

Porta-Potty Bears

Our hospitals continue providing top notch care to our soldiers. As you've heard in the news, US soldiers continue to become injured by enemy action and accidents. In every case, the soldiers receive outstanding medical care at Bear North and Bear South.

This past week we conducted the Change-of-Command for A Company from CPT Glenn Marsh to CPT Marvin Emerson. Over the past 2 years, Glenn did an outstanding job in preparing A Company for their hospital mission and safely deploying and setting-up their hospital. Congratulations on a job well done. Marvin is no stranger to the 21st. He has been our S3 since last summer and will be a great addition as A Company Commander. Welcome to Marv, Kara, and the kids.

Last week I discussed our water and gasoline supplies. This week, let me tell you about something more personal. When we started in Kuwait, we used Porta-Potties, but this ended as we crossed the border into Iraq. At first, the "toilet" involved a small hole in the ground. As we waited South of Baghdad for our orders to move forward, we found several scraps of lumber and used two of our toilet seats to create a "two-holer." We were talk of the area as the only unit that planned ahead and brought toilet seats. Bear North and South continue to have the nicest latrines in each of our areas. Bear South has a fancy "eight-holer" while North built several smaller versions – each with seats and fancy counterweights to help close the doors. This past week, Bear North returned to modern times with the installation of several porta-potties. Bear South hopes to have the same within the next few weeks. Just don't forget to bring your own toilet paper!

The big news this week is the release of Stop Loss guidance. Soldiers that were due to ETS during the past few months will be permitted to depart the Army between now and 20 Dec. Their new ETS date is derived from a formula based on their original ETS date. For each soldier, we've used this updated ETS date to calculate an expected departure date. In most cases, the departure will be 90 days prior to the new ETS. In the meantime, the 21st does not have any guidance on when the hospital will redeploy. As you may be aware, most of our combat forces remain in Iraq. I expect most of these forces to depart before we get a specific date on when we will be replaced. I still think the winter season is the most likely return. As we learn more, we'll be sure to keep you up-to-date.

This has been a good week for mail service. Several soldiers received packages less than 2 weeks after they were mailed in the US and many of the older packages are being delivered. Some packages are opened for inspection and valuable items may be lost. Please be careful if fragile or valuable items are included in your package, but please continue to send these expressions of support.

I'll close by focusing on the hard work of our Rear Detachment and Family Readiness Groups. Thank you to the Rear Detachment personnel and family members that assist with emergencies and special problems for our families. We can not perform our missions without your support.