

# A Letter from Home

12 January 08

Dear Little Brother,

It was great to get your letter. So, you've begun your first tour in Iraq. I'm sure it's pure culture shock. It was for me. At the risk of sounding like a know-it-all, I want to share a few lessons I learned from my time in that hot, dusty sandbox. Just some friendly advice from a big bro who's been there.

First and foremost, practice preventive maintenance—for you and your equipment.

PM for you comes down to a few basics: Drink plenty of water to replace what you sweat out. Rub insect repellent with DEET on your skin so the bugs don't eat you alive. Protect your skin with sun screen, your hearing with combat arms earplugs and your eyes with combat eyewear.

As for PM on your equipment, start with the hydration system, because you can't soldier long in the desert without water. Check for leaks. Disinfect the bladder so your water doesn't taste like a stagnant pond.

Then take a close look at the soft panels and hard inserts in your IBA. If they've taken hits by bullets or fragments, they can't protect you worth a darn. Replace them.

Make no mistake, little brother, sand can sabotage your gear pronto. To keep communicating, put dust caps on radio connectors. To keep shooting, clean your rifle and magazines twice as often—and keep their outsides wiped dry.

One last thing: your HMMWV. When the action heats up, you'll need to roll and roll fast. So check the radiator's coolant level once a day. And make sure to clean the air filter. Don't get stuck on the side of the road. A downed vehicle attracts enemy fire like flies to—well, you know.

Above all, stay frosty and come home safe. Best of luck.

Love,  
Your Big Bad Bro

