

SUGGESTED HEADER - Feeding the Force
SUGGESTED SUB-HEAD - Reserve food service specialists hone their skills at Pacific Warrior 2008

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FORT HUNTER LIGGET, Calif. – It has long been said that an Army moves on its stomach and nearly 100 Army Reserve food service specialists proved the axiom to be true during Pacific Warrior 2008.

The three-week field training exercise at Fort Hunter Ligget, Calif. was a proving ground for food service specialists, pulled together from 15 different units, to feed a force of nearly 3,000 Soldiers.

“This was our first time managing this exercise,” said Maj. Derek Bonaldo, G-4, 91st Operations Group (Provisional). “At first we were happy just to not have mission failure. We learned plenty about the difficulty of trying to manage a group not in your chain of command, as well as subsistence storage, accountability, and communications with austere forward operating bases (FOBs) from the main Class I (subsistence) break point.”

Bonaldo said the food service Soldiers and NCOs served anywhere from 800 meals at the smallest FOB to over 1,100 at the largest FOB at any one time.

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Meals were prepared at the FOBs in the smaller mobile kitchen trailers (MKTs) and the larger containerized kitchens (CKs). Refrigeration vans were also located at all FOBs for cold and dry food storage as well as ice.

He added that meals were prepared from the Unitized Group Rations-A (UGR-A) with fresh vegetables and fruit. The hot breakfast and dinner meals were supplemented with MREs for lunch.

“Our food service Warriors have a very challenging task, a task that many Soldiers and leaders don’t understand,” said Rickey Frazier, Reserve Component Food Service Advisor, Army Center for Excellence, Subsistence, Fort Lee, Va.

“Often our food service Warriors are the first out of the bunk in the morning and the last to lie down at night. However, after talking with several of them, they feel the difficulties of their job don’t outweigh the satisfaction of having the most rewarding task on the battlefield.

Bonaldo added that the food service professionals took many lessons learned from the exercise.

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These included keeping proper headcounts during designated mealtimes, having updated field sanitation certificates, other required training for the NCOs and junior enlisted Soldiers, as well as command and control of the 92Gs working in the FOBs.

Both Bonaldo and Frazier were quick to point out there were many outstanding food service professionals participating in the exercise.

Of significant note was Sgt. 1st Class Alexander Cromartie of the 223rd Transportation Command.

“He went the extra mile,” Frazier said. “They posted serving and nutrition awareness posters; posted a banner wishing fathers a “Happy Fathers Day”, and if that wasn’t enough, the USO was on the scene to lend a hand,” Frazier said.

“The USO was not allowed to open its mobile concessionaire until after duty hours as not to interfere with the exercise.”

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In addition, AAFES had a mobile site set up where Soldiers could purchase personal items they didn't bring with them for the exercise, Frazier added.

"Plenty can be done better for next year. This USARC WAREX will continue every year at Fort Hunter Liggett and the food service operation will continue to learn and get better," Bonaldo concluded.

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PHOTO CUTLINE:

PacificWarrior_MKT: An Mobile Kitchen Trailer (MKT) set up at a FOB during Pacific Warrior 2008. Army Reserve food service professionals served nearly 3,000 Soldiers during the three week exercise. Courtesy Army Center for Excellence, Subsistence

