

The Geronimo



Vol. I No. 5 Task Force 1-501st PIR, FOB Salerno, Afghanistan December 19, 2003

Soldiers guarding Soldiers

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Jeff Troth

The Soldiers of 1-501 Airborne Task Force know they can sleep, eat and go about their daily routines in relative safety thanks to their brethren who are standing guard 24/7.

Companies within the task force take turns manning the gates and guard towers that surround Forward Operating Base Salerno. Company B is finishing up its duty as the first line of defense for the FOB.

"We are the only ones who check the trucks," says Pfc. Justin Pruitt, Co. B. "We have to ensure that nothing gets in that can be used to harm our Soldiers."

The guards on the FOB's gates confiscate various items. When the Afghans depart, their items are returned.



A 1-501 ATF soldier keeps a watchful eye out for unusual activity from the guard tower located next to the north gate.

The search of the vehicles is not always an easy task. Under the seats of some trucks Pruitt has found compartments concealed under wooden planks. So far all he has found in these spaces are hoses and other spare vehicle parts.

"Some of those spaces could be overlooked, and they are perfect places to hide weapons," Pruitt said. "You have to look as good as you can and hope you don't miss anything. I do not want it to be my fault that something made it on Salerno that was used to harm any of our Soldiers."

Trucks arrive at the front gate with supplies and equipment for the task force. Their information and papers are checked and then verified from Bagram Air Field, where the trucks originate.

Pruitt said interpreters are at the gate to help with drivers who don't speak English.

"We have learned some basic Pashto, so that we can tell the locals to turn around when we are searching them, or that they are OK and can go," said Pruitt. "Anything more than that would be very hard without an interpreter."



A 1-501 ATF soldier uses a metal detector to determine that a truck driver is not carrying any contraband onto the FOB.

Besides the Soldiers at the gates, several others are on guard towers that ring the perimeter of the compound. These guards are responsible for noticing anything out of the ordinary in their sector.

"Once you've been here a few days you get a feeling for the position," said Pfc. Ivan Inouye. "You get to know what is supposed to be out there and what is supposed to be going on in front of your tower, so you know when something isn't right."

The Soldiers know their constant vigil serves a purpose and when they are not on guard other Geronimos are providing that security for them.

"When I am on Salerno and not on guard duty I feel safe," said Inouye. "I know that there are soldiers out there on guard and keeping a constant lookout."

ASK MSG NORDSTROM

If you have a question for MSG Nordstrom, drop it off at the ALOC.

Dear MSG Nordstrom,

What is up with our breakfast meal? We have only had biscuits and gravy a couple of times since we have been here, and to me it is a morning ritual that I miss.

Signed, Chip Beefer

Dear CB,

You got one thing right son, it is good. But you need to call it what it is. When we weren't on the front lines fighting the Germans in Bastogne we were filling our bellies with good ol' SOS. And that is what most intelligent people still call it. So, until you can call it what it is, fill your trap with eggs and drive on. MSG N

Dear MSG Nordstrom,

It is hard enough walking around here at night why do we have to litter the area with rocks and sand bags? I have almost busted my noggin open a few times.

Yours Truly, Can't see in dark

Dear CSID,

Well, well well, having trouble walking at night? I have the perfect solution, it is called the LOW CRAWL. You think those rocks are a pain now, just wait until you have crept across the length and breadth of this base on your belly, then you won't be complaining about walking on them.

As far as busting your head, I know our Uncle Sam issued you the proper protection. Wear your Kevlar, and that chin strap and better be on your chin, not under it. MSG N

Dear MSG Nordstrom,

I am a little frustrated with our logistical procedures during the recent operation. How many times do I have to call in an Amber report in a day to get fuel? I mean, come on, you know I'm missing my XO.

Sincerely, LID

Dear Comanche,

This is actually my fourth response to this question. Can you confirm 80 gallons – or is it 50 gallons – or is it 130 gallons? Better luck next time, Airborne!

MSG N

Dear MSG Nordstrom,

Although prior to the deployment we were briefed that we would be getting mail every 7-10 days, I heard that mail is on every plane that lands at the FOB, but they just don't want to deliver it.

Waiting hoping impatiently for news

Dear WHIN,

If they told you 7-10 days what makes you think they are holding your mail hostage? When mail comes in, it is sorted and given to your unit mail clerks. So stop bugging the S-3 air and ALOC everyday about mail – they don't know anything. MSG N

Christmas Message from Geronimo 6

As I write this message, the GI Soldier has been chosen as the Time Magazine Person of the Year. I can think of no better individual to receive this recognition than all our Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Sailors as each sacrifice for the Global War on Terrorism. Each of you, as members of the Geronimo Task Force, are part of this historic crusade that our country has embarked upon. When your children and grand children are old enough to understand the historic significance, you will be able to explain what your contribution was to the fight. Today, our country has returned to Orange alert. Once again they are at the second highest terrorist warning of attacks since 9/11. Remember, you stand in Afghanistan today to prevent any future attacks on our soil.

Christmas and the Holidays hold special meaning for all of us. Family, friendship, and generosity to others are hallmarks for the Season. Although we spend our Christmas in Afghanistan, remember, you are neither the first nor the last Geronimo to spend Christmas away from family. Geronimos were laying in the snow of Bastogne on Christmas day, in the rice paddies of Vietnam on Christmas Eve, and now you patrol in the deserts and mountains of Afghanistan. You carry on the proud tradition of this Regiment.

I conclude with this Holiday Cheer: CSM Turnbull and I are proud of each one of you and honored to lead this great team. Enjoy Christmas and remember why you sacrifice. Take care of each other.

Merry Christmas and Kill the Enemy!

Geronimo 6

Spirit of Christmas alive, well at FOB

**Faith in the
Word**

By Chaplain
(Capt.) Brad Lee
1/501st PIR Chaplain



Season's Greetings my fellow Geronimo's! Now before anyone responds with "Ba-Humbug," consider for a moment that some of you simply need to hang around the right person to experience some Yuletide cheer. For those of you in Headquarters Company, maybe you should try spending some time with Master Sgt. Nordstrom. He not only has a knack with words if you read his column, but he also bubbles over with Holiday cheer.

If you're in Company A, Staff Sgt Ralston is quite the Holiday

Cheermeister there. For Company B, I highly suggest 1st Sgt. Powell, I've actually heard him singing Christmas carols in the shower!

Unfortunately, Company C seems to be Holiday spirit challenged, but maybe if they moved closer to the TOC, they too could benefit from Master Sgt. Nordstrom's jovialness. Company D lives close enough to the chapel that they experience the Holiday music and cheer emanating from the chapel.

1st Sgt. Levis gets the vote for Battery E — you know he almost has elf-like qualities. And for Forward Support Company, Sgt. Carr is a fine

example of Christmas cheer as he is one of the few that I have seen actually make Sgt. First Class Lesch smile!

As we are but a few days from Christmas, I notice that most of us fall into two groups. The first group approaches Christmas as just another day, which is an understandable way of coping with separation from family and loved ones. The second group however, chooses to embrace the spirit of Christmas and make the most of what we have. I, like most of you, would prefer to be at home with my wife, children, and dog, celebrating Christ-

mas around our own tree and fireplace. Be that as it may, I am here with you this Christmas.

But rather than mope and pout and try to downplay the holiday, I choose to celebrate, which I am certain that's what our loved ones would want us to do as well.

And rest assured, there should be no guilt in our celebration. After all, and especially for those of you that are men

and women of faith, the true Spirit and meaning of Christmas is not determined by where we are or who we are with.

Traveling back to FOB Salerno last week from the PAA, I was reminded that the shepherds that I saw tending their flock probably were not all that different from the ones to whom angels appeared some 2,000 years ago and announced, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Whether at home by the fireplace with eggnog and mistletoe, or here at FOB Salerno, the Spirit and the joy of Christmas is very much alive if you will embrace it and celebrate it. God is with us here just as He is with our families back home, and that is why we can celebrate as we are bound together by the presence and love of God. So from my tent to yours, may your days be merry and bright ... Merry Christmas!

Grace & Peace, Chaplain Brad Lee



A 1-501 ATF soldier opens an early Christmas present at the Chapel Open House.

No War Trophies Allowed from Iraq, Afghanistan

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Do not even think about bringing back to the United States war trophies from your service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

With about 140,000 American service members due to rotate out of Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. Central Command officials are very clear that service members cannot bring home weapons, ammunition and other prohibited items.

A few soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division understand how serious the command is. Some soldiers tried to smuggle weapons back from Baghdad, and they have gone through courts martial. Others received Article 15

administrative punishments. “There is a whole spectrum of punishments, depending on the severity of the offense,” said Maj. Robert Resnick, an Army lawyer at Fort Stewart, Ga.

Army Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command, has put out the policy. Basically, under no circumstances can individuals take as a souvenir an object that was formerly in the possession of the enemy. The taking of war trophies goes against the coalition mission in Iraq and Afghanistan, officials said.

“We didn’t go into Iraq or Afghanistan to conquer them, but to liberate them,” said Marine Capt. Bruce Frame, a Central Command spokesman. “Taking articles



from those countries sends the wrong message.”

Service members with questions should work through the chain of command, CENTCOM officials said, adding that service members will be given ample briefings on what is allowed and what is not. In the case of Iraq, unit commanders will brief service members on the policy before leaving for Kuwait.

In Kuwait, military police will explain the policy and will permit an amnesty period before searching gear

and vehicles. In the United States, U.S. Customs Service officials will examine individual gear.

In Afghanistan, unit commanders will explain the policy, and MPs there

also will explain it and offer an amnesty period before the service members board the planes. Again, Customs will examine gear and baggage upon return to the United States.

The same prohibitions pertain to American civilians serving in the Central Command area of operations.

Other federal laws pertain to other items. For example, service members cannot bring back plants, animals or other organic materials. Some Marines returning from Afghanistan in April 2002, for example, tried to bring back the skulls of sheep attached to their guidons. The Customs agents met the Marines as they landed on the beach at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and confiscated the items.

No one can bring back antiquities into the United States, and of course, no one can bring drugs or drug paraphernalia into the United States.

The overall prohibition does not pertain to souvenirs that can be legally imported into the United States, officials said.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Trish