

## “This Is What It’s Really Like” One Soldier’s Veiw

Dear Friends and Family,

I thought I would send out a letter letting everybody know what life is in Kuwait/Iraq is like. I am stationed at Camp Navistar which is in Northern Kuwait about two miles south of the Iraqi border. The base is fairly small and there is not a whole lot to do here, which works out well since we don't have a whole lot of time to do anything. There is a makeshift Subway, Pizza Inn and Green Bean Coffee. The subs look the same and are wrapped in the same wrapper but they just don't taste anything like back in the states. I haven't tried the Pizza Inn and the Green Bean Coffee makes pretty good Frapachinos, but they are expensive.

We also have a gym, a Post Exchange store which is very small and always out of whatever you need, and a welfare area with computers, phones, TVs and a library. I spend almost all of my available time in the gym; it keeps me motivated and for some reason, takes my mind off, how long we have been here. I live in a tent with seven other guys. We are all team leaders in the same platoon. I have built a little desk and I have a wall locker with a bunk bed which, leaves about a four foot square area for me to move around in. It is air conditioned but the generator always overheats and the power goes out about once a day for a few hours. I am usually trying to sleep when that happens and I wake up in a puddle of sweat completely dehydrated with a giant headache. The temperature is finally cooling off here to a cool 118 degrees, during the day and about 85 degrees at night. Hey, it's better than it was, 148 degrees like last month.

My platoon is the only one in the entire battalion that has a different mission than convoy security. We are called RSE (Route Security Element). I am a truck commander which means I ride shotgun most of the time and my crew does the driving and gunning, but we switch it up to keep it interesting. Our HMMWV is armored but it doesn't do any good with the explosive force projectiles, they cut right through, like a hot knife in

butter. We cross over the border to Iraq everyday and search for about 60 mile stretch of highway for roadside bombs and prevent hijacking of the convoy vehicles. Right outside the border before you get to the highway, there is a town about the size of Plymouth (15,000 or more) that we also patrol which is where most of the attempted hijacking take place.

We get to interact with the people a lot more than the rest of the battalion, so we are experiencing a third world country up close and personal. The houses are made out of clay and cement, they all have dirt floors and there is trash absolutely everywhere. Yet somehow they all have satellite TV and cell phones, amazing. For the most part they like us or at least don't mind us. The children surround our trucks whenever we stop. They speak a little English such as, "Mister, Mister, give me some food or money". It gets old. They don't look undernourished and this is the life they are used to. Most of them don't even wear shoes. They walk around on the black-top barefoot in 140+ degrees. They must not have any nerve endings because my boots melt to the road if I stand in one spot long enough.

Most of the terrorist come from elsewhere and stake out here at night to steal the trucks or plant bombs or ambush us. They have not had any successful hijackings on my shift. I am very pro active and I make it difficult for them to predict where I will be. They are afraid of us so they won't make a move if they think we can catch them. I am the only truck to recover a vehicle, but the hijackers bailed out and got away in the city. During the day it is relatively safe because the enemy are cowards and faceless. None the less, what we do is extremely dangerous, we have found bombs that would have completely destroyed our HMMWV but because we are constantly searching the area they don't have time to wire it up and detonate them. They only stop and put them down hoping to make it back later and hook them up. But I have a 50 cal machine gun with a boat load of ammo that says "Try me!!! I dare you!!!"

The drivers here are horrible. They have no laws, at least nobody to enforce them anyway. They drive on both sides of the road both ways. They don't use blinkers and usually none of the lights work anyway. Most of the so called police help the terrorists or are terrorists. The Iraqi National Guard is a joke. They cause us more problems than anything. We don't trust them at all!!! The southeast sector of Iraq is controlled by the British, so we get to see them a lot. They are nice and pretty funny. They all talk like Steve Irwin the Crocodile Hunter. Sometimes we see the Danish and Italians but I am not sure what they do here.

Well, I hope that paints a picture for you. If not, don't worry I will be bringing home plenty of them for you to see. Thank you everybody for all of the packages of munchies and magazines. I miss all of you and look forward to making it home when this is all over. It will be nice to get back and enjoy my freedom, because when you're fighting for it you are not free. Being able to get in my/your care and go where I/you want, to do what you want, when you want, it just a fantasy right now. Hope all is good. Keep in touch.

Sargent Brandon Riebling

P.S. Every once in a while we get packages full of toys, stuffed animals, clothes, old CD or tape players and things of that sort for the children of the village. Most of the packages are from other soldier's family and friends. Some are from charity organizations in the cities where the soldiers are from. If you would like to send anything like that I would be glad to distribute it out in the village. I can guarantee you that I will personally hand it out so you know that it made it to the people who needed it. I could even send you a picture of the child you sponsored with your gift, ha ha ha.

Address to send if you care  
Srg. Brandon K. Riebling  
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*This letter was submitted by Mario Gualtieri and is from his grandson (son of Nina) Brandon K. Riebling.*

## BOWLYOU

Tax & Accounting

*Wish You a Beautiful and  
Joyous Holiday Season and  
a New Year of Peace and  
Happiness*

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

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