

# Letters To The Editor



## A Letter From Iraq

To the MANSCEN Directorate of Training Development,

I really appreciate the box of treats that the people at DOTD sent to me. It meant a lot, knowing there were people who cared enough to do that. The time I spent at DOTD and the MANSCEN was rewarding, and I met a lot of good, dedicated people. I'm proud and thankful that I have been given the opportunity to deploy and do my job as a firefighter. It is a learning experience, and I hope to bring lessons back to use to implement change to our doctrine. My parents taught me that the best lessons learned are those that are learned through hardship. If that is true, this deployment should produce some good lessons learned.

Life here in Kuwait and Iraq is hot, sandy, and windy. It is sad to see the way these people have been forced to live. I know we did the right thing by freeing them. After driving by and seeing what these people have had to endure, it makes me angry when one of our own people complains. We have no reason to ever complain, and I'm proud to be here helping. Keep up the hard work that you do there at DOTD; it pays off on the battlefield, as I have now seen firsthand.

My fire-fighting unit, the 562d Engineer Detachment (Fire Truck) from Fort Leonard Wood, was on the Iraqi border next

to the Paladins and Patriot systems the night the war began. At least three Scuds flew overhead as we ran to our bunkers. Also, a mortar round hit and destroyed a Kuwaiti police station about 1 to 2 kilometers from us. We wore various levels of MOPP gear for 2 months.

We are staying very busy and rarely have access to photos or mail. There are no modern facilities here. It's like living back before running water and electricity. But it's great to experience what it's like not having all the things we take for granted; it shows us a simpler way of life.

Those who really know me know that I could talk on forever, but I will cut it off now. Thanks again for the box of treats; I did share it with my soldiers. They are great guys, just as everyone is there at DOTD. Sorry for the sloppy handwriting; I don't have a table to steady the writing pad.

Sincerely,  
SFC William A. Brassfield  
June 2003

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## QA/QC Construction Supervision . . . or "Just Wing It"

As a nonengineer, I read *Engineer* for general interest. Articles that are "engineer-techie" go by me in a hurry, although I do have a civil engineer working for me who can explain—slowly and patiently—what I do not grasp. However, the January-March 2003 issue contained a lot of information at my level.

I was especially impressed by USMC Major Jeffrey J. Johnson's article on QA/QC (page 16). This is a tremendously weak area that needs a lot of work. Major Johnson's credentials for commenting are impeccable—in Joint Task Force 6 (JTF 6), he saw a long string of engineer construction units pass through and knows whereof he speaks. I would reinforce his statements. At Fort Lewis Range Control, we have—over the past few years—tried to avoid doing much range construction with engineer troop units because QA/QC is so bad. We'd rather not get something built than to go through the agony of dealing with shoddy results caused by inadequate (at best) QA/QC.

Some would protest that this is driven by the nature of the missions we can offer. Units working on installation projects are not deployed; they are coming from garrison and are subject to all the distractions of garrison life. But in the past, I have seen engineer units accomplish great construction planning, execution, and QA/QC on our projects under those identical conditions. It is definitely in the realm of the possible, but it has to happen by intent, skill, and application—not by osmosis. I also note that Major Johnson's comments apply entirely to units that are deployed to JTF 6 and away from garrison, so it's obvious that it's a problem more of organization than of location.

*Bottom line:* There is a crying, critical need for applied QA/QC in engineer troop project planning and execution.

John Weller  
Fort Lewis Range Officer