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### **1st Armored Division sergeant still working with Soldiers after two decades as member of active, reserve and National Guard forces**

**By Pfc. Evan Loyd**

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** -- Sgt. 1st Class Donald Johnson, electronic warfare officer with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, has served the Army as an active-duty, Army Reserve and National Guard Soldier since he enlisted in the Army as a wheeled vehicle mechanic in 1986.



PFC EVAN LOYD

Sgt. 1st Class Donald Johnson, electronic warfare officer for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, talks with local kids while on a patrol in Iraq in May 2008.

His first assignment was on active duty with Company C, 303rd Field Artillery, 8th Infantry Division, in Baumholder, Germany. In 1988, Johnson transitioned into the Army Reserve for two years with a Wisconsin-based engineer company. Two years later he was back in the Regular Army, where he stayed seven more years, before spending 10 years in the Army National Guard.

In 2007, Johnson rejoined the Regular Army, where he found himself back in

Baumholder, assigned to the 2nd BCT's Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

“The Army has helped to define me. I kept coming back because I missed the camaraderie. I enjoyed being part of something bigger than myself, and serving my country. I felt like I was making a difference.”

Johnson served in many different positions in his more than 22 years of service, and said he has done everything from mechanic to company first sergeant.

“I loved those jobs because they allowed me to work closely with the lower enlisted [Soldiers] and get to know and help them.”

As HHC’s acting first sergeant, Johnson oversaw the unit's train-up for deployment to Iraq in April 2008. While some might have been intimidated by such a big task -- and one that normally calls for an NCO in a higher grade, Johnson said he and the company rose to the occasion.

“It’s not about your pay grade; it’s about how you approach the job. It didn’t matter what rank I was, I got support when I needed it, and got the job done,” he said.

Now, as electronic warfare officer for the brigade, overseeing his battalion-level counterparts and making sure their equipment is maintained and tested, Johnson said his role in taking care of Soldiers is the same as a first sergeant's, just from a slightly different angle.

“My job now is keeping Soldiers alive,” said Johnson.



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