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### 1ST ARMORED DIVISION SOLDIER GOES 'WHERE THE ACTION IS' ON SIXTH DEPLOYMENT WITH 'OLD IRONSIDES'

By Staff Sgt. Mark S. Patton

1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

**CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait** -- While many Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division headquarters recently began their first combat tours in Iraq, one "Iron Soldier" seems to be finding this deployment stuff a hard habit to break.



STAFF SGT MARK S. PATTON

Sgt. 1st Class Roscoe Johnson III, NCO-in-charge of the automation section for 1st Armored Division's Alpha Detachment, 146th Signal Company, talks with section Soldiers at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Johnson is currently serving on his sixth deployment with the division.

This is the sixth deployment as a member of the division for Sgt. 1st Class Roscoe Johnson III, NCO-in-charge of the automation section of the division's Alpha Detachment, 146th Signal Company.

Johnson says he wouldn't have it any other way. "I love this division," he declares. "I want to be where the action is."

Sitting in a tent in the scorching Kuwait heat, where he and other Soldiers deployed with the division headquarters are currently training many miles from home in preparation for the move north, he constantly grins as he shares his "Iron memories."

Johnson talks of how far he has come with the division as a Soldier, section sergeant, platoon sergeant and first sergeant.

Fit, trim and athletic, Johnson seems the personification of an Iron Soldier. He says Iron Soldiers must be hardened and ready to face adversity. Like the legendary American fighting ship that inspired the nickname of the division -- "Old Ironsides" -- he says division troops must be tough and hard to break.

His first stint with the division began in 1989 when Johnson, then a young specialist, was assigned to the 141st. The following year he deployed for the first time, to Operation Desert Storm.

That was followed by two years with the 51st Signal Battalion at Fort Bragg, N.C., and then Johnson returned to "Iron Land." He hasn't left since.

The sergeant has traveled the globe with the division, serving on three peacekeeping tours in the Balkans. His current deployment here is his third combat tour with Old Ironsides.

With an air of calmness -- a trait for which his Soldiers say he is known -- Johnson gives a lot of credit for his success to his wife, Susann.

Johnson claims that Susann, a native of Germany, is one of the main reasons he has stayed with the division. He does not regret it.

"Germany has nice people, and it is a beautiful country," he says.

Johnson jokingly refers to Susann as the "house vet," a title he says she has definitely earned over the course of his deployments as she has stepped up to the plate to keep house and home in order and raise their seventh-grade son, Roscoe IV.

"My wife is good about me being away," said Johnson. "She has her own schedule, and she is all about family and taking care of our son."

In spite of his fabled calm, it's obvious Johnson misses his clan when he talks about playing basketball with his son and giving Roscoe IV pointers after each game and practice.

As a six-time veteran, Johnson shared some of his secrets for surviving deployment.

"The Army is what you make of it," he said. "Individuals have to do things that benefit the whole team, and they need to remember everything comes to an end."

The sergeant said he also expects and thrives on challenge. He described a happy blue-collar childhood in Detroit, where he was raised by a factory worker father and a nurse mother who is the daughter of legendary Motown R&B artist Jackie Wilson. But the challenge, he added, was watching many of his friends going the wrong way in life and remaining determined to live right.

“Detroit is a pretty tough city to grow up in,” he explained. “I had to get away from all that, which is one reason I decided to join the Army.”

Johnson compared growing up as a child to growing in the Army. He said he is constantly evolving as a Soldier and leader, but it took time for his confidence to develop.

As a young specialist deployed to Desert Storm, Johnson now recalls with a chuckle, he once was so unraveled by a warning of an incoming SCUD missile that he couldn't remember the proper steps to putting on his chemical protective gear. With so much adrenaline going through his body, he completed all the steps backwards, and pulled the straps on his gas mask so hard that a strap snapped. When his NCO came around to check on his Soldiers status a short time later, Johnson says he told him, "I'm dead."

The sergeant calmly told him to tie the strap back in place, and Johnson says he vowed he would never let adrenaline get the best of him again. And he still likes to use that story to teach that lesson to his Soldiers.

“You have to be fast at things, but never rush,” he said.

“He is nice and calm, and his calmness carries over to his Soldiers, and it helps us relax,” said Alpha Detachment information specialist Pfc. Aaron K. Blakey.

Capt. Joe Billingsley, a battle captain for the division automation section, expressed it with a bit more "Armyese."

“He has a nice balance of leadership skills and technical skills,” Billingsley said.

While no one can be certain what the future holds, Johnson is optimistic about the division's contribution during this, his third, deployment in Iraq.

“I believe (the division) will set a standard here,” he said. Its "Iron Family" can survive if they remember the old Army motto that became a household phrase in America.

“Be all that you can be,” he says.



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