing saddles with Soldiers and then demonstrated how to balance supplies to ease the burden on the mule, how to pack supplies and how to load oddly-shaped items such as anti-tank missiles.

"You want to be sure when packing things like this that you cover them, so the enemy can't see what you're carrying," Schulz said. "You don't want to be exposed on a narrow mountain pass and have your enemy be watching with binoculars and able to tell what kind of weapons you have."

Two Fort Riley Soldiers recently completed the Animal Packers Course, given by the Marines in Bridgeport, Calif. The course is based on Army Special Forces doctrine, said 1st Sgt. Dean Stockert. Stockert can now task those Soldiers to train Fort Riley units deploying to Afghanistan.

Those attending the conference also were able to spend an afternoon at Hope Ranch in Manhattan, Kan. The ranch has been in operation for about five years and currently has about 37 students participating in the equine therapy program. The lessons are geared to help those with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities.

Chelsea Nunn, one of the therapists, said there are two types of lessons. The first type is geared more towards therapy for students with cerebral palsy (CP) or similar conditions. **» Pg. 14**



Chaplain's Thoughts

Chaplain Terrence E. Hayes, Brigade Chaplain



STRONG BONDS RETREAT

By Capt. Larry Van Hook

The Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, held its first couples retreat at Great Wolf Lodge in Kansas City, Kan., Feb. 13-15, during the Valentine's Day weekend.

The retreat was part of the Army's Strong Bonds initiative. It is an Army-wide program administered through the chaplaincy that has invested millions of dollars into the betterment of Soldiers' marriages and Families.

The funding has helped Soldiers to attend marriage, Family, and pre-marital single Soldier retreats at places like the Great Wolf Lodge.

Besides the fun and relaxing locations, Strong Bond retreats offer the chaplain an opportunity to

provide his or her Soldiers with tools to strengthen Families and marriages; something that indirectly mitigates the increase incidence of both divorce and suicide in the Army.

During the recent couples retreat, Capt. Larry Van Hook, the STB chaplain, and Maj. Terrence Hayes, the brigade chaplain, conducted a seminar on the "Five Love Languages."

It was received favorably by the attendees, and the couples left asking each other "How is your love tank?"

The couples also enjoyed a fancy Valentine's Dinner in which they exchanged gifts. (Giving gifts is one of the five love languages).

Many couples brought their children and enjoyed spending time

with them at the indoor water park and game room.

At the retreats, most everything is provided: lodging, curriculum, food, and entertainment.

The Army has recognized the need for unmarried Soldiers to maintain and strengthen the relationships in their lives as well, which is why there are Strong Bonds retreats for single Soldiers.

Although the retreat in February was for couples, another one was scheduled just for the single Soldiers in the STB from March 27-29.

Contact your battalion chaplains for upcoming Strong Bond retreats or call Staff Sgt. Timothy Seppala, the Brigade chaplain's assistant, at 785-240-0901 for more information.

ST



» **Pg. 8** “It was a very humbling experience. I got to meet this guy who landed on the beaches of Iwo Jima, and I got to hear his story first-hand,” said Capt. Gary Plys, commander of the 1st Maintenance Company, 541st CSSB, 1st Sust. Bde.

As they rounded up to head back home, some were left a little speechless and humbled by what they had encountered during the day. They were left speechless and humbled because they realized that they had nothing to complain about.

“We deploy for 12 or 15 months at a time, but these guys would deploy for years at a time, not ever knowing when they were coming home, and they did it without moaning or complaining,” Plys added.

Sure most Soldiers have tough and challenging days, but these Veterans have endured, and continue to endure, days where they have difficulty getting out of bed in the morning because of physical or mental disabilities from the wars they have fought in.

Due to the success of the visit, the leaders of the 541st CSSB have scheduled another trip to the home in early April “so that the younger Soldiers and officers will have a chance to speak with the older generation,” Plys said.

Today, Soldiers live and work in an Army that is much better off than the Army these Veterans fought in, and for that, they were thankful. They made sacrifices so that everyone would have freedom. Service members should also be thankful for the love and dedication the Veteran’s gave through the service to their great country. **ST**

» **Pg. 11** they rotated through during the program.

At one station, Sgts. Eric Haussecker and Josh Meredith explained several EOD tools like the Percussion Actuated Neutralizer Disrupter.

At another station, Sgt. Billy Wilkes and Spc. Kevin Cheatham demonstrated the Pacbot, an EOD robot controlled by radio or wired control to handle situations involving potential explosives.

The children paid close attention and laughed as the Talon EOD robots scooted around the playground picking up various objects while Sgt. Jeremy Walsh and Pfc. Adam Lendt explained how the robots help in search and recovery efforts, to include those similar to the efforts in which they were used after the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

Spes. Scott Archdekin and Richard Partridge, along with Towne, took on a barrage of questions as children learned about various types of military ordnance and the capabilities of the

bomb suit used by EOD Soldiers.

Austin Telck, a fifth-grader, said he especially enjoyed the Talon robots and noted the Soldiers were sure having fun showing off the robots. He did express some genuine concern, however, when he said, “I think that guy in the bomb suit wants out of there pretty bad. He looks mighty hot.”

Liz Fanning, one of 20 after school leaders and a journalism major at Kansas State University, said she was as excited as the kids and very much appreciative of the Soldiers taking time to come to the school and provide everyone such a great learning experience.

Fanning and all involved in the activity took enjoyment in expressions on the children’s faces when the Pacbot was driven right up to them and then started talking.

“I’m glad to learn about all this,” said one student, Aliyah Ryan, “But I’m really glad there are Soldiers who can protect us from these dangerous bombs.” **ST**

» **Pg. 12** The lessons focus on strengthening core body muscles and helping with coordination. The second type of lesson is geared for those physically able to ride, where the therapy is more emotional in nature and focuses on the technical aspects of how to ride.

“There was one girl with CP who came in here about two years ago and it took two trainers to hold her on the horse during the lessons,” Nunn said. “Now she can hold herself up.”

Equine therapy in the Army is nothing new. Staff Sgt. Tonya Mullen, 3rd Infantry Division, Caisson Platoon, works with the therapeutic riding program for Soldiers at Walter Reed Medical Center. Soldiers in the program are

amputees, or have had severe eye or similar injuries. Some suffer from traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress syndrome.

“The benefits for Soldiers in these types of programs are amazing,” Mullen said. “Not just the mental aspects of it, but the physical as well. It really works well to strengthen muscles.”

Mullen said the rocking motion of riding a horse also helped leg amputees with balance, muscle development, and flexibility as they began to use prosthetics.

The Fort Riley Warrior Transition Battalion currently contracts with Hope Ranch as a service to Soldiers who might benefit from equine therapy. The conference also featured briefings by each mounted color guard and unit and historical tours of Fort Riley. **ST**