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CHRISTMAS COMES EARLY FOR SOLDIERS OF V CORPS' 601ST AVIATION SUPPORT BATTALION

By Lisa Eichhorn

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ANSBACH, Germany – Although the weather in Germany has been somewhat winter-like for a good part of this summer, the calendar says Christmas is still months away...except for deployed Soldiers of V Corps' 601st Aviation Support Battalion.



LISA EICHHORN

In the Ansbach (Germany) American Elementary School gym, Harrison (left) and Harley Ponds help Steven Farionos pack boxes to send to their fathers in Iraq.

Members of the 601st's Family Readiness Group and rear detachment thought sending Christmas presents in July to their Soldiers deployed in Iraq would be just the boost the troops need.

FRG leaders also said the project was a boost for the families as well.

"Projects like this help families feel connected to their deployed Soldier. Plus, when they get involved it makes family members feel like they're making a difference, as

opposed to concentrating on the negative parts of a deployment," said Pam

Lindenmeyer, the 601st's FRG leader and project coordinator.

The Ansbach American Elementary School gym was packed with a variety of items and empty boxes for family members to fill. Many of the items were donated to the unit by the efforts of Bernie Hintzke, the father of Pfc. Adam Hintzke, a Soldier with the battalion's Company B.

"Mr. Hintzke contacted us based on information he saw in one of our newsletters that we send out to all family members, including those of our single Soldiers. He was so energized, he went out and had most of the items you see here donated by local businesses in his town. We actually have 67 more boxes on the way that we plan on donating to the Victory Ward and other places that support our Soldiers," said Capt Mellanie Merrit, 601st Rear Detachment commander.

The gym was buzzing with excitement and laughter, just as the unit's leadership hoped.

"Deployments are tough but they also help us forge great friendships with each other," Lindenmeyer said.

