



# The Desert Voice



8 - 14 February 2004

## Commander's Corner

Welcome to the inaugural edition of "The Desert Voice". This weekly publication is intended to provide the family members of our Signal Task Force an insight into the daily activities the soldiers are experiencing on our historic deployment to the Iraqi Theater of Operations. Each edition will cover a period from Sunday to Saturday, and be electronically sent to the Rear Detachment Command Team on Sundays for distribution. The first few editions will only include the organic companies of the 121<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion. However, in the very near future, our Task Force will be augmented by companies from the 711<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion out of the South Carolina National Guard, the 279<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion out of the North Carolina National Guard and the 125<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion from the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division based in Hawaii. I hope our readers find this publication informative, and I encourage you to comment on the content and format in order to shape this product into one that is useful to you.

The 121<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion departed from our home station in Kitzingen, Germany between 7-9 February. Thanks to our Rear Detachment, together with the Family Readiness Groups and the Unit Ministry Team, each company was treated to a tremendous good-bye with an abundance of food and family in attendance. Family separation is never easy.

Seeing fathers and mothers saying good-bye to their children

was especially gut-wrenching for me. But behind every glistening eye, I saw courageous and determined families and loved ones who are as equally heroic



LTC Garrison and CSM Butler unfurling the colors at Camp Udairi, Kuwait

patriots as the soldiers who are answering our nation's call. There's definitely truth in the old saying that the only thing tougher than being a soldier, is being the spouse of a soldier.

The morning after the battalion had arrived in its entirety, we conducted a ceremony for the uncasing of the battalion colors. This event symbolized that the team of soldiers was back together again, only in a different place, ready to do our duty. From my foxhole, I couldn't be more pleased with the way the battalion has made the transition to this area of operations. We trained extremely hard in the months preceding the deployment and will continue to do so as we await the arrival of our equipment.



SGT Coss from B CO and SPC Santiago from HHC at their reenlistment Ceremony with the IID Commanding General, MG Batiste on 14 FEB 04.

A particular highlight of the week was seeing the Commanding General of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, Major General Batiste administer the oath of reenlistment to two great soldiers in the battalion. SGT Coss from Bravo Company and SPC Santiago from Headquarters and Headquarters Company took their oaths in front of the temporary Division Command Post on Valentines Day. Congratulations to both of them and their families.

Overall, this was a very good week. We had some excellent small arms ranges ran by each company. We established our motor pool area, and conducted reconnaissance of the port area. We are ready for our ship to come in!

## Alpha Company

Alpha Company, 121<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division departed for Kuwait from Larson Barracks,

Kitzingen, Germany on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2004. The company Family Readiness Group and the battalion rear detachment provided a farewell feast for the deploying soldiers and their families in the company motor pool. There were many tearful goodbyes as loved ones said farewell to their deploying soldiers.

At midnight, the company arrived by bus at Nurnberg, Germany airport, the company was quickly in-processed for the flight and fed a catered dinner. By 4 a.m. the company was boarding the plane to Kuwait, after receiving a farewell handshake from a 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division representative. It wasn't long before Alpha Company was taxing down the runway on its way to a year-long deployment in Iraq.

After a four hour flight the plane touched down at Kuwait International Airport. The company was then taken to Camp Wolverine, located there at the airport, where the soldiers in-processed, were given a couple of quick information briefings, and an opportunity to eat. The whole process went very smoothly and after a few hours, the company was on a bus to Camp Udairi, Kuwait. The sun had begun to set when the company embarked on its bus voyage, so the soldiers were not able to see a lot of the landscape during the journey, but judging from the surrounds of the Kuwait airport, it was a dry, sandy, dusty place.

Alpha Company has spent the past six days at Camp Udairi getting settled in and conducting training in preparation for the move north to Iraq. The weather has been a lot warmer than when the company departed Germany, though it still pleasant, with the exception of the occasional dust storm. There are a lot of Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities available on the camp to include a computer café, a phone bank and a gym. AAFES has a presence as well offering a shopette along with Subway and Burger King.

In the near future, the company will concentrate on preparing equipment for the deployment; continue training and getting focused for the mission ahead.

## Bravo Company

Over the last week, Bravo Company, 121<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion has moved from Larson Barracks to Udairi, Kuwait, and is currently awaiting the conditions to be set for continued movement into Ba' Qubah, Iraq.

With a final formation at 0200, 8 February, the Blackhawks bid farewell to their loved ones and boarded the bus for the Deployment Processing Center located in Nurnberg, Germany. Upon completion of the weighing, the paperwork, and the waiting, we boarded the plane at 0630 and flew over Baghdad on our way to the Airport in Kuwait. More paperwork, more briefs, and more waiting. Finally, the company once again boarded busses and moved to Camp Udairi, Kuwait. We arrived at about 0030 (just after midnight), found our bags and put together cots in what will be our new home for a couple of weeks.

Living conditions on this camp are comfortable. We have a small PX, a Burger King, a Subway, two Dining Facilities, and a laundry service. Latrines, showers, and sinks are all centrally located in our areas, and are maintained by contractors, daily.

For the most part, the soldiers have been left alone for team, section, and platoon training, which has centered on basic rifle marksmanship, rules of engagement, and physical training. We were given the opportunity to train on the Electronic Simulations Trainer and to train on Close Quarters Marksmanship, both of which improves our soldiers abilities with his or her weapon and his or her confidence in using them.

There have been some minor tasks (guard duty, running a range for a day) that we have had to do, but they have been minor and were important to the camp as a whole.

The dust storms in Kuwait are no joke, and we have now had two of them. The dirt and dust gets everywhere and on everything. Any other spare time has been consumed with keeping ourselves, or equipment, and our living areas clean.

## Charlie Company

After a warm send off from our families and friends, on 7 Feb 04 Charlie Rock departed Kitzingen for beautiful Kuwait. Although our flight experienced

some delays including a 10 hour layover in Nurnberg, everyone arrived safely at Camp Udairi, Kuwait at 1200 on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February.

Camp Udairi is located in the middle of the Kuwaiti desert, miles from anything. For such an austere location, the camp provides adequate facilities for all of the soldiers to sleep, bathe, eat, call home, e-mail, and work out. The weather (temperatures in the 60s and 70s) under which we arrived has also allowed everyone to ease into the process of acclimating to the weather. We have already experienced our first sandstorm, which covers everyone and everything with sand.

Everyone has been issued the armored plates for their vests and is slowly learning to operate and move around with the extra weight on. Charlie Company has also had the opportunity to conduct more weapons, convoy and IED training since we arrived.

The next few weeks will prove to be busy ones for Charlie Rock as we continue to train and prepare to move north to Kuwait. You may begin mailing things to the soldiers of Charlie Company now as they will probably arrive in Iraq when we do.



The four company commanders after a convoy rock drill. From left to right: CPT Dooley, CPT Steyer, CPT Poston, and CPT Long

## HHC

Headquarters and Headquarters Company deployed on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1045 hours from Kitzingen, Germany to Nuremberg airport. Upon arrival at Nuremberg we were in processed, weighted, fed and put into a holding area where we had to be marched everywhere on the little camp. Good news is that we did not have to wait all that long before our flight. In flight, to our surprise we did get a meal. The selection of course was the same chicken or noodle delight, however, it was good and palatable. The flight to Kuwait lasted about 4.5 hours.

Upon our arrival we departed the plane and loaded the buses. That is all of those except the baggage detail that had their work cut out for them. I must say they all did a wonderful job. Hats off to all of the soldiers who took on the task of the sometime gruesome bag lifting. We were once again inprocessed into theater in Kuwait. Here we waited the most. Most of the waiting was just for buses believe it or not. We finally arrived at Camp Udairi at 0830 the next day completing our first leg of our mission. Since arriving we have had a wonderful sand storm, which made us all feel at home. A special thanks to the advance party for all of the hard work they did making our arrival seamless, since many of us had been up for 25 hours already. The weather is currently a wonderful 60-80 degrees daily. This is Tough 6 out.

## Soldier Spotlight

After fierce competition, SPC Griggs and SGT Wilson distinguished themselves above their peers to be named at the Battalion Casing of the Colors Ceremony as Soldier of the year and NCO of the year respectively.

### Rear-Detachment POCs

- Commander: 1LT Lamborn
- 355-2967
- NCOIC: SFC Young 355-2864
- HHC: SFC Jaggernaut
- 355-2885
- A Co: SSG Degro: 355-2616
- B Co: SGT Versie: 355-2643
- C Co: SGT Garcia: 355-2440

### Family Readiness Group POC's

- HHC FRG – Edith Floro
- A FRG – Mindy Long
- B FRG – Debbie Pedroza
- C FRG – Laura Poston



1ID CG MG Batiste shaking hands with SGT Coss at the reenlistment ceremony