

Busy Bears

Our convoys moved our soldiers safely to their destinations and the 21st Combat Support Hospital is operating two busy hospitals in Iraq. We call our hospitals "Bear North" and "Bear South." I was very proud of everyone's hard work in complexing our hospitals in record time. In this case, record time means less than half of the time required to set-up the hospital during our field training exercises last November.

Bear North is operated by B Company. The hospital is located in a grassy field with bumps and ruts that reveal its prior use as a farm. Bear South is operated by A Company and is located in a very large desert field. B Company has the rain while A Company is plagued with sand storms.

"If you build it, they will come" was made famous by the baseball movie, "Field of Dreams." In the case of our hospitals, this phrase again proved accurate. Each hospital had their first patients within minutes of opening their doors and inpatients during their first night of operation. So far, our "medics" have helped over a hundred soldiers and a few host nation persons with very serious medical problems.

When are we coming home? In the next few weeks there will be announcements of units redeploying to CONUS. Some of the medical units from Fort Hood may return, but I expect the Army to require our hospitals here in Iraq for the next several months. We will share any updates as we learn more.

Mail service continues to be sporadic. As we arrive at each new location, it takes several days before the postal personnel arrive to take letters. Delivery has also been delayed as postal personnel try to determine where units are located. Please keep sending letters – the soldiers really appreciate the notes from home. We also have not seen telephone service for almost 4 weeks. We have very limited email access and hope to provide limited opportunities for soldiers to email home in the coming week.

Our soldiers are setting the standard. I'm really proud of their hard work and you should be, too. Thanks for your sacrifice and support.