

Wednesday, August 22, 1990

Troops from Texas leave for Middle East

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Soldiers from around Texas volunteered or prepared to move out Tuesday in the U.S. military building in the Persian Gulf.

An undisclosed number of Air Force reservists have volunteered to provide airlift support for the 433rd Military Air Wing at Kelly Air Force Base, officials confirmed.

The 433rd has a total of 3,700 members in Texas and Oklahoma; 3,400 of those reservists are assigned to Kelly, Wharton said. It is one of several military units assigned to Kelly.

None of the reservists have been called to active duty, which would require authorization from Congress.

Wing spokesman Maj. Meade C. Wharton refused to disclose specifics of the air wing's role in Operation Desert Shield, but said some of the unit has been departing Kelly since last week in connection with the Middle East crisis.

The air wing flies the C-5A "Galaxy," designed to airlift cargo and personnel.

Troops at Fort Hood were "still

preparing to go," to the Middle East to join Operation Desert Shield in Saudi Arabia, a base spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Elements of the 2nd Armored Division and the 1st Cavalry are expected to be deployed, but the spokeswoman said she could not say when they are going to leave.

At Fort Bliss, meanwhile, the 3rd Armored Cavalry prepared to ship out to do the desert warfare they'd been training for.

The entire 3rd Armored Cavalry, with nearly 4,500 soldiers, 1,700 vehicles and 75 aircraft, will be dispatched to the Middle East, Col. Doug Starr, the regiment's commander, said.

The regiment will act as a flank guard or as a scout, doing reconnaissance and feeding intelligence to other units.

Fort Bliss officials refuse to reveal when the unit will actually move. Such information is classified.

Starr said it is the fifth time the entire unit has deployed since it was established at Fort Bliss in 1972. Every other time the unit has left for training.

Wholesalers: Oil companies misuse Middle East crisis to control prices

AUSTIN (AP) — Major oil companies are using the Middle East crisis to manipulate gasoline prices in an attempt to squeeze out independent service station owners, an association of gasoline wholesalers charged Tuesday.

"The situation in which we find ourselves today is worse than the oil embargo days of 1974," said E.W. "Bubba" Wehman Jr., president of the Texas Oil Marketers Association.

Since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, the price of unleaded self-serve regular gasoline has increased 16.2 cents, according to the American Automobile Association.

Wehman said behind the high prices, another more costly scenario is unfolding. He said oil suppliers are keeping the retail price below wholesale levels at refinery-owned outlets, mostly in major cities.

This will eventually drive independent station

owners out of business, giving oil companies more control over the price at the pump. "It means less competition. Normally less competition means you'll pay higher prices," he said.

"If it continues, federal and state laws may be required to level the playing field for the independent marketer and big oil," Wehman said, suggesting legislation that would bar refiners from the retail market.

His group, whose members deliver to more than 10,000 retail outlets, met with the officials from the state attorney general's anti-trust division.

"Simply put, the wholesalers are left with the appearance of being price gougers. When in fact, we are the gougees," he said.

The Texas Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association, which represents major oil companies in

the state, did not immediately have a response to the wholesalers' charges.

In another development, the Texas Railroad Commission has scheduled an Aug. 30 hearing on a federal proposal to boost the state's oil output.

Federal energy officials have asked the agency, which regulates oil and gas production in Texas, to consider raising the state's oil production ceilings to help offset losses from Kuwait and Iraq.

Railroad Commissioner John Sharp said a key issue is whether increased production from the East Texas field and horizontal wells in South Texas would be harmful to long-term production.

Sharp said some producers argue that when production is too fast, some oil is wasted in the process.

Crisis postpones deactivation of troops

FORT HOOD (AP) — Deactivation of the 2nd Armored Division has been put on hold by the Army while the units troops prepare to head for the Middle East.

"As the situation in the Middle East develops, the Department of the Army is going to review the 2nd Armored Division and make a decision regarding any further deactivation," said Fort Hood spokeswoman Liz Crossan.

The Army had announced in June that it planned to deactivate the 12,000-member division due to European troop cutbacks and warming superpower relations.

About 500 soldiers were deactivated in June, 800 in July and 900 last week, Crossan said. The rest were scheduled to be deactivated by September 1991.

Although the Iraq crisis has prompted the Army to reconsider eliminating the division, it has not decided to restore the full force, said Army spokesman Capt.

David Roth in Washington.

Pentagon officials have said they will not release official troop strengths or destinations about any units of any service. But last week they confirmed that elements of the 2nd Armored Division and the 1st Cavalry Division, also from Fort Hood, would soon join other troops deployed for Operation Desert Shield.

Those units were "still preparing to go," on Tuesday, a post spokeswoman said.

The Fort Hood troops awaiting deployment continued combat preparations, painting equipment desert-beige and learning about the culture and climate of the Middle East, 2nd Armored Division spokesman Maj. Jim Boling told the Austin American-Statesman.

Around Fort Hood, word that the deactivation was on hold offered temporary relief to community leaders who have worried that the pullout of 12,000 soldiers and 30,000 civilians would foster economic collapse.

U.S. soldiers receive support from home

EL PASO (AP) — A local businessman is wishing hometown soldiers "Godspeed, success and safety" and a military wife is handing out yellow ribbons as local citizens begin rallying support for troops deployed to the Persian Gulf.

World War II veteran Paul Berry told a friend at KTSM-AM radio station that he wanted to show some support for the troops, and the result was a 30-second radio spot that debuted Tuesday morning.

"We hope that the American people would become aware that those are our neighbors and Americans over there," said Berry, owner of Wyler Industrial Works. "We feel very strongly about it, I feel strongly

about it having been in a war myself and having had a lot of support from the American people."

With the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" playing in the background, the radio spot informs listeners that men and women from Fort Bliss "have answered the call to defend freedom, wherever it is threatened."

"The employees of Wyler Industrial Works support our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines ... and wish them Godspeed, success and safety in their mission — for America," the announcer says.

Members of the 11th Air Defense Artillery, stationed at Fort Bliss, already are in the Persian Gulf.

Anti-chemical gear dispatched to troops

DALLAS (AP) — Anti-chemical gear has been dispatched to military personnel stationed in Saudi Arabia without the protective suits, a Pentagon spokesman said Tuesday night.

A U.S. Air Force sergeant stationed at an air base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, contacted the Associated Press over the weekend to

complain that he and 120 others stationed at the base had not been provided the protective gear in the days following Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

"Chemical gear for all the people who are assigned to that training unit was in fact shipped out of the U.S. today via airlift," Air Force Lt.

Col. Don Black said Tuesday.

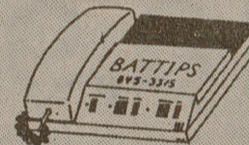
Black said the protective gear would take a couple of days to arrive in Saudi Arabia and would be distributed to the members of the military training mission by the end of the week.

The impression that the Air Force "stuck these people out there on the

front lines totally defenseless and unprepared ... is not the case at all," he said.

Master Sgt. Johnnie Bratton, a native of San Marcos, said Saturday that he and the other members of the training mission, many of whom have been stationed in Dhahran for up to two years, lacked "minimum protection."

BATTIPS



Anyone with story suggestions can call BATTIPS, The Battalion's phone line designed to improve communication between the newspaper and its readers. BATTIPS' number is 845-3315.

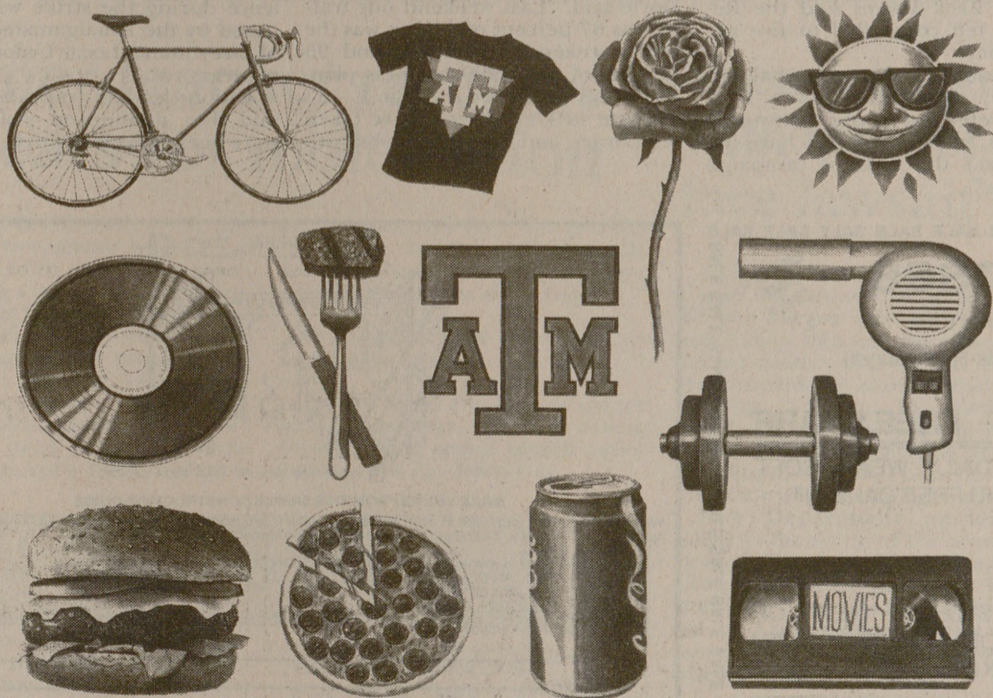
Ideas can include news stories, feature ideas and personality profiles of interesting people.

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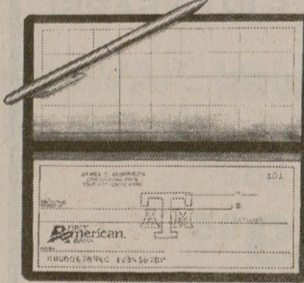
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