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Regional

Soldier writes letter from Iraq

By DAVE CLARKE Of The Star Courier

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Letters home have become a rarity in the war in Iraq because of modern technology which makes communication with families back home almost instantaneous with cell phones, e-mail and webcams.

Staff Sgt. Jason Adams, of Toulon, however, has written numerous letters home to family, friends, area newspapers and others since he arrived in Iraq with Battery F, 202nd Air Defense Artillery, of the Illinois National Guard from Galva.

The unit is based at Camp Victory North, near Baghdad International Airport.

While in Iraq, SSGT. Adams has been awarded the Army Commendation Medal of Valor for his performance under fire which saved the lives of soldiers wounded in an attack by insurgents.

Adams, who is enrolled in the St. Francis School of Nursing and working toward becoming a lifeflight or emergency room nurse, is currently home on leave spending time with his wife, Stephanie and daughters Teryl and Joanna, as well as parents Howard and Joan Adams, all of Toulon.

An open house in his honor will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Newsroom Bistro, in Toulon.

On Sept. 15, while on guard duty in a tower at the airport, Adams wrote the following letter sharing what it's like being in Iraq and why he is proud to serve.

Once again, this past week has found me stuck in my "deer stand" watching the grass grow. But, even though my duty would seem rather mundane, excitement never seems to elude me. I am still working the night shift in the towers, which runs from 0200hrs until 1400hrs. I have spent all of this time with a soldier from Charlie Battery of the 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Regiment. The most interesting thing about him is that he is from the island of Guam. I love talking to him about the places that he has been. He has seen Korea, the Philippines, Japan, Australia, Indonesia and many countless islands in the Pacific. I felt like such a hick when I told him that aside from a border town in Mexico, this is my first trip outside the United States. But, in trade, he has never seen some of the things that I have seen either. He has never seen a corn field frosted with snow or a deer and her fawn running through the timber, so it all averages out in the end.

I am told that farmers are already picking corn in areas back home. There aren't exactly a ton of Successful Farming issues floating around here, so I have no idea of what the crop forecasts are this year, but I certainly hope that the farmers have a good yield. The weather here is starting to change dramatically. A couple of weeks ago, the highs were still hitting in the triple digits, with the lows in the 90s or upper 80s. The last couple nights, the lows have gotten down into the 60s! Let me tell you, when you are used to 120 degree weather, 60 degrees is downright cold. We have started to wear our field jacket liners at night. There is usually a nice breeze blowing from the north and since our towers do not have windows, there is nothing to stop the cold air. It is refreshing to go through an entire day without sweating through my clothes.

Four days ago was September 11th. We were worried that the morons that we are fighting with might give us a little "party" in honor of our most infamous of days. That day passed without incident, other than a call to my wife to wish her a happy anniversary. Yes, our anniversary is 9/11. The only good thing about that is that I usually don't forget it anymore. It helps keep me out of the doghouse! No, the morons waited until the 12th to remind us of why we are here. Spc. Jasmin and I have worked out a little rest plan on our own in the towers. At night, we take turns dozing off in order to get enough sleep in an otherwise sleepless day. I had only been asleep for a few minutes when Spc. Jasmin yelled "Rockets!" The bad part about being up in the tower is that there is nowhere to go during an attack. We certainly

can't leave our post, and even if we could, where would we go? There are no bunkers nearby for us to run to for cover. Basically, we just hunker down, and hope for the best. We counted 12 impacts in the first salvo, luckily, none of them hit too close but, we could see them impact about 400 yards away. We ducked down and we lost count of the explosions as the second salvo came in. These hit closer and we could feel the blast wave from the explosions. Sitting through indirect fire is not fun. There is nothing you can do except pray that the rockets or mortars either hit long or short, left or right. These rockets are so big that they are fired from several miles away. So the likelihood of finding the jerks that shot them is slim and none. They are already in their trucks and gone before the first one impacts. No one was hurt in the attack and all of the rockets hit in a grassy area out by the airstrip. Nevertheless, neither one of us were sleepy after that!

What these idiots donât realize is this: The airport is a source of revenue for this new country and if they continually try to blow it up, it will take longer for it to get back on its feet and therefore take longer to get this country going again. Like I have said a million times, these arenât the smartest people in the world that we are fighting against.

I have been reading a book about Dwight D. Eisenhower these last few days. This book starts out in Abilene, Kansas and ends with the surrender of Germany. In this book is the entire speech that Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered on December 8th, 1941. As I read this speech, I found it interesting that all one would have to do is change one date and several places and this speech would apply to September 11th. We were "Suddenly and deliberately attacked" and "With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of the American people, we will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God." It is sad, but it still fits. Even sadder is that since 9/11, new words have been added to the average American's vocabulary. Words like Taliban, Al-Queda and Jihad were virtually unknown to us. Sadly, today many kids know what these words embody. This war is so much unlike any other that we have fought. Sure, we have fought guerrilla wars in the past, but prior to Vietnam we were allowed to fight and win. It is different today. Today we again find ourselves in a guerrilla war. Yes, we know the threat; we know the cities which give birth to insurgents and car bomb factories. We are allowed to defend ourselves, but basically prohibited from taking any real offense for fear of civilian casualties

and religious backlash. Unfortunately, the American soldier knows all too well about bureaucracy and how it works. That is the one thing that hasn't changed throughout the years. We soldiers of today wear many hats; soldier, diplomat, liberator, protector, provider, policeman! All these jobs embody the United States soldier today. Our jobs are not limited to destroying the enemy by any means possible. Too many other things factor into our roles here. We cannot simply carpet bomb a city in order to root out a handful of bad guys. We are like a bear being antagonized by a bee. The bee cannot destroy the bear, but it sure can make it mad!

Thinking about this, I am reminded of the words of Winston Spencer Churchill during WWII. Churchill said "You ask what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival."

One of my close buddies here recently left to go home on leave. Prior to his departure, we sat one day and talked about going home. He told me about an incident that happened to him in an airport when he was coming home from basic training. When a soldier travels under orders, they are usually required to travel in uniform. Coming home from basic is no different. My buddy was in the airport in his Class A uniform and a man approached him and spit on him and called him a babykiller. This appalling happening did not occur many years ago during the height of the Vietnam era, but rather, less than 10 years ago.

This uniform that I wear is not just a garment. A garment is something that anyone can buy at Wally World. No, I have earned the right to wear it. There are millions of uniforms exactly like it, but mine is unique. It bears my family's name and is adorned with the rank and medals that I have distinguished myself enough from my peers to be awarded. Nothing was given to me! I have earned it all! It is a reflection of me and I consider it almost sacred. Its sharp creases and crisply starched collar command respect, the spit shine on my boots reflects the attention to detail that is one of the hallmarks of the Army. I have had the honor of wearing it for almost 13 years, and even today as I put on the boots, the trousers and the shirt, I am humbled. I am humbled to be able to serve all of you. This uniform makes me a better person, a better husband and a better father for I have a code by which I must live. It speaks loudly of who I am, what I believe, what I hold dear and most importantly, what I

am willing to do, or to give up in order for my kids to live as I have lived. But, not just my children! The countless millions of Americans whom I will never meet will also benefit from my service. To have someone disgrace it in such a way, to me equates to setting our flag on fire; it is disgusting, it is hateful and it is almost unforgivable. The difference is this; our flag is an inanimate symbol of our country, whereas I am a living, breathing symbol of our county. A soldier's way of life is one of servitude. We do not choose our missions; we serve all of you, even those of you who despise us for what we are.

Being spit on because of this uniform is not about the embarrassment of the act. Yes, it is embarrassing, but moreover, it hurts. It cuts like a knife straight to the bone and the scars do not dissipate with time. We find ourselves asking "Is this what I defend, is this the scum that my buddies died for?" These things are that which I fear; not bullets, rockets or mortars. I volunteered to put myself in harm's way if need be. I did not volunteer to be defiled by someone unable to recognize what soldiers are all about. Thusfar, I have heard only stories of warm welcomes, handshakes and hugs from Americans back home. However, there is always someone just waiting for the opportunity to make a statement. Hopefully, my travel home will be looked back upon with happiness and thanks rather than sorrow and hatred.

At any rate, at last glance I had only 11 days left before that big airliner takes me back to the greatest place I know. It is good that I am spending most of my time in a tower. I do not think that I could concentrate enough to accomplish much else. See y'all in a couple weeks!

SSGT. Jason A. Adams

Baghdad, Iraq

Editor's note -- In contrast to SSGT. Adams' story about a buddy who was spit on in an airport several years ago while coming home from basic training, SPC Brock Bollivar, a U.S. Army soldier from Prophetstown who is also currently home on leave from duty in Iraq, was given a first class airline ticket by a man behind him while he was waiting in line to fly on standby from Dallas to Chicago. The man heard the soldier in uniform in front of him ask for a standby ticket, said he didn't need to be in Chicago until the next day and offered Bollivar his first class ticket allowing him to get home sooner than planned.

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CAMBRIDGE -- Scarecrows from the bizarre to the beautiful will be auctioned off during the Cambridge United Methodist Church's 15th annual Fall Review from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 9.

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