"LIFE IN THE NAG"

BY LT TONY RUSSELL, USCG

"Life in the NAG" is when a random 100-ft long tanker collides with your ship while riding the Kinzer Abu Alishi (KAA) speedy five knot current in the middle of the night.

"Life in the NAG" is when your ship is designed to patrol with 18 people for five days but now patrolling with 30 for 30 days.

"Life in the NAG" is when you have been living a "Groundhog Day" existence bouncing between the same two terminals sitting six miles apart for the last 20 days.

"Life in the NAG" is when the media characterizes your living conditions as a "Mad Max kind of life."

"Life in the NAG" has come to be the common descriptions used daily by the Coast Guard men and women to describe their unique existence beyond the tip of the spear in the North Arabian Gulf (NAG) as part of the maritime naval component of Operation *Iraqi Freedom* (OIF).

The Coast Guard's roles in OIF have included preventing and deterring the movement of weapons, leaders, terrorists or equipment by the new skiffed regime of Saddam Hussein; standing by to respond to acts of environmental terrorism; conducting port and coastal patrols along the coast of Iraq; and providing port and terminal security in Kuwait and Iraq.

Sometimes success is measured in what hasn't happened – and that is a perfect description for what the Coast Guard has done to secure freedom for the

Coast Guard RM1 Elizabeth V. Vizzarro of PSU 312 presents British Royal Sergeant Jason Brandon of the Commander Royal Engineers, at the Medical Clinic in Umm Qasar, Iraq.

HU4 Kim Francis of PSU 309 works in a NUCD bunker to escape the heat of the tent. The tents are usually air conditioned but that day the AC failed.

people of Iraq and protect the coalition naval forces. Through their actions, the Coast Guard's OIF forces have prevented dozens if not hundreds, of mines from being released into the designated waters of the NAG. They've located and secured large amounts of weapons and ammunition, prevented contraband entry to the national delivery of humanitarian aid, and through presence alone, deterred countless other actions against coalition forces or high value targets.

The Coast Guard's senior coalition naval commander describing the actions of our Coast Guard unit can be usually applied to all:

He said, "It takes courage and tenacity your ship's company has displayed, operating at day and night in hostile and difficult navigational waters, has attracted our great admiration and respect. That you performed this with such spirit and enthusiasm on one level, and measured resolve and unmanning on the other, is testament to your impressive professionalism and sense of purpose. The nation has been a tremendous advisoriement for your proud service."

The Coast Guard's missions in the NAG are rendered in ways very similar to the nation's traditional roles, yet such is different in one way or another. It is these small but significant differences that come with operating in foreign waters during a war as part of a multi-national coalition, that makes living "Life in the NAG" both a condition and a statement that reflects the experiences of the Coast Guardsmen serving here.

"Life in the NAG" can be used to preface or preclude any stories built around personnel and interagency operations.

They might be tales of how the family Hook, N.J., based CGC-Island supported the first maritime convoy prisoners at war, or the discovery of a hidden Iraqi weapons cache by Lieu Enforcement Detachment 308 and the USS Chinook, both from the Hampton Roads area.

The crews of the CGC *Nimbalgil* and CGC Aquidneck will not soon forget the experience of escorting humanitarian aid shipments into Iraq or when they were back patrolling their home waters off South Portland, Maine, and Atlantic Beach, N.C., respectively.

The memories who make up PSCs 313 and 311 will always be honored for their role in securing the future prosperity of Iraq through their vigilance over its ports and oil terminals.

And the boys tender CGC *Walnut*, from Honolulu, which came to the NAG with no intention of serving the designed purpose, found ways through ingenuity and initiative to locate, repair and place 25 buoys in the critical Iraq waterway.

"Life in the NAG" does not always serve as a term of endearment. At times it can be used to describe the frustrated and confounded.

This has been the case for the members of PSU 313 providing security for the Khawr al-Amaya Iraqi oil terminal in the NAG. Making due on a decrepit and hazardous platform by sleeping in pipes and using a toilet with down, open-air access to the seas, below certainly meets the criteria for "Life in the NAG."

Sometimes "Life in the NAG" summarizes situations that are just down right dangerous. CGC *Barnstable* from Boston, one aboard in this from their early experiences navigating the KAA before mine clearance operations were completed. Nothing like hearing a security call for a mine located aboard of your ship 20...then watching buys 20 pass down your hatch.

Monotony and frustration are terms often associated with "Life in the NAG." Cold Ground definitely sets the standard for this application of the phrase. Nearly 19 days straight at sea, with the last 20 in a minefield on

A 32-foot U.S. Navy patrol boat from Inshore Boat Unit 14 conducts port security and harbor defense patrols with a 25-foot U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat from PSU 311 in the Southern Iraq port of Umm Qsar.

Petty Officer 1st Class Timothy A. Beard of Port Security Unit 313, stands watch on the Mina al Bakr oil terminal in the North Arabian Gulf off the coast of Iraq.

auto patrol but beyond sight of land. This routine is only broken for refueling and replenishment at sea evolutions. Not to consider their open-door media policy that comes with being the only Coast Guard ship in the region equipped with a flight deck.

"Life in the NAG" defines a collage of events, successes, successes and adventures that have come to characterize the daily life of our Gunsters. It is not limited simply to operations, but can include the logistical challenges that come with an uncommon deployment half way around the world.

Just ask the crew of *Walnut* how many days it takes to get tired of eating chicken nuggets when you were delivered 20 pallets, rather than the 10 crates ordered. Hunter has it. Without attempted to establish the chicken nugget as a temporary form of currency in the newly liberated Iraqi port of Umm Qsar.

Though the slogan "Life in the NAG" has many seen and meanings, regardless of the specific context and intended meaning, it always serves as a spoken reminder of the dedication, pride and can-do attitude that the Coast Guard forces in Southwest Asia have brought to the fight.

The Coast Guard men and women who have served in *Operation Iraqi Freedom* will always have to answer those "Life in the NAG" and will be able to sit on their future mess decks, wardrooms and chief's mess to share their sea stories.

For some, "Life in the NAG" might be one of their last voyages Coast Guard experiences before moving on to other things. But for others, it might be a shaping force for a long and successful Coast Guard career.

For all, "Life in the NAG" will be one of those state-in-a-lifetime experiences that will have built bonds and memories to stand the test of time for generations to come. Just ask a veteran of pre-war to the Coast Guards "Semper Paratus" foundation.

RESERVE UPDATE:
WAR ON TERRORISM

DEPLOYED!

PSUs 305, 309, 311, 313 "ANSWER THE CALL"

Four Coast Guard Port Security Units (PSUs) deployed during the month of February. The final destinations of the approximately 120 members sent were not being disclosed for operational security reasons.

"The Coast Guard has a long history of operating jointly with the other services dating back to our beginnings in 1790," said VADM James Hull, Atlantic Area Commander. "Port security units have deployed to this region many times since the Persian Gulf War. Once again, they are stepping up to the plate and answering the call of a grateful nation."

Coast Guard PSUs have previously been called for service in Operations *Noble Eagle*, Operation *Desert Shield/Storm* (the Persian Gulf War), in 1990-91, and Operation *Uphold Democracy* in Haiti in 1994. Between December 2000 and October 2001, members of PSU 309, 307, 308 and 311 deployed to the Middle East.

Here is a summary of each unit's recent deployment:

PORT SECURITY UNIT 305

About 120 members assigned to Coast Guard Port Security Unit 305 based at Fort Eustis, Va., boarded a military airlift plane at Langley AFB Feb. 14, and headed overseas in support of *Operation Enduring Freedom*.

"As PSU 305 makes yet another deployment since Sept. 11, 2001, we look forward to the opportunity to work side by side with the sailors, soldiers, airmen and Marines engaged in the fight against terrorism," said CDR Robert Grubb, PSU 305 Commanding Officer. "We trained very hard for this mission and are ready to do the job as it is our commander-in-chief should ask of us."

PSU 305 was activated immediately after Sept. 11 attacks. In addition to patrolling and protecting New York Harbor in the days and weeks following the terrorist attacks, they also provided port security in support of detainee operations in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, from January to June 2002.

PORT SECURITY UNIT 309

Port Security Unit 309 departed its home in Fort Clinton, Ohio, Feb. 24 en route via bus to Fort Campbell, Ky. They were at the unit's home base at Fort Clinton for about a week waiting for the order to depart. As with all the PSUs, their final destination and duration of the deployment are not being disclosed for operational security reasons.

The breakdown of PSU 309 members deployed by state: Illinois, 4; Indiana, 3; Kentucky, 8; Michigan, 19; New York, 2; Ohio, 62; Pennsylvania, 4; Wisconsin, 1; Outside DS, 2.

PSU 309 last deployed to the Middle East Dec. 18, 2000, following the terrorist attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen Oct. 12, 2000.

PORT SECURITY UNIT 311

Port Security Unit 311 departed March 3 for Reserve Base Newby Feb. 17 to support the global war on terrorism and to prepare for future contingencies.

"We are trained and ready to exercise our mission," said CDR Donald Bates, PSU 311's commanding officer. "This deployment shows our determination to safeguard our nation's security, both at home and abroad."

The Port Security Unit is comprised of primarily reservists, approximately, most civilian law enforcement officers and active duty law enforcement. PSU 311 patrolled the Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors with other Coast Guard assets immediately following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. On Oct. 8, 2001, PSU 311 was called to active duty for service in the Persian Gulf for a six-month deployment.

PORT SECURITY UNIT 313

Port Security Unit 313 deployed from McChord Air Force Base, Wash. the weekend of Feb. 15 en route the Central Command area of operations to support *Operation Enduring Freedom*, the Global War on Terrorism and any future contingencies.

The majority of PSU 313 personnel are reservists who were called to active duty Feb. 8.

"Our unit members are highly trained and very motivated," said CDR Harley Thomas, PSU 313's commanding officer. "Our readiness for this deployment is an indication of the Coast Guard's continuing commitment to safeguarding our nation against terrorist attacks."

PSU 313 patrolled the waters of Puget Sound with other Coast Guard assets immediately following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and remained vigilant there for months afterward.

— From LANTAREA, 5th, DII and DIII Releases.

Iraqi missile intercepted over Kuwait

By Tini Tran
The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — Iraq fired off another missile attack on Kuwait on Friday but the missile was shot down by a Patriot missile battery, triggering air raid sirens throughout the city for the second day in a row.

Kuwait military spokesman Col. Youssef al-Mulla said three Patriot interceptor missiles destroyed an Iraqi ballistic missile in mid-air early Friday afternoon over Jahra, a town of 200,000 people about 9 miles west of Kuwait City.

The roaring boom brought Mohammed Jassim running outside.

Looking overhead, he watched as two more massive explosions spewed black smoke and metallic debris onto rooftops and houses below.

"I heard the explosions and saw the smoke. There were small pieces (of metal) all over the roofs and the streets," said Jassim, a longtime resident. "It is something incredible that no one was killed. God has saved us."

A 10-foot-long chunk of the missile landed in a more deserted area, but tiny shards of blackened metal were scattered all over residential rooftops and streets.

Police Brig. Gen. Ahmed al-Rujaib said on Kuwait Television that the missile was a Scud that was intentionally "targeting Jahra" in Kuwait City. But nearby is the Ali al-Salem air base, where many U.S. troops were being housed.

Police officers and firefighters, their gas masks hanging from their belts, went on rooftops of buildings in Jahra and the desert north of it to collect debris.

The Iraqi missile was the first launched at Kuwait on Friday, but a day earlier, at least six other missiles were fired by Iraq over its southern border toward U.S. troops and Kuwait City since the start of the U.S.-led campaign to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, Kuwaiti officials said.

There have been conflicting reports about exactly how many and what types of missiles were fired. However, none of the missiles were believed to be tipped with the much-dreaded chemical or biological warhead. No injuries or damage have been reported.

Four of them were believed to be Scud missiles, which Iraq is banned from possessing. The other two were identified as Chinese-made surface-to-surface missiles, Kuwait officials said.

One missile landed in Kuwait Bay, about 3,300 feet from a resort hotel that is about 18 miles south of Kuwait City, where the U.S. military's press information center is installed. Hundreds of foreign journalists who have swarmed in the city to cover the war are based there.

A second one fell nearby into waters off the al-Shuaiba industrial area, where a major oil refinery is located. Those two missiles were identified as Chinese-made Silkworms by Kuwaiti officials.

U.S. military officials said that at least two missiles were fired at Kuwait, but can Patriot missile batteries in Kuwait intercept missiles fired in the northern desert near U.S. military bases close to the Iraq border, according to the U.S. Army Central Command. No injuries were reported.

A solid Washington, ally, this top oil-rich emirate just south of Iraq where U.S. and British forces have been waiting for months was a certain target. Within hours of the U.S.-led forces' first strike on Baghdad, sirens blared throughout Kuwait City early Thursday.

Jittery residents scrambled for bomb shelters, some of them with gas masks and chemical suits in tow.

Freeways filled up with cars as police set up roadblocks and checkpoints around the city. But months of crisis drills and emergency preparation kept citizens largely calm.

TCS Jessica Jackson, left, of PSU 313 receives the smallpox vaccine earlier this year from Hill Bro. Molloy. The unit deployed overseas Feb. 15 with most unit members having received the shot at the January drill.