



101 ARABIAN HOURS

By

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Penman Publishing, Inc.

Chattanooga, Tennessee

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First Published 2000 Penman Publishing, Inc.
4159 Ringgold Rd., Suite 104
Chattanooga, Tennessee 34712

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ISBN: 0-9700486
(TWP2)

Print version by Penman Publishing, Inc.

Dedicated to God, Marcie Bryan,
family and friends, and to those
who served

CHAPTER 1

The National Guard is the oldest fighting force in the United States. This is the militia that is referred to in the Constitution- you know, the second amendment- the one that allows possession of firearms. During Colonial times, this group of citizen soldiers was known as the Minutemen. Paul Revere's midnight excursion was directed to those who dropped whatever they were doing and took up weapons to repel the invading British. Throughout history, the National Guard has served in all major wars, most minor incidents and a variety of disasters (natural and otherwise). More U.S. Presidents have served with the National Guard and its variations than any other branch of service. From these beginnings evolves the modern Army and Air National Guard, comprised primarily of trained reservists who answer the call of duty one weekend a month and two weeks during the year, fulfilling a two-fold mission. First, there is security of the state. Then, when Uncle Sam's full-time fighting force gets jammed up, the reserve can be federally activated by order of the President of the United States.

The history of the Guard has been colorful. When anyone mentions the National Guard, some think of the statue of the minuteman, striking a stoic pose, musket in hand, truly prepared for duty. For the most part, however, the Guard struggles with a public-image problem. A good example is the media's concept of the "weekend warriors". The movie "Rambo" showed, for example, several Guard guys unable to contain a single super troop. During the course of action, several soldiers requested to go home for a variety of reasons. Then, there was the movie "Southern Comfort", where ill-prepared soldiers were fighting a real war with rifles filled with blanks. My personal favorite was "Attack of the Killer Tomatoes", where-in fatigue clad individuals were bowled over by mutant tomatoes. Then there was the nasty incident at Kent State University, where students were shot and killed by "overreactive" reservists from Ohio's National Guard. How about the concept of being able to literally buy one's way into the Guard? This would have probably kept you from going to war during the Vietnam era.

Even within the ranks of the military, there is that mindset of National Guard- the NG's- the *Nasty Girls*, the *No-Go's*, the *Girl Scouts*, the *Boy Scouts*, *Weekend Warriors*, etc. The book, "The Sunshine Soldiers", was based on basic training of reservists during the Vietnam war. There was no disguising the contempt the regular military had for the part-timers. It seems as though the intense training produced a group of troops just short of military standard. They were undisciplined and somewhat rag-tag in appearance, not to mention that they were probably on their

way back home after basic, while others were preparing to ship to unknown destinies.

With this in mind, one would have to wonder what type of person would, by choice, enter this somewhat peculiar branch of service. Why would a God-fearing man reared with Christian values leave a wife of four months to undergo the rigors of learning to kill and survive in the most absurd of conditions, enduring a variety of hardships and deprivations and learning seemingly useless disciplines from people with very limited social skills? Add to this the fact that there was no requirement to do this.

I enlisted in the Florida National Guard in February 1977. This was in spite of the fact that I had outlasted the draft with a student deferment while in college. When the draft went to a lottery system, I was far enough down the list that the draft had become a non-issue. Still, I felt compelled to serve. My father and brother had both been career military, which I knew was not my calling. But I was driven by curiosity at least to sample the menu. As I boarded the Greyhound bus at Jacksonville for Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I must admit I was wondering exactly what I was doing there. I thumbed through a copy of Ian Fleming's "From Russia With Love" and talked to other people who were headed for a similar fate. I thought of my apartment, which was less than a block away from the beach, where the sound of the surf was always present. The one thing that I would not miss was my job as a "client representative"- or bill collector. In theory, I would be able to gain a new trade through the training I would receive.

Everyone who has been through basic training has his or her share of horror stories. The rumor that we were hearing was that the Army was attempting to make their version of the Marines' Parris Island happen at Fort Jackson. And for the next several weeks, I believed that rumor. The long hours, nasty food-like products, physical training (PT) at a variety of times, classes of infinite boredom, weapons training, nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) training, endless hours of marching and inspections were but a few of the highlights. Kitchen Police (KP) and other details would cut into the few moments of sleep we thought we were going to get. Days started as early as 4:30 a.m. and terminated when the drill sergeants were tired of messing with us, which was usually quite late. The army is always fond of reminding you that they are only required to give you three hours of sleep per day, and not necessarily in a row. But they were ingenious. Who would have ever thought of using a garbage can as an alarm clock substitute? It works well when waking sixty guys, as it rolls down the barracks aisles. Thanks to ill-fitting boots producing hall of fame blisters and a nice dose of pneumonia, I got to visit the troop clinic and spend quality time at the hospital.

After basic and a week at home, it was back to Fort Jackson briefly for a primary electronics school, and then off to Fort Gordon, Georgia, where I completed my military occupation specialty (MOS) training.

Approximately six months after signing up, I was back at home and assigned to my home station, the 146th Signal Battalion. Here, I learned to use equipment that was, in some cases, so obsolete that there were no repair parts available in the system. My first taste of annual training (AT) aka summer camp, was an education. In the pre-dawn hours of the first day, we stood for inspection and promptly mounted our vehicles. Primarily we were in 2-½ ton trucks known as deuce-and-a-halves. There were also 5-ton trucks and at that time, the jeep or “quarter ton”. These fine motor machines had been inspected prior to use by the crack motor pool folks. As we began lumbering through the parking lot of the armory, our vehicles began to disintegrate. Already hoods were up on vehicles that had overheated while the convoy commanders attempted to move the equipment. As we pulled onto the street, the vehicle in front of us lost the passenger-side mirror- a rather large piece. Within several hundred yards, we were using evasive action to avoid a muffler, which had fallen off a truck. This was outdone by a smoking truck exhaust stack, which had also decorated the roadway. Over the course of the next thirty miles of convoy route, assorted vehicles sat roadside suffering from flat tires and assorted mechanical problems. As we hit the front entrance to Camp Blanding, Florida, located near the booming metropolitan area of Starke, Florida, and home to some of the most disgusting drinking water on the planet, pure sulfur, we were told what a great convoy we had! No one got killed...at least in the convoy. Seems as though one individual was permitted to drive a privately owned vehicle (POV) to camp. That night on her way home she lost control of her car. There were rumors she had been under the influence of alcohol. As difficult as summer camps could be, it was preferred to her option.

These two weeks, as with most other military operations, felt like two years. The NBC training phase, which requires all troops to bask in the glory of CS gas (most call it tear gas), was cut short. There we sat in our M17A1 protective masks, sweating profusely. As we waited in 98-degree heat to get our dose of “perfume”, we were given the “all-clear”, indicating that the threat had passed. It seems a highranking officer wanted to be the one to launch the canister, so he and his driver took a quarter ton to a position slightly elevated above the unit’s position. Apparently, he discharged the gas projectile and for whatever reason, the canister failed. It simply rolled into some bushes. The officer now had to go looking for this unexploded device. A search of the area revealed nothing. As he was about to resign himself to having lost the device, the officer’s driver managed to find it for him- by

driving over it. As the gas spewed from underneath the tires, it probably crossed his mind that the next time he too should carry his mask with him.

Florida is known as the lightning capital of the world. During a field exercise we sat in our communications vans when a storm began. The storm lasted a long time. Everyone was waiting for orders to shut down, but that never happened. The net result was a member of the Alabama National Guard being struck by lightning while he monitored his station. Both of his ears and the area on his neck where his dog tags lay were burned externally, and he also suffered internal burns. He was flown to Jacksonville for medical assistance. One Major from the Alabama National Guard was screaming at the Army evaluator from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Some of the Alabama Special Forces members were also irritated with the evaluator. Halfway through the field problem, the evaluator was *suddenly recalled* to Fort Campbell for another assignment. Prior to departing, he stated that we had all done an outstanding job. He was due to leave on Sunday; instead he left on Thursday.

After two summer camps and numerous drills, a logistical problem loomed on the horizon. My wife, Marcie, and I had moved south several hundred miles. Although I was still able to drive to drills in Jacksonville, gas was becoming in short supply, so I began looking for a unit closer to home; the nearest was in Fort Lauderdale. The 149th General Supply Company was housed in an armory built in 1965 and located somewhat near Port Everglades and International Airport. Although my signal training was of no apparent value, I transferred in and began working in a variety of jobs. The members of the unit were easy to get along with. A General Supply unit would set up shop in a rear area in the event of a war. This sounded nice, but just like naval ships, you become a *sitting duck*. On the plus side, the enemy has to find you first. On the down side, that's probably you and your friends gathered under the camouflage screening, surrounded by army stuff, in vague proximity to the bad guy's location. This unit, however, was not prone to routine activation. At least, that was what I was told.

My civilian job was, by this time, that of a cable technician. Soon enough, though, I would be putting the "Support of the National Guard and Reserve" policy to the test. It actually started when Marcie and I were on a one-day getaway to a seaside hotel in Pompano Beach. We were sitting on the balcony, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, when I noticed a large number of fuel-bearing vessels spanning the horizon. They were grouped together and not moving. We turned on the television, only to find the event on the news. Remember the fuel problem that kept me from commuting to drills in Jacksonville? These laden ships weren't moving because, at the port of Fort Lauderdale there were trucks that weren't moving either. The truck drivers, whose job was to move the fuel from the port to retailers, were conducting

a wildcat strike. As we left the hotel, we noticed inordinately long lines of cars sitting at gas stations. This would lead to the Governor of the Great State of Florida finding our unit's phone number, along with several other units, resulting in our activation. For a week the Guard drove fuel trucks with placards on the side indicating the trucks had been commandeered by the state. It was interesting watching the Guard's Special Forces unit members hanging onto the trucks with one hand, M16's in the other, rolling through the port. My job was at the port with a squad that pulled security details.

It wasn't long after this that hurricane season opened. Hurricane David closed in on South Florida and, once again it was back to the armory. My wife was pregnant at the time, and I was working as a volunteer with the Parkland Fire Dept. One of the unit members was also a fireman. His father was the chief. We had arranged to leave the armory and remain on standby with Parkland. We were deactivated the following morning.

Then came the Cuban Refugee Crisis. Fidel Castro allowed thousands of his fellow countrymen to leave and journey to the U.S. by way of a massive flotilla. People were crowding onto anything that would float and making the ninety-mile journey across the Straits of Florida, straight to Miami. Guess what happened next? Yes, there we were at an armory in Miami, acting as a greeting committee to large waves of humanity. In the midst of these seemingly endless lines of folks were some of Cuba's lesser citizens. Before long law enforcement discovered clusters of inmates and psychologically challenged clientele. Intelligence revealed that some of the worst offenders wanted to call Miami home.

My recall of high school Spanish got me activated one day earlier than the rest. For over a month we housed, fed and coordinated a massive effort to assist these *new folks on the block*. We lived on black beans and rice, Cuban cigarettes-made with cigar tobacco, and a little rough going down- and Cuban coffee. We did a 36-hour shift with no one sleeping. The only problem was that everything had a greenish glow to it.

We were eventually pulled from the armory and sent farther south to abandoned missile sites that were being used as temporary holding facilities. Efforts were underway to expand a somewhat permanent detention facility. People were free to move around these various compounds. Our job was to maintain order. Other than a few cultural differences, things went fairly smoothly. Those who needed to be isolated from the general population were. There were rooms that had law enforcement as hall monitors. In Cuba, the police wore fatigues. As this just happened to be our uniform at the time, the people had a healthy fear of us.

The biggest problem was that there was no place for us to hide after hours. Most irritating was that the state had rented a variety of hotel rooms for our use, but in true military fashion, they did not provide a means to routinely use them. I did manage one night at a hotel. Air conditioning, clean facilities and television- what a thrill. The only problem was the room was only available for five hours. Realistically, though, all we really wanted to do at that point was sleep.

Finally, the day came when our services were no longer needed, so we dragged our sorry bodies and brains home. A week later we were at drill once again Miami was in the news. Racial tensions were mounting over an incident in which police allegedly beat a black man to death. When the system failed to punish those thought to be responsible for the death, Miami literally went up in flames. At the conclusion of the drill, the unit commander, in a veil of nervous humor, told us not to overindulge in partying, as we could be called up. We were told, however, that we would only be activated if things were totally out of control. By late night, someone at the state level was able to define what qualified as “out of control”.

Once again, we were at the armory. This time, we were issued weapons, live rounds, bayonets, flack jackets and face shields. This was looking serious. In the early morning hours, we were told that our convoy would not receive the escort from law enforcement as scheduled because everyone was busy in the impacted area. Swell! We mounted the convoy and proceeded southbound on Interstate 95, as we had done so many times before. This time, however, everyone was armed and riding tactical in the motor movement that took us to Miami Stadium. As soon as we had dismounted, we were given instructions and divided into squads. We were given an hour to sleep. I found the bleachers to the right of home plate to be some of the finest cement on which I have ever had the occasion to sleep. Very firm.

In the pre-dawn hours, we consumed food that, according to one source, was being condemned as it slid down our throats. It really didn't matter, as long as we had coffee. We quickly mounted our vehicles and proceeded to an area in Miami known as Liberty City, where we assumed our positions and began directing traffic. It was a truly confusing and bizarre situation. Two blocks from our location, someone had attempted to drive through a heavily guarded intersection and was shot and killed. Another similar situation resulted in the sparing of the individual. His car, however, paid the price. So, there I was standing at this intersection which was fully loaded with fellow guardsmen. To my right was a tire store, which was spewing flames and toxic smoke. On my left was the shell of what once was a gas station. Amazingly, the water was still running from a hose on one side of the building, which we could use to cool down. To my rear was a gutted Mom and Pop grocery store. In the parking lot was a car that had been overturned and set on fire.

It was here that various police SWAT units came to pose for pictures. The other corner had a fast food chicken outlet. To the disbelief of many, they had not only been spared, but were actually doing business- and there was a line at the drive-through window. Then, in front of me a video journalist chose to lay down in the street and shoot up toward me. I'm sure I must have looked sixty feet tall. I believe he was with the British media. I would be interested to know if this shot was ever used. (I did see my picture in Miami Magazine shaking hands with other soldiers as I cruised with others in a military jeep-a sort of *General Patton with the guys* type photo.

Meanwhile, a group of people carrying rocks and bottles was approaching our intersection. It was at this moment that I was thinking that I could just as easily have sat at home and watched this whole thing on television. We were preparing to do business with the advancing crowd when a small police unit became involved and discouraged them with smoke grenades.

As night fell, we were trucked to another intersection. Most of us had at least two magazines of ammunition. In some cases, the police gave us additional rounds. Here, I spoke with one of my fellow troops who told me how was guarding an area with particularly good target potential for the rioters, with a total of two bullets. I know he was thrilled.

We were finally relieved from our posts, mounted a truck and were making our way back to the stadium. As we proceeded through the area, we heard a popping sound. Although we may never know for sure, the sound had one of two origins. Some thought it may be engine backfire; others just knew it was gunfire. In any case, there was a rapid dismount from the truck and a tactical move to seek cover. As I jumped from the truck, my protective mask slipped out of its carrier, as did that of another soldier. I quickly claimed what I thought was my mask. The other guy never did find his, but we managed without them. After several moments of stopping everything that moved, police arrived and secured the scene, allowing us once again to proceed back to the stadium. When we arrived, I thought of Sir Winston Churchill, who once indicated that being shot at and missed was a most exhilarating experience. Amen!

We were taken from the riots the second day, where we were guarding an old folks' home. Then we were sent home. No, it was not out of the goodness of their hearts. By the end of the week, we were packing for summer camp in Fort Drum, New York. I can recall my civilian employer asking me if I was going to ever have the time to work for him again. The only thing I learned in two weeks while at Fort Drum was that, in the army, a veterinarian is an enlisted person who inspects the meat you eat. At least we had the weekend for a boat ride into Canadian waters. It

would have probably been nicer had there not been record cold temperatures that we Florida folks were having to play in. From fry to freeze to back again. I suppose this is one reason our entire clothing issue went with us everywhere. We did have a small problem in that we had two persons attempting to run the unit. Our regular Fist Sergeant didn't make the camp, leaving two diametrically opposed individuals to argue at the front of our formations and issue conflicting orders. Quite entertaining. Because of the cold, we had activated the furnaces in the barracks. We were told by Fort Drum personnel that we couldn't do that, as it was no longer winter- as defined by the army. Our response was not one of agreement. Even the radio weather guy was telling us it was alright to shiver when the temperature was twenty-six degrees. In the end, after much dialogue, we were permitted to heat the rooms.

The following year produced a major renovation for the unit. We were now reorganized as the 743rd Maintenance Company. We were now a Forward Direct Support (Fwd DS) unit as designated by the Guard. To the Army, we were simply Direct Support (DS). Either way, it meant that if we should end up going to war, we would have the opportunity to tour with the frontrunners.

After being assigned to various jobs, the first order of business was training. We were flown to Fort Lee, Virginia for a two-week crash course on our new assignments. We traveled and trained with another unit- the 149th General Supply Company, now based in Miami. This was not a happy group. For years, they had been a Military Police (MP) company. Now, they were performing less exotic duties. While there were no overt plans for mutiny, their attitudes reflected a given amount of disgust.

My job was to go to school and advance through the module levels as quickly as possible. Military training is somewhat different than the real world. You are given books and learning material based on a given block of instruction. As you complete one training module, you are rewarded with the next level of material. If you don't get to the next level, no goodies for you. Each day I would take the material and test out on the level. I was trying to get through what was really more than two weeks of material. After school, there was marching, PT and affiliated fun. In the morning, there were formations and announcements. It was announced one morning that an investigation was underway to determine who exhibited his displeasure with our summer camp by defecating in the showers, referring to the gesture as "animalistic". It was off to the PX for some better shower shoes. During one afternoon formation, we were rushed back into the barracks for a shakedown inspection. Someone decided to pack a handgun in his footlocker- for show and tell, perhaps- which is frowned on. It was quite coincidental, I'm sure, that it was found

in the second locker inspected. It was back to the PX to see if there was any ballistic sleepwear on sale.

As a unit, we spent a lot of time in the traditional *front leaning rest* position. Most people know this as the *push-up* position. Apparently, no one had informed them that after basic training you could not be required to assume the position unless the leadership was willing to join you, which, in this case, they did not. It was also the only pay call line I stood in where the Sergeant-at-arms stood near the line with a military 12-gauge, looking as if he wanted a reason to use it. I was under the impression he guarded prisoners for a living.

The next couple of years provided little in the way of activity for the new unit. There were the usual drills summer ATs at Camp Blanding and Fort Stewart, Georgia. The one notable difference was an immense increase in what the Army calls rolling stock- things that move on wheels or track. As a maintenance company, there were repair personnel for every common army item. Among others, there were the mechanics, armament and small arms specialists, communications and electronics experts. There was even a canvas repair shop at one time. Additionally, there were the supply, mess and administrative sections common to all army units, all of which required vehicles. There were also the support services such as production control and my platoon, which handled stock control and common repair parts supplies.

I must admit there was one summer camp where I managed to distinguish myself in an unusual way. We were in the middle of a field problem, approaching the evening meal on one of those typical Florida summer days- hot and humid. Two of us had volunteered to cover the perimeter points while the assigned soldiers went to chow. We had both decided that having a radio playing music was good. Unfortunately, the Army didn't care too much for the idea. We took our portable radios and carefully rigged the wiring through our uniforms and into our steel helmets. Inside the helmet were the headphones, which covered the ears and eliminated other noises. It was great. We were each enjoying our tunes with no one the wiser- or so we thought. As we stood by our positions, the black female Army Captain who was our evaluator, approached. No problem, I thought as I had made provisions for just such an occasion. All I had to do was unplug the headset from the radio, and I could manage very well, thank you. The problem arose while I was attempting to grasp the plug. It was stuck at such an angle that I couldn't disconnect it. Now, the evaluator was on top of me, so I reported, as is Army custom. She then asked me a question, but all I could hear was the music blaring from the radio. I could see her lips moving, but it wasn't in sync with the music. I had no idea what she was asking. Apparently, she was asking me if I had a range card for the position

I was manning. I had responded by telling her what day of the week it was and giving her a brief forecast of the weather. The expression on her face told me we were not communicating. In the meantime, the other soldier had managed to get rid of his radio and was prepared to speak with the evaluator. After inquiring about my mental capabilities, she asked the other soldier the same question about the range cards. Although he was simply sitting in for someone else, the evaluator had him doing range cards for the balance of the camp. I don't believe she and I ever spoke again. My platoon leader, a second lieutenant, did have some comments. They were not uplifting.

As the unit expanded, there were vehicles and jobs for eventually hundreds of troops. Although my primary job was in the area of "tech supply", which encompassed stock control and repair parts supplies, I found myself appointed to the Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare section. Despite minimal training in the area- there was no one school qualified in the unit- I was appointed noncommissioned officer in charge of the section. I eventually completed a course in NBC defense, but that dealt with only the most fundamental aspects of operations in an NBC environment. Still, there was training for the NBC unit as well as required training for the troops. During one annual training period, our NBC training unit was sent to other units to assist in their training, at the request of our Army evaluator- in this case , a captain from the Puerto Rico National Guard, who liked the way we did things. What was awkward was training Vietnam veterans who probably knew this stuff better than most. I also had the opportunity to train troops for civil disturbances.

Every year, we issued riot gear and beat each other up on drill time. It was great.

As there was a push for basic soldiers' skill training, I spent an immense amount of time preparing and executing the fundamentals for the unit. There was also the administrative upkeep that was required- specifically, the paper work. In the meantime, the had changed leadership, and there were many other changes taking place. With the introduction of computers, the manual system I had learned was being phased out, although there was the feeling that there would always be a need for non-electronic back-up. With most of my time devoted to training, my section job became that of trivial contribution and, as a squad leader, dealing with personnel problems. Over time, the leadership would again change and become more computer oriented.

We were once again at annual training, going through the motions and jumping through the hoops as we always had, but we sensed a more urgent pace in the training. Our evaluators were not as bent on the war games as they were in seeing

the section as a whole performing well. The politics normally affiliated with camp were seemingly minimal. I engaged the evaluator in an informal conversation as we worked in our office- trailer. We were wrapping the AT period up. He wanted to know- more so than previous evaluators- that we had what we needed to perform and maintain operations. He had indicated that we could be going to war. Now, we had heard this at every summer camp. However, there was a conviction in his voice that captured my attention. Although it was said that only a handful of Pentagon-type individuals were aware of plans for the future, I had to wonder if the evaluator's manner was strictly fortuitous.

CHAPTER 2

Summertime in Florida is a swell time. Again, it marks the start of hurricane season, hot days, hot nights, high humidity and the endearing sounds of female mosquitoes attacking you and your barbecue. I have also notice a general mood swing in the public- that of heightened irritation, aggravation and manners befitting barnyard animals. This was especially important to me, as I had been working as a police officer for the city of Boca Raton since 1981. By 1991, I had been firmly established for some time as a marine officer, which involved riding around in a boat all day. Okay, someone has to do it. I would usually work the day shift and be at home in the evenings eating dinner and watching the news. Usually, there would be the normal rapes, murder and mayhem that so delicately embrace the region; however, there was a budding interest in stories being filed from the Middle East. It seemed Iraq was creating a small global issue by walking into the small but oil-rich country of Kuwait. There have, of course, been moments of unhappiness in this region since the beginning of time. In fact, Iraq had just been at war with another neighbor, Iran, and was not playing well with other countries in the region. The surrounding Arab world was trying to reason with Saddam Hussein to pull his troops out and go home. The stories of atrocities being committed to the people of Kuwait began to expand into nightly news coverage. President George Bush was beginning to publicly condemn their actions, stating that the United States and its Allies demanded an immediate and total withdrawal from the region, and indicating that a diplomatic solution of the region's problems must be reached. Hussein, however, indicated that he was not moving. Apparently, there were those in the Pentagon who knew, long before things began to manifest themselves, that we were going to be gearing up for a conflict with Iraq. One problem with this area was military intelligence- meaning we had little. Although we had our allies in the area, such as Israel, information was difficult to usurp from a culture quite foreign to ours.

The threats were getting more serious as the evening news was now devoting the majority of its coverage to an escalating situation. It was apparent that top negotiators were having no luck in convincing Iraq's defense forces to leave. Instead, there were more invading troops following the road to Kuwait, with fortifications being developed and long term military provisions being put in place. At home, President Bush was now stating that he would be looking to the United Nations and allied forces to seek support should military action become necessary. Several of the nations indicated that they would love to help out. Our staunchest allies, the British, had some of the best desert fighters on the planet. We had an arsenal stockpile and new war toys that had never been battle tested.

Meanwhile, on the home front, everyone was asking the same question: Why should we get involved in someone else's civil war? We were being told that we could not stand by while countless people suffered and died from injustices being delivered from such a menacing satanical force. It was generally assumed, however, that justification for military intervention actually would evolve around greed. After all, with the Middle East in turmoil, the flow of oil (the Babylonian whore?) could dwindle and obviously paralyze a nation based on mobility and comfort. Each night, efforts to peacefully resolve matters deteriorated. The war talk volume was getting louder. Some even wanted God to take sides, claiming this could become a "holy war". Now, matters were becoming personal. The talk was that if the U.S. were to activate its military, there would be a need for reservists to supplement regular forces. At our drills, people were becoming more serious. We heard well-placed hints that if a deadline for a peaceful solution were to come and go without resolution that our unit could be in the mix. Then, there was the possibility that, if activated, we would simply remain stateside. Our unit would replace the staff at Fort Stewart, Georgia, while they went to war. But most of us decided that, if we had to be activated, then we would rather "pay our money and take our chances" overseas, even though we really didn't want to be activated at all.

But peace was not breaking out as we had hoped. In fact, it became painfully evident that military action was eminent. Plans to put the big war machine into motion were now being executed.

One Wednesday evening, I sat in front of the television with great frustration, watching the drama unfold. Everyone at work was asking if we were going to be deployed. I had no answer. Every ring of the telephone caused a bit of minor panic. Finally, the phone rang with due cause. The voice told me that I was to report to the armory as soon as possible. I donned my uniform quickly and drove the distance, wondering if this was it. Upon arrival, I was told that I was to prepare the NBC equipment for transport. After inspection of the devices, it was decided that while the equipment had served well as training aids for the unit, it wasn't designed to be real war material. So the paper work began, declaring all of our stock as "unserviceable". My conversations with the several other troops, who had also been brought in for the night detail, continued to hold out for a pre-war settlement. Or maybe, because this was hurricane season, Florida Governor Bob Martinez would find our state mission as a priority, and not throw us under the bus. I left the armory with no answers, but one of the sergeants from our higher headquarters who found himself attached to us stated that he didn't believe that we would be going anywhere. The following night, I was back at the armory, again with the NBC equipment. The sergeant from the previous night approached me. "Remember what I told you guys

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