

## Desert Storm Memories

*By CAPT (ret) Lee Henwood, SC, USN (Ret.), Member*

I was stationed at Navy Material Transportation Command 1989–1992, wearing three hats as Air Freight Officer, Reserve Coordinator, and NOACT (Navy Overseas Air Cargo Terminal) Officer. Several days after Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1991, I was sent with a small group of my NOACT sailors to set up and operate an airhead at the Saudi Arabian naval base in Jeddah. We were among the first 400 US military personnel on the ground in Saudi Arabia. We served as the bridge between the USAF cargo aircraft and the fleet. My team of crack air cargo handlers would offload USAF aircraft, document cargo and passengers and send them to the fleet

via Navy C-2s or helicopters, as well as processing passengers and retrograde back to Norfolk. US personnel had been issued CBR gear, but no weapons since we were on a Saudi base. The Saudi personnel were armed, but had no CBR gear. It made me wonder who would actually use the gear in the event of a CBR attack on the base. We operated this airhead until we were relieved by a reserve NOACT unit from Omaha, Nebraska.

During Operation Desert Storm I was assigned as OIC in charge of a freight forwarding warehouse in Bahrain. During our nighttime flight to Bahrain we could see the entire horizon light up, reminding me of an electrical

storm in the summer. We found out the next day that one of the battleships had been conducting a shore bombardment of the Kuwaiti coast. With the exception of seeing a few SCUD missile intercepts, cargo operations were fairly uneventful. In fact, the most exciting event to happen in the warehouse was when actress Brooke Shields stopped by to use the head. My NOACTs talked about that for weeks.

Ironically, during the second Gulf War I served as the Commanding Officer of Naval Transportation Support Center, which was the successor command to Navy Material Transportation Office.

