

All Concerned,

At the last FRG meeting that I attended there were several questions about living conditions for the Bulldog soldiers. I was lucky enough to get some of CPT Leclerc's time and he provided me with a wealth of information and I think I got him to answer most of the questions that I wrote down from your meeting. So here it goes.

### **Basic Living Conditions**

Every soldier has a bed, foam mattress, donated comforter, and sheets. CPT Leclerc said that a great thing to send would be some soft, fitted sheets. The ones they issue are not as good as you can get from home. The soldiers that are co-located with the BDE are currently living in trailers that house 2-4 soldiers each and are air-conditioned. Showers and flushing toilets are also provided. The company signed for several TVs, DVD players, refrigerators and microwaves, and they have distributed these out amongst the soldiers. Not every soldier has one, but they share. The permanent Dining Facility is also in construction. What they have now is only temporary, but CPT Leclerc said that they could eat four times a day, every day. The new dining facility will be ready in just a few weeks. The Prophet Platoon is about 4-5 miles away from the Company Command Post (CP) at a different base camp. Those soldiers are living in a building that has all of the basic comforts and then some. CPT Leclerc referred to it as College Dorm life. They have a big Dayroom with a TV, Armed Forces Network (AFN), movies, and a Playstation 2 (soldier provided) and air conditioning and fans. Their quarters are not as private or advanced, but the unit has made sure they have had all of the same comforts as everyone else.

### **Internet and Phone Capabilities**

Internet is coming slowly, but it is coming. The soldiers co-located with the Brigade just recently started getting Internet capabilities. Right now there is a computer in the Brigade Tactical Operations Cell (TOC) that is available to the company. Eventually, the company Command Post (CP) will have one too. Internet time is limited, but the soldiers are very respectful of each other and try to make sure that everyone who wants to write an e-mail, gets a chance to write to their loved one. Recently, an AT&T Phone Center was added for soldiers to use. It is still under construction, but should be up soon. Each Center holds about 15 phones, to give you an idea. The Prophet soldiers are more restricted right now as to what they have access to. They do have to pay \$3.00 an hour to use the Internet, and about \$.50 a minute for domestic phone calls. The unit is trying to work getting them a Cell Phone or something to help.

### **PX Facilities**

From what I am told, they have a PX that is sufficient enough to carry the toiletry items to include snacks, as well as a Barber Shop available to them. They are building the biggest PX in Iraq near the living quarters. CPT Leclerc said that it looks like it will be bigger in square footage than the Clear Creek PX, if that helps give you an idea how big it will be. There is a Warehouse of sorts that carries almost any American soldiers luxury to include Dirt Bikes (\$100), Digital Cameras, DVDs, CDs, MP3 players and an assortment of other amenities. There is also a gym facility close, but they have not had the opportunity to do much PT because of their schedules.

### **Leave Policy**

CPT Leclerc went into great detail about the environmental leave program (Rest and Recreation or R&R). Environmental Leave will begin on or about 1 April for the soldiers in 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. CPT Leclerc is going to try very hard to try to let me know when soldiers are due to come back and in what order. Please understand that unless a soldier is returning under emergency leave, it will take about 2-4 days to get out of Iraq and out-process Kuwait properly. That time is not counted against the soldiers' Environmental Leave time. The Categories of leave are as follows:

**Category 1**-Soldiers that qualify under emergency leave but not under theater policy (death of immediate family member to include spouse, child/step-child, parent/step-parent, sibling, or loco-parentis). It takes approximately 48 hours to return to the US in an emergency situation.

**Category 2**-Soldiers with pregnant spouses (defined as a birth after 1 Jan or soon to deliver) The unit will try to get the expecting father home in the same month the child is expected to be born.

**Category 3**-Dual Military Spouses where the spouse has just returned from a deployment.

**Category 4**-Everyone else that has leave available and who deployed before 1APR. The policy is to ensure that the process is random and equal for all soldiers.

**Category 5** - Soldiers who deployed after 1APR are not eligible for the environmental leave program. However, these soldiers are authorized to take "Freedom Rest." This is the opportunity to visit a palace in downtown Baghdad that has a hotel type room to rest in. It may even have a pool that the soldiers can use. They plan to send a soldier every other week for a couple days to allow some decompression time.

Soldiers that fall into Category 1 have first priority for leave for a given period; soldiers in Category 2 are second priority, etc. The company will send soldiers on leave based on these categories/priorities and they will be able to send 4-5 soldiers each period.