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16th Sustainment Brigade
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Soldiers enable the war fighter — to relax

AFN

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16th SB Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq — There are many ways to “enable the war fighter” to do his job, but few ways to enable him or her to relax; and for two Soldiers here, “down-time” is a full-time mission.

Pfc. Billy Anderson and Spc. Randal Couch, both Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 76th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Indiana Army National Guard, run cables, trouble shoot, install networks, antennas, power inserters and splitters to ensure that everyone on base can watch American Forces Network television programming.

“Couch and Anderson go out of their way to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have AFN, with most installs completed within 48 hours,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jeramie Baty, signal operations non-commissioned officer in charge, 76th BSTB.

“These two Soldiers service a COB with over six thousand people, and they do it ten hours a day, seven days a week,” Baty said. “Considering neither one of them has had any formal training in the cable television industry — that includes operating the

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equipment needed to decode the satellite signal into its various stations and then recombine and broadcast the new signal to the individual customer's television — they have done a great job.”

Couch, a signal systems support specialist on his second deployment, said he was caught off-guard with the job.

“I didn’t ask for the job,” said Couch. “It was given to me. I was tasked to complete the project started by the last unit (the 332nd Rear Operations Center, Wisconsin Army National Guard) to get everyone AFN.”

The 26-year-old from Indianapolis, Ind., said he enjoyed the work.

“It’s nice,” he said. “I get to get out of the office.”

In 2006, Soldiers at Q-West starting getting three channels of AFN, with limited availability. The 76th BSTB took over the project in May 2008, Baty said.

“In our time here we have installed over 14 miles of cable; provided service in over 800 CHUs; and installed networks in seven “pads” and 40 buildings,” said Baty, a 31-year-old native of Middletown, Ind. “We have upgraded the equipment that runs the commander’s channel, added the Q-West movie channel and one FM radio station. We have installed over \$40,000-worth of equipment throughout the COB.”

Baty said that television is important to Soldiers’ well-being.

“AFN is a vital piece in maintaining a Soldiers morale and sanity,” Baty said. “It is the

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link that you have to home, especially now during the baseball World Series and, of course, football season. Soldiers will complain about lost AFN service before they will about water rationing.”

For Sgt. 1st Class Lamar Chancellor, brigade property book non-commissioned officer, being able to see his favorite teams, including the Alabama Crimson Tide, Dallas Cowboys and Phoenix Suns, is very important.

“I’m telling you, it’s definitely a big plus,” said the 35-year-old from Birmingham, Ala. “Because there was a time they didn’t have it here.”

Anderson, a 23-year-old construction equipment repair specialist from New Castle, Ind., said he didn’t expect to be a cable installer in Iraq.

“I was just going to show up and do whatever they told me to do,” Anderson said. “I didn’t know I’d be running cable, though. I don’t mind it; I’m learning a different trade. I guess I can’t complain.”

Anderson said television is important to Soldiers, though he doesn’t like watching it.

“If we don’t give it to them we’re not liked much,” Anderson said. “I don’t have a TV; I don’t watch TV. I try to keep busy. I hate being in the CHU (containerized housing unit).”

Anderson said he was proud of the work he’s done, but he’s ready to wrap-up this deployment and go to school to study sports medicine.

“I’m ready to get back, get back to Indiana,” he said. “I won’t have to walk through sand and gravel to get anywhere.”



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Spc. Randal Couch, signal systems support specialist, and Pfc. Billy Anderson, construction equipment repair specialist, both Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 76th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Indiana Army National guard, run coaxial cable through a drainage conduit on the roof of the 16th Sustainment Brigade headquarters building here Oct. 30. Soldiers from the 76th BSTB have installed over 14 miles of cable at Q-West, provided service in over 800 CHUs, and installed networks in seven “pads” and 40 buildings, said Sgt. 1st Class Jeramie Baty, signal operations non-commissioned officer in charge, 76th BSTB. They have also upgraded the equipment that runs the commander’s channel, and added the Q-West movie channel and one FM radio station. “We have installed over \$40,000-worth of equipment throughout the COB,” said Baty, a 31-year-old native of Middletown, Ind. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)