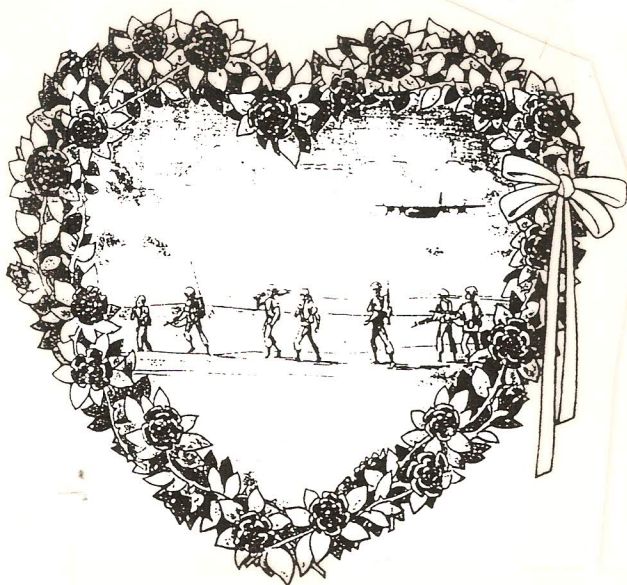


Greetings from the Kingdom!

Well, I have been so inundated with mail - which I really appreciate - that I just have to resort to this Valentines Day note to catch up.



Should mention that in addition to "regular" mail; I have been adopted by a few school classes: one in Indiana, one in Florida, one in Maryland and one in North Carolina. My wall here is papered with all kinds of letters and colored pictures. Responding keeps me busy but the support is worth it.

On the issue of support, I believe we get a fairly balanced news picture, from peace rallies to yellow ribbon parades. Nobody wants war. And everybody has a right to express themselves ... wouldn't want it any other way. In case you have any doubt, the bottom line message we all get is one of **overwhelming** support (a distinctly different one from the last time I drew combat pay).

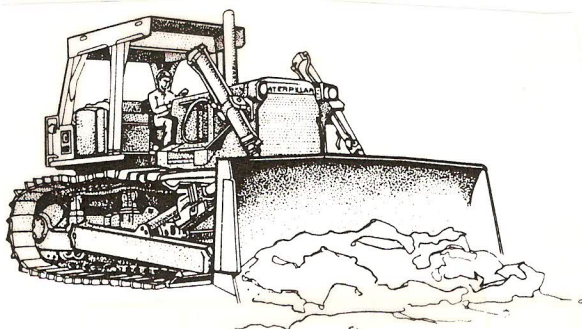
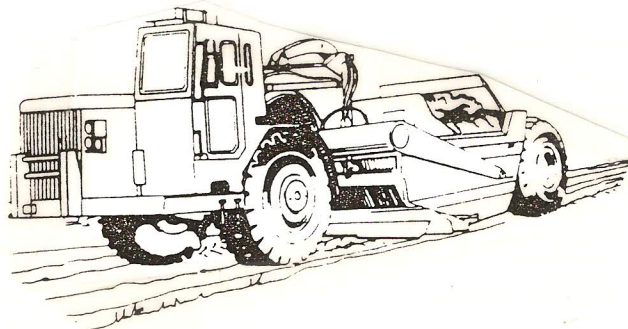
From the engineer perspective, we have been working a number of different issues. Initially we had problems getting the forces settled (bedded down) in theater due to the lack of infrastructure once one moves away from the coast. We placed tremendous demands on property to be leased; and on aggregate, cement, asphalt, lumber, electrical and plumbing materials and other construction items. We managed to rapidly deplete all resources and to skyrocket prices. In some cases we had U.S. units, in effect, bidding against each other for goods and services. The moral of all this is that the next time we get into something like this you should immediately buy a ship full of plywood at \$12 a sheet and sail it in to sell at \$20 a pop.

Because of the initial shortfalls in engineer troops as "trigger pullers" were air and sealifted into the theater, we were concurrently identifying fund sources and hiring contractors to fill the gap. The Japanese offer of assistance in kind made some significant dents in our requirements...and on the first of November our Saudi hosts agreed to provide accommodations and facilities in the Kingdom...to include retroactive reimbursement for previous (expensive) purchases and contracts. That was good news.

On the downside, we found ourselves generating new procedures to accommodate the Saudi system. By nature, they tend to be more centralized and not inclined to streamline their activities, even in the name of military emergency. So we needed an accelerated course in diplomacy...Type A personalities need not apply. So far things have worked fairly well.

As we turned over designs for contracting, and as January 15th approached, the fewer the number of contractors who would bid for projects and the more the bids exceeded the "government estimate". This resulted in higher levels of Saudi approval authority being required, which called for larger doses of patience and diplomacy...difficult but largely still within the art of the possible.

Then came D-Day, and as it came, the contractors fled. Those that stayed had their work force vanish. Third country nationals were vulnerable to their own fears and to the concerns of their families back in (Pakistan) (India) (Philippines) who wanted them out of a war zone.



We had one contractor who decided to move to London, taking with him a check for \$12,000,000 which he had received for some relocatable structures we had purchased from his parent organization in Canada. I fax'd a letter to the president of the company in Alberta, explained that we had some urgent military requirements, and wondered where he and the reputation of his firm stood on the issue. He wired back, "Colonel, you can count on me", and, sure enough he came through in every respect.

And then there was the ship that was carrying thousands of tons of steel for warehousing. It cited a war clause in maritime law, and unloaded in Jeddah rather than sailing into the Gulf to unload at Ad Dammam - leaving us with a big problem trying to find a freight forwarder to move the material across the peninsula.

However in this and a number of similar cases, using a combination of threats and promises ... and furnishing most of the work force "loaner" protective masks ... the movement of goods and the construction program slowly got back on track.

And then there was oil. Guess which office in United States Central Command is responsible for environmental matters? As this is being written I have an officer returning from a personal tour of the desalinization plant at Al Jubayl. I am reporting status twice a day and got tired of third hand, sometimes conflicting reports. The fellow's name is Mike Fitz but we now call him "Slick". On the more serious side, the spill is of a magnitude that we really cannot comprehend and could have long term implications.

About two weeks ago a call came in from the U.S. Forces Media Relations Center looking for someone to give a background talk on mine clearing. (A background talk is "on the record", however the name of the speaker is not divulged, but referred to only as a "military source". No cameras or photographs, but tape recorders may be used to form the record for quotes used in reports. Speakers are wired and the session is piped to Washington where a transcript is made.....So anyway Major Greg Bean and I worked up a brief and created about 40 "poor boy" [home made] vu-graphs to support the talk. There were a couple of rehearsals a one day delay, but finally it was showtime. I visited the briefing room in the Hyatt that morning and was fairly well awed by the lights, cameras and microphones. The Public Affairs representative pointed out the seats reserved for CBS, ABC, NBC, Reuters, API, UPI, etc. I asked if all this was supposed to make me feel at ease. At any rate, 1:00 p.m. came around and we launched into Obstacle Breaching 101. I talked and Greg flipped. About 35 reporters were there - the usual number. They had wanted a 10 minute talk, but we went 38 minutes and another 20 worth of questions until the military Public Affairs officer cut the session. Still going strong at the end. Interesting experience. Made front page of the local english language paper the next day and was quoted almost correctly on CNN the next night.

Baghdad plants chemical mines in Kuwait

RIYADH, Feb. 11 (R) -- Iraq may have sown mines filled with nerve and mustard gas in parts of southern Kuwait, a U.S. military source said today.

U.S. officers estimate Iraq has laid half a million mines on the southern borders of Kuwait and Iraq to hinder a ground assault by U.S. and allied forces.

"The Iraqis were involved in mine warfare for many years against the Iranians. They bought large quantities from everyone in the world who would sell them and the mines they have include the most sophisticated in the world," the source said.

The wide range of mines available include some which could be filled with the kind of chemical agents Iraq was known to have produced and used against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians in the 1980s, he added.

But for security reasons he declined to say what U.S. intelligence knew about any Iraqi chemical mine capability. U.S. combat engineers were trained to deal with such mines.

The Iraqi minefields are part of an array of defenses which also include barbed wire, tank trenches and sand ramparts. Some of the trenches can be filled with oil and ignited.

Most of the technology for breaching these defenses dates back at least to World War II. New weapons such as fuel air explosives have not fully replaced the old methods, the source said.

Fuel air explosives are dropped by parachute. They spray a mist of petrol vapor which is ignited in a high pressure blast.

Pool reporters with U.S. forces in the Gulf have seen fuel air explosives at air bases but U.S. officials say they have not yet been used in the war.

"It's possible to use them. There are problems in their use," the source said. "They (the parachutes) are rather inexact at putting them in the right place."

Another problem is that some modern mines do not respond to a single blast but need sustained pressure, such as from a passing tank, to make them explode.

Yes, the mail is slow, but probably better in and out of Riyadh than most other places. No, there is no censorship - so keep sending those Sears catalogs. However I would note that there has been one experience of Iraqi postal espionage. It occurred when I asked Karen to send me some recorded music. Evil forces must have intercepted the mail because the cassette I received had "Vanilla Ice" penciled on the case and 90 minutes of brainwashing 'rap' on the tape. Luckily I switched off almost right away or brain death would shortly have resulted.

Well there is certainly more to write about but I need to save something for my Christmas letter.

Thanks again for all your support.

