

OPERATION DESERT STORM
UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

March 10, 1991

Dear Friends,

Bonnie must have decided that with the end of hostilities here in the Gulf area, I might have too much time on my hands. So, in conjunction with Spring Cleaning, she decided to "help" me by forwarding all the Christmas cards...yes it is March, even in Saudi Arabia.

So, with the raging successes? of my Christmas letter and Valentine's Day note and a whole lot of addresses recently furnished, comes the mandate to publish again; and now we have the Saint Patrick's Day (Patron Saint of Engineers) message from "the front". Well, no one would ever call Riyadh the front though we did play catch with a few Scuds. Actually, we had a Marine here for a few days working intelligence issues at the headquarters, and after taking in our set-up he declared that we were TREMFs; with the T standing for "total". (The R and E stand for rear echelon...{types}).

So far as DESERT STORM goes, we were all surprised, and thankful, about the quick conclusion. As the President and others said, any losses are too many; however from an engineer standpoint we were amazed at the relative ease with which the coalition forces literally blew through the fixed defenses and obstacles along the border. Casualty predictions for a forced breach were grim, to say the least.



As we change from a build-up to a build-down philosophy with the theater construction program, there have been some exciting moments: trying to jump in and cancel or downscope some of the high dollar projects, mostly Saudi-funded, and gear-up wash racks and hardstand needed to redeploy. You might ask how we got into this "last minute frenzy"; to which I would have to reply that we were always thinking redeployment...but we seemed to be the only ones. Couldn't get anyone's attention; and when we brought up the subject it was like trying to give a wildcat an enema: you don't get much accomplished except get the dickens scratched out of you. Now all of this doesn't mean that forces will be delayed getting home; we'll just crash until all the building blocks are in place.

Not sure how the Islamic holy month of Ramadan (March 17 to April 14) will affect our operations. Have enclosed an excerpt from the CENTCOM news service. You may find it interesting.

Have been closely monitoring the early returns..not from elections, but from this part of the world back HOME. No word yet on when CENTCOM will pull the plug, or to what degree; but I know a lot of people who could have their bags packed in about 15 minutes. LtGen Rogers, the Deputy CINC back at MacDill, will retire on 29 March, and the entire Engineer Division has volunteered to be there to line the field ... or police the parade ground, or whatever.

Warm regards,

Ramadan: Fast nearing

SAUDIARABIA-- Because of the deployment of more than 500,000 U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Storm, American, as well as other non-Muslim coalition forces, may find the Islamic culture quite different than that of their own. One major event in the Islamic culture is quickly approaching.

The Islamic holy month of Ramadan will be observed by Muslims, the followers of the Islamic religion, from March 17 through April 14 this year.

During the entire month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Arab and Islamic calendar, Muslims take part in a ritual fasting. The fast is considered to be a spiritual discipline marking the end to indulgence and constituting a kind of purification.

Muslims do not eat, drink or smoke from dawn to sunset during Ramadan. In addition, Muslims do not listen to music, engage in sexual contact or other "pleasures of the senses."

During the night, however, these sacrifices are restored, but no celebrations of any sort are held.

After the final evening prayer, Muslims usually eat a breakfast. Later during the night, a larger meal is eaten. Shortly before dawn, a meal called "suhur" is eaten. Frequently, town criers will roam the streets, advising the people that sunrise is near and the fast should begin again.

Some Muslims are exempt from fasting, such as those in poor health, pregnant and nursing women, and travelers on long journeys. Children begin by fasting half a day, gradually increasing to several days until they are old enough to fast without jeopardizing their health. If fasting might threaten health, it should be stopped. Muslims exempted from all or a part of the fasting period must observe the same number of days missed later in the year.

Because the Islamic calendar is based on the cycles of the moon, the beginning of the month of Ramadan depends upon the physical sighting of the moon. The month of Ramadan moves through the year because of the lunar calendar and is not always observed in accordance with the Western Gregorian calendar during the same month of the year. In the Islamic calendar, holidays advance about 10 days each year. When Ramadan is observed in the heat of summer, the "sacrifice" is greater. Fasting is considered easier when conducted in the winter months.

Muslims begin the day during Ramadan by vowing to perform the fast as a rite. Ramadan is considered a blessed time to Muslims because it represents a moment in the year when God's graces seem closer and more accessible. Muslims believe that by fasting, they morally achieve a direct understanding of the suffering of the hungry. Additionally, Muslims believe the fasting rite leads to renewal and fresh strength.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars of Islam. As a result, Ramadan is an occasion for intensified reading of the Koran.

The last ten days of Ramadan are particularly holy. During this time, Laylatal-Qadar (the "night of power" or "destiny") is observed. In the Islamic religion, this commemorates the night during the year 610 A.D. when the Koran was revealed to Muhammad, the Messenger of God. It is, therefore, the holiest day of the year.

Non-Muslim allied coalition forces are being cautioned to be considerate of fasting Muslims by not eating, drinking or smoking in front of their Muslim comrades.

- CENTCOM News Service



© 1991 BROOKINS—RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH