



# The Desert Voice



01 – 07 March 2004

## Commander's Corner

TIKRIT, IRAQ – We've finally made it to Iraq. The approach march into our sector was long and grueling. In fact, the last time I endured something that tough was the first Gulf War 13 years ago. But at the end of this not so pleasant experience, everyone had made it safely to their respective destinations and learned something about themselves, their stamina, and the value of discipline. The tactical road march was over 600 miles, much of it in the hours of darkness on unimproved roads in hostile territory. I'm glad we don't have to do it again for a year.

We've begun the process of transitioning the network from the 124<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion's system to ours. This process will continue through next week, and culminate with the two battalions having a Transition of Authority ceremony on 13 March.

I visited a girl's primary school in Ad Dwar which is one of two schools the battalion will sponsor during our tour here. CPT Steyer and HHC will be on point for this mission, and B Co will head the effort for the school in Baqubah. Once the battalion has the reins for assisting these schools, we will let those of you who may be interested in helping the Iraqi children know what and how you can help us improve their education and quality of life.

As I circulated the battlefield this week from Baghdad to Kirkuk, I witnessed a lot great work. Most

are satisfied if not pleased with their living conditions, and are excited about assuming the mission. Like all professionals, soldiers are eager to practice their craft in a real world setting and do their part in providing a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people.

## Alpha Company

To say that the past week has been exciting would be an understatement. It was the time we had all been waiting for...the convoy to Iraq. I am pleased to report that all went well and everyone showed up with all fingers and toes accounted for. Although it had a happy ending, the trip was definitely interesting.

We departed Camp Udairi on the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and basically drove straight through until the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>. (Don't forget it's a leap year).



We stopped and grabbed a couple of hours of sleep, refueled and then moved on until we arrived to the Tikrit Palace. We arrived at the palace around noon, so after a hot lunch we moved on to our different locations in Iraq. While we didn't see any bad guys or bombs, the experience of sitting for hours in military vehicles was enough combat action for any of us for a while.



SPC DOTY provides route security for the Convoy from the back of a Maintenance Section Truck.

Now the company is settling in to our new homes away from home. Iraq is actually somewhat green right now. I am told it is because we are at the end of the rainy season. We have trees and grass, which is quite a pleasant contrast to the austere desert landscape of Kuwait. That's not to say there isn't plenty of dust around, but unlike Camp Udairi, it's not just the dust that is around.

As of the writing of this article, soldiers are moving into housing that is already available on the different Forward Operating Bases as well as constructing housing closer to their work areas. Building materials are available, Iraqi contractors are on post to help with refurbishing buildings and there is plenty of time available. On top of that, the food is good.



There are a couple of FOBs that don't have Brown and Root contracted food service, but it will be arriving to those areas shortly.

It looks like it's shaping up to be a comfortable and interesting tour in Iraq.

## Bravo Company

This week the company moved to FOB Warhorse in Baqubah, Iraq, began setting up our living quarters, and started the shelter maintenance required after the long drive.

The drive from Udari, Kuwait to Baqubah, Iraq took four days to accomplish. From Udari, we headed north to the border, where we stopped and refueled. Then we pushed on, through another refueling, and finally, at 0430 in the morning, we arrived at our first overnight (seven hour) rest stop.

After we refueled and did some maintenance, we slept in and around the vehicles until 1130, and then got back on the road.

From the rest stop, we headed towards our next overnight stay just north of Baghdad. There, they had a Brown and Root dining facility, which was much appreciated, as every meal was an MRE at this point. We slept in the same manner and headed out the next morning for LSA Anaconda.

We didn't make it.

Just after we left the rest stop, two IEDs were discovered in our route. We stopped the convoy when we noticed the road was closed to our front, discovered why, and headed back to the rest stop without any incident. We



SPC Abdur-Raheem sleeping at TAJI

waited a couple of hours, and when the MPs finished clearing our route, we tried it

again, making it to Anaconda, but arriving too late to make the push to Baqubah.

Anaconda was a nice camp! We had tents, cots, food, showers (with hot water), and an MWR tent right next to where we were staying. A much appreciated over night stay.

The next morning, we left the soldiers of F31 in Anaconda, and headed towards Baqubah, which would be "home" for a majority of the company. We arrived at mid-day, found most of our living quarters ready for us, and began to move in.

We have found the outgoing soldiers from Baqubah to be very generous, as they are trying to unload all of the amenities that they have bought, borrowed, or "procured" during their stay that won't fit in their baggage, or that they just didn't want to carry. They have been more than willing to sell carpets, TV sets, microwaves, refrigerators, gaming systems, and even satellite receivers!

From there, the rest of the week was setting up "camp" and recovering our vehicles from the trip.

## Charlie Company

The past week has been an exciting time for Charlie Rock. The members of Charlie Company were the first company from the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division to arrive in Iraq in support of operation Iraqi Freedom II. Our first full week in Iraq has been a very successful one for the company with all of the LEN platoon's equipment fully in place and already providing communications service. We also welcomed the B Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon (or Node Center 53) to Charlie Rock this week. This platoon will live and work with us

for the remainder of the deployment.

The living standards here are not as austere as many of us might



Convoy soldiers resting at CSC Scania

have suspected. The chow is good, everyone lives indoors, and there is a gym, a PX, a laundry and other quality of life measures in place. Our living quarters were a tight fit but SPC Froeschner has worked hard to build a number of sturdy bunk beds for each of the platoons in order to create more personal space for each soldier. PFC Pierce has also been selected to serve on the Battalion Commander's convoy team during this deployment.

The next few weeks will continue to prove challenging for Charlie Rock as we integrate 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon into the network and as we continue to help 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division command and control the transition from OIF I to OIF II.

ROCK 6

## HHC

This week has been a busy one for all Hang Tough Soldiers. We finished our preparation for the convoy and we executed our road march from Camp Udari, Kuwait to Tikrit, Iraq. The convoy started off as usual an early morning formation followed by a line-up, rock drill (basically a rehearsal using rocks as icons), and walk thru rehearsals. I must say I was impressed with every soldier. LTC Garrison seen here spoke



LTC Garrison personally talking to soldiers prior to their convoy north.

with almost every soldier prior to our departure.

The time came and we finally began our long convoy to the north. I wish I could give you precise information on the dates and times, but we all know that we cannot do that. Upon leaving our last stop in Kuwait we proceeded on the road that would lead to Iraq. We went north through the berm, razor wire, tank ditch, and into Iraq. Entering the other side it was so apparent what has not been reported home in the news. The countryside was littered with trash and poverty beneath anything in North America. It became ever apparent on the suffering the Iraq people have endured under Saddam.



The convoy north was long, quiet and unforgiving. I cannot say a lot but I will say that it did take a long time and that one of the roads, 90 miles of it was not black topped. What a bumpy ride that was! It played hell on our tires, so much that SGT Briggs now is an expert front left tire changer on his 5 Ton. We also went through 4 other HUMVEE tires, so we are all now qualified to work at Tires Plus. We arrived here at Tikrit a few days later in the evening.

The last few days we have all been busy trying to get 4<sup>th</sup> ID soldiers out of here as fast as we can. Currently we are at a pause, because we did not haul our trailers up with us and had them put on flat bed, because of safety concerns. Last night, HHC received all of our trailers at about 2000 hours. Hats off to all of those

soldiers who literally busted their buns to get the trailers off the unloading docks so they could get showers and food before they hit the road again.

Lastly LTC Garrison and I (CPT Steyer) were able to meet with the Head Master of the school in Ad Dwar, Iraq that HHC is currently sponsoring. The school is approximately 40 min away from the Tikrit palace. The primary school is an all female one. Currently there is a contract in place to fix the plumbing, electricity, water, and classrooms.



I will close this week with a picture of Voice 6 & 7 on the roof of the school surveying security.

Tough 6 out.

### Chaplain

The words of Colossians 2:7 encourage us to “overflow with thankfulness.” This is often an overwhelming task, particularly when there seems to be nothing for which we should be thankful. After all, look at our situation; our families are separated, the soldiers are in harms way, the spouses are now single parents and the children will do without a parent for a whole year. At times like these, it seems that there is truly nothing for which to be thankful. But there is. Just think about it.

For over a month, we’ve prayed for safety for our soldiers...and God has answered our prayers. We’ve prayed for wisdom for our leaders...and God has given

abundantly. We’ve prayed for comfort and peace for our families...and God has given that in great measure. We’ve prayed for things to go smoothly in the network transition...and God is working the bugs out daily. We’ve prayed that God would confound our enemies’ plans...and everyday our enemies fail a little more. We’ve prayed that we would grow closer to Him...and every moment He draws us closer. We’ve prayed for high morale...and He’s filled us with passion for our mission. And I’m sure there are others, your prayers, which He’s answered. We do have much for which to be thankful. I hope that you sense and know that and that you will overflow with thankfulness as we continue to seek protection and guidance from the One who controls all things.

Here is a picture of a classroom that has been fixed up.



LTC Garrison and CSM Butler on the roof of the school 121 SIG is sponsoring in Iraq.

### Rumor Mill

**Rumor:** *My spouse is only going to be in Iraq for 6 months and then he'll return once the U.S. turns authority over to Iraq.*

**Fact:** The transition of governmental authority in Iraq, has no near term effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's mission. The stop move / stop loss from November is still in effect, which stated that we are stabilized until 90 days after our redeployment which is scheduled for FEB '05.

**Rumor:** *A mortar hit the DFAC and there were 121 SIG soldiers in it when it hit.*

**Fact:** One night this week, three mortar rounds were fired into the compound and landed near the dining facility. 121 SIG soldiers were in the DFAC however, the rounds did not hit any building and no one was injured.