Dear Editor:

Greetings all,

John F. Kennedy once said, “It is an unfortunate fact that we can secure peace only by preparing for war.” This is a motivating quote that gives meaning to my experience. I am sorry I have not been able to write, however, I will try to make sure a letter gets out in a timely manner to keep everyone informed the best I can.

Well, that said, this has been a pretty crazy last few months. I was in the Army Reserve when my unit, the 1013th Quarter Master Company, was ordered to send troops to the 263rd QM Co. from El Paso, Texas. Since then my adventure has taken me to all parts of the world.

My first stop was a brief stay at Fort Dix, N.J. While there I experienced some first class training. Training that ranged from basic soldier skills such as rifle qualification, navigation, advanced weapon (50 ca., 240 Bravo, 249 SAW) familiarization. The more advanced training consisted of a HMMWV rollover drill, qualification on the 203 (grenade launcher mounted under the M16 A2), and Counter IED (Improvised Explosive Device) classes that prepare us for convoys in Iraq.

After our stay in Fort Dix we then went to Camp Shelby, Miss. We continued the same training there that we began in Fort Dix. The weather in Mississippi made us excited to go to the desert. The heat of the desert looks great when compared to the humidity of Mississippi. While at Camp Shelby, we received a lot of gear and just did the final qualifications and paperwork to go to Iraq. There is a lot of paperwork and health surveys to do before anyone can go into a war zone.

After our 30 days at Mississippi, we flew, with our rifles might I add, out of Gulf Port. It was quite an experience to step onto a commercial airline with stewardesses, with a rifle/grenade launcher in hand, as well as a knife in our pocket.

The flight took us to Maine where we had a layover and were greeted by several friendly people who supported the troops. This was great, except that my platoon sergeant had a seizure on the plane and had to be taken away on an ambulance. He will not be returning as far as I know. After Maine we flew to Germany and stayed a couple of hours until we finally arrived in Kuwait.

Kuwait was quite an eye-opener because it was my first experience of the desert. We were stationed at Camp Buehring for about two weeks. Our main goal in Kuwait was just to adapt to the heat and wait for a flight into Iraq. We did do some training while in Kuwait. We went through the HMMWV rollover training, a weapon test fire and a class on the types of IED’s they are using in the latest attacks.

Kuwait was a nice stay other than the fact that close to 70 soldiers stayed in a tent that only allowed for each soldier to have a cot and about a foot-and-a-half on either side for space. The other down part was living out of a bag for the two weeks. It went by and we finally got our flight out of Arifjan Air Force Base. We flew in a big cargo plane operated by the U.S. Air Force. We landed at BIAP (Baghdad International Airport). Our headquarters is located in Camp Liberty which is next to Camp Victory, home to BIAP.

I have been here about two weeks and am still trying to get used to the climate and new way of life. Life here really isn’t bad at all, Camp Liberty provides a lot of comforts. Base offers internet in our CHU’s (Containerized Housing Units). Our CHUs only have two-three personnel living in them. There is a great chow hall about a mile away, a gym, and nice PX. All require a little walk

but it is not that bad, and a shuttle service runs about every 30 minutes.

This life, however, is very short lived. Tomorrow I was supposed to fly to a COP (Combat Outpost) where these luxuries are nonexistent. The outpost is a small base of only about 300 soldiers. No reliable internet, chow halls, indoor rest rooms/showers, gym and tents without a/c to live in. I am waiting to go just to see if this place is going to be that “fun.” However, our flight was cancelled, so we will not be leaving tomorrow as we planned. We need to reschedule the helicopters for transportation, but for now I have been given a detail that will take my Sunday off away from me. I will be required to show up in full battle rattle to escort a civilian around the camp.

Hopefully we can get our flight and be on our way, but I have had the chance to see some of the sights that this camp offers. The main sight that really makes a person think is the Al Fut Palace. This is one of Saddam’s royal palaces. The place looks like a scene straight out of Aladdin. The entire inside of the palace is made from marble. There is an entrance greeting room that has a chandelier that looks like a school bus hanging from the ceiling. Then surrounding the palace is a moat that turns into a lake in his backyard. The lake is stocked with fish that are the size of medium sharks. The palace is very unique and a neat sight to see.

I just want to thank you all for the support and prayers. It is extremely helpful to know the support is there. I wish to see you all soon.

Yours truly,
PFC Ford, Todd A.