

CWS JERRY LASHBROOK PRIVATE 1ST MISSION



MAR 10 2007

Friends and family

10 March 07

I hope all is well, and I am sorry I have not written sooner, but my schedule since I left home has been quite unusual. As I am writing I am spending my first night in DJ (Djibouti) it is about 1am and I'm in a tent with about 5 others. I'm not sleeping to well yet, for obvious reasons. Let me catch you up as to how I got to this point.

As you all know we spent the first ten days or so at FT Benning Ga. It was a slow schedule at first. We were issued a lot of equipment some of which I will list,

New uniforms (not flight suites so I will never wear them)

Sleeping bag

Boots

Armor plated vest and with military style load bearing equipment

Helmet

Chemical suit and mask

9 Mil (which I turned into the arms room here today in hopes that I never have to check it out. We were told by other folks here that they never carry them on trips it is just to much of a pain in the ass and you don't need them Also they make the young Marines here that get in trouble go to the Arms room and clean weapons so mine should be spotless when I have to take it back to Benning.)

Rain gear

Cold Weather gear

Ruck sack (Military back pack)

It was basically four duffel bags worth of junk that I will never use. We didn't want to bring some of it so we rented a storage building in Georgia and stored at least one bag a piece so we don't have to lug the stuff around. I left behind things like the uniforms, sleeping bag and the cold weather gear (what am going to do with cold weather gear in Africa?). I ended up bringing four bags of stuff with me, but that included one bag I brought from home. You would think we could have just told them we didn't want some of that stuff, but it doesn't work that way. They have to give it to you.

We also did medical screening and got a lot of shots. Of course the normal stuff just to catch me up, but they added Anthrax (which burns like hell for the first five minutes) and small pox, which is still festering on my arm. We also did some other various in processing stuff.

We did get some good training though like how to detect IEDs, first aid, and various other military tactical stuff. The training was conducted by a contract company called Omega it is made up of mostly retired Drill SGTs. They were fantastic. They knew the info well and how to present it. We went to their range and qualified with the pistol. It was a lot of fun. It was a pop up range with targets spread between five and thirty meters away. We also got the typical legal brief on who to shoot and who not to shoot. All in all Ft Benning was worth while.

We finished up the training there and had about four days off. They let us leave so I drove last Friday night down to Winter Haven FL and spent the night. I got up Saturday morning and flew a sea plane at Jack Brown's for about an hour (lots of fun). Later on

that day Michael, my mom and Michael's kids flew into the Kissimmee airport and we spent a couple days at Disney world. I had to return to Georgia on Monday.

We left Ft Benning Wednesday morning at about 6am for our long journey here. We flew to Atlanta and then to Norfolk VA commercial. At Norfolk we went over to the Naval air station to get on the contract airplane for the ride over. The contract company was called North American Airlines and the plane was a 767. We left Norfolk at about 6pm Wednesday for the five hour flight to Shannon Ireland where we stopped to refuel. The next few stops were to drop off passengers and to refuel, they were Naples Italy, Crete, and then to Bahrain. Each stop was about two hours were we got to get off and just hang out in the terminal. On the last leg here to DJ there was only about 15 of us on the plane. The entire trip from Norfolk to here was about 26 hours. The crew was very nice. They fed us a lot a showed lots of movies. I didn't sleep to much on the plane though. I enjoyed looking out the window and seeing lots of new places.

So, we arrived here at about 5 am local time on Friday. We were greeted by our predecessors from Ohio who we are replacing. 3 of them are staying behind for two weeks to help us get used to the flying and the how things work around here. 3 left on the plane we came in on. They are taking good care of us and making things easy so far. Our commander was given keys to his trailer immediately, the rest of us are on a waiting list. It all has to do with rank and when you arrive to get a trailer. We were told it could be as much as a two month wait for us. Either way we will only be in the transient tent for a couple days until we will move into a tent with a lot more individual privacy. The tents do have wood floors though. Everything inside is very well air-conditioned infact I would be cold without a big blanket. The only real bad part is that the bathroom and showers are in a tent about 20 yards away which really sucks at 1am, and yes there are supposedly snakes around. You can guess what kind! We have been told that we will spend very little time in our living space any way. At night we will mostly hang out in our Ops tent and watch movies.

All in all the camp here is not too bad, it is mostly made up of tents which of course all have great ACs. There is a PX were we can buy just about anything we need and a real nice gym. The best thing here is that this is probably the only deployment were drinking is allowed. Stuff like this is typical of the military. The sorrier the place is that you have to live the more privileges they give you. I would rather stay in tent where I can drink then a house were I can't. There are two bars here on base. One is mostly the young Marines and the other is older folks. The second one is reserved for Senior enlisted folks and Officers only we will probably try that one tomorrow. We are only supposed to have three beers a day. We were given a beer card that the bartenders are supposed to punch every time you get a beer. Well I had two beers (they are the big cans also) today and no one asked for my card, So, I think it well stay a very liberal policy as long as no one gets in trouble. We are also allowed to go into town as long as at least two of us go. We are usually allowed the three beer rule in town, but it is suspended right know because I think some young Marines got in a fight. The Ohio guys said they did not go in town very much. They said as much as we get will get travel that there are so many better places to go. DJ is the poorest country in HOA and the city is supposed to be pretty nasty. We are occupying half of the DJ international airport. We were told that the US goal here is to help these countries around here out so they can see that Americans are good people and not let terrorist train and use there countries. There are a lot of soldiers out building

schools and hospitals. The task force that runs this whole show is called HOA (Horn of Africa) and we are living at the Main operating base in DJ called Camp Lemonier. The Task Force is mostly Navy and Marines. It appears Navy Seabees do all the building in the countries and marines protect them and the camp here. It seems that we are just here to provide transportation to the big wigs here on the base that need to go and visit the embassies and officials of the countries. The task force commander is an Admiral and we are considered his pilots, but others use us when he is not. We have one of the nicest offices here. It is made up of a desk for each of us with our own computer. It also has a room built on that has a large screen TV with lots of DVDs and a couple of couches. Like I mentioned before I think that is were we will spend most of our evenings hanging out. The food here so far is very good. Tomorrow we will spend more time meeting folks and learning how to do flight planning and general everyday aviation stuff. I will be the first to fly on Sunday with one of the Ohio guys. I think we are taking the Admiral to Nariobi Kenya. We will have one full day off there so I am looking forward to three nights in a hotel. The flying schedule looks to be very busy, which is good. I am so glad that we brought only four pilots. It looks to be mostly overnight trips to which will be great. Well that is all for now, I will keep you all posted on how things are going. It so far looks like a lot of fun. I love and miss you all and I will try to send pictures when I can. We are going to try to make a unit myspace page. I will keep you posted. I any of you see someone that I did not include on this e-mail feel free to forward it. I will list my e-mail address below. Also, I am currently 9 hours ahead of you.

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