



# The Desert Voice



07 – 13 June 2004

## Commander's Corner

TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO- DANGER  
– This week we completed our 15<sup>th</sup> week in Iraq and 18<sup>th</sup> week since departing our home station in Germany. It was a largely uneventful week, save the Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device that detonated outside FOB Warhorse near the town of Baqubah. Unfortunately, we had two soldiers injured in this attack. SSG Schmidt and SPC Pritchard from B Company, 121<sup>st</sup> SIG BN were in the vicinity of the blast. Both soldiers will recover from their injuries and our best wishes for a speedy recovery are extended to them and their families.

Our friends from Multi-National Corps – Iraq (MNC-I) paid us a visit this week. Like all higher headquarters, they were here to “help.” In this particular case, they actually were helpful. My definition of helpful is they walked away agreeing to give us more than we had to give them, so it was a net gain for our Task Force. It doesn't always work out that way. Sometimes when you get “help,” you wind up on the short end of the stick.

We will begin scheduling MWR VTCs for families this coming weekend. We will make this opportunity available on Saturdays and Sundays. These sessions will be between the battalion headquarters in Kitzingen and FOB Danger in Tikrit initially, and we will expand to other FOBs when technically feasible. Contact

the Rear Detachment for more information.

Aside from R&R, the most frequent questions soldiers ask me are about the Stop Loss/Stop Move policy. Rumors that the policy has been lifted or changed are not true. Soldiers and families are stabilized throughout the deployment and for 90 days post deployment. As with any Army policy, it could be changed in the future, but for now the Stop Loss/Stop Move policy remains just as it was when we deployed.

Overall, it was a very good week. With the ever rising temperatures, we are putting increased emphasis on protecting the soldiers and equipment from the heat. The soldiers are doing a great job and they continue to impress me with their ingenuity, attitudes and professionalism.

On 15 June, we will welcome CPT Dawn Longwill to C Company, 121<sup>st</sup> SIG BN as she assumes command of the “Charlie Rock”. Dawn has been in the battalion for nearly a year working at the Division HQ. Sadly, we will say farewell to CPT Poston who will have completed a highly successful command tour and led C Company brilliantly through a very challenging period.

Thank you all for the thoughts and prayers, it does make a difference!



LTC Garrison with the kids

## Alpha Company

Things just keep getting better for us here in Iraq. We witnessed an eclipse when Jupiter passed in front of the sun this week. Ok, we didn't have any of the special equipment needed to see the eclipse, but you could feel the excitement in the air. And the fact that we couldn't see it, but that people in the United States really, really couldn't see made it that much more exciting and another benefit of being here in Iraq. This week we have a little levity to lighten the mood and some great accomplishments from soldiers to tell you about.

Guerilla warfare has broken out on FOB Remagen. It all began innocently enough with a few soldiers getting water pistols in care packages from well intentioned family members. They would squirt the unsuspecting passer-by, after which everyone would enjoy a good hearty laugh. It was all good clean fun in the Iraqi heat. But as is human nature, violence beget violence and the violence escalated in intensity. Today on battleground Remagen you can find even the meekest of

Alpha Company soldiers outfitted with Super Soaker water rifles with backpack style water reservoir.

However, I don't want to portray all First Platoon soldiers as water war mongers. You will find the doves in the group who refuse to carry water weapons. They try to keep the hope alive that any inhabitant of battleground Remagen can go to the dining facility or their sleeping quarters without being doused with a torrent of water. Though that hope is like a dimly lit candle, they protect the flame at all costs, which is really difficult when they're dripping wet.

As a recent example of how the violence has escalated, SSG Jones, a dove, returned to his sleeping quarters after an exhausting day to find a barrier of sand bags stacked 4 feet high in front of his door. Immediately SSG Jones knew something was amiss. As his would be attackers arose from the positions from where they had been laying in wait, SSG Jones sprinted away from the jets of water as they glanced off the pavement behind him. But there was moisture hitting the pavement in front of him as well. That moisture came from SSG Jones as he cried tears of pain realizing that the light from the candle of hope was in danger of being extinguished.

Though the search continues for the would-be water assassins, the chances of finding the culprits are dim, like the flame of hope. It will be only a matter of time before even the doves are forced to arm themselves with water canons, in a desperate attempt to defend themselves. It's a cycle of violence that has been seen many times in many areas of the world.



*PFC Muniz, PFC Her, SGT Carter and PFC Negrette display their new hardware*

Now for soldiers' accomplishments: SEN team F71 at FOB Summerall has been busy. FOB Summerall experienced a Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device at the front gate recently. SGT Miller, upon learning of the tragedy, immediately jumped in his HMMWV and went to the scene to see if he could provide assistance. There was a shortage of Field Litter Ambulances so SGT Miller utilized his truck to transport an American soldier and Iraqi Civil Defense Corps member from the blast area to the air field for MEDEVAC. The American soldier was treated at the scene and released, but the ICDC soldier still needed to be flown to a medical facility. SGT Miller went above what was already a heroic act by providing the ICDC soldier water and staying with him until he was loaded on the helicopter, ensuring he wasn't alone during what had to be a frightening time.

Also on the F71 team, PFC Bond was named the First Infantry Division Artillery (DIVARTY) Soldier of the Quarter. It is a big honor for a Signal soldier to win this coveted award, out performing his Artillery counterparts in an Artillery unit. I won't say it's a big surprise, but it is still a big honor. To add to the team's list of accomplishments, SPC Smith became SPC (Promotable) Smith

after attending the DIVARTY promotion board. During the Combat Patch ceremony at FOB Summerall, SGT Miller was chosen to be the bearer of the National Colors. These guys are doing a great job getting DIVARTY up to Alpha Company, 121<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion standards. It's a large task, but we feel sure they can handle it.



*SPC Smith and PFC Tubbs from F71*  
Meanwhile, over at FOB

McKenzie, SPC Snider from SEN team F14 changed his status to promotable after attending the 1-4 Cavalry promotion board. We're thankful that Snider did well at the promotion board and gave us something to put in the newsletter, since his team continues to maintain that absolutely nothing of any interest ever happens to them.

Alpha Company added a new name to the rolls this week when Soraya E. Clark came into the world. She joined us at 5 lbs 14 ozs and 18.25 inches tall. Rosalinda and baby girl are doing great. We raise our O'Doul's Amber Non-Alcoholic Malt Beverages in a toast to the mother and baby.

Alpha company soldiers continue to do great things and have great experiences here in Iraq. I can only list a sampling of these soldiers' daily accomplishments here as there are many every day. Summer is here, the food is great and the scenery breathtaking. The only thing

missing is you. Wish you were here, XOXOXO

## Bravo Company

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!! Well I want to start out this week's installment with a little rumor control. Yes, it is true on 8 June 2004, FOB Warhorse was attacked by a Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device(VBIED). It is also true that our own SSG Schmidt was wounded in the attack. He received some shrapnel to his legs and head, he was immediately evacuated to the Balad Hospital, where he received top notch treatment. After a brief stay there, he was sent back to Landstuhl. I got to speak with SSG Schmidt today. He is doing very well and is heading back to his residence in Germany for recovery. It is still undetermined if SSG Schmidt will rejoin us here at Warhorse. All of our thoughts and prayers go out to SSG Schmidt during his recovery.

Now for a little better news. The R&R slots are slowly picking up for us. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of June we get to send four lucky individuals out on R&R, and seven more individuals are going out on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June. We are also getting more slots for the four-day pass programs that are available for everyone. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of June we are sending four soldiers to Qatar, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June we are sending five to Lake Dokan. We are all hopeful of more slots for both R&R and the four-day pass programs. We will continue to send as many people on R&R and on four-day passes as possible until the program ends in November.

Everyone here is working very hard and striving for perfection is a daily goal. Even though the network is "GREEN" for us, our soldiers are continually trying to

make it better for those that they support. They are "tweaking" the shots everyday, even if it means spending a little time out in the heat. They are trying everything possible to keep themselves and their equipment cool. With the amount of ACs running around here, I am one person that is glad that I do not have to "pay" the electric bill for this place.

On Sunday, on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day invasion, the company was awarded the 11D Combat Patch. It was a great event for everyone involved. Ours was made a little more special because MG Batiste was on hand to present the patch, to everyone on Warhorse. For those that could not be in the big ceremony, we held a small one just for the company, which gave me the privilege to hand the combat patch out to our outstanding soldiers.

All in all, it has been an okay week for us. There are plenty of good things going on here in Iraq, some of them overshadowed by the VBIED. We continue to drive on and do this mission the best we can everyday. I know everyone here, including myself, all have the same goal that keeps us driving on everyday, and that is coming home to see our loved ones. No matter what happens here, that goal will never change. Your continued support for your loved ones here, is unmatched. Everyone here appreciates everything that is being done to help us, and keep our morale high, for that I thank you. Have a good week and take care.



*Always cheerful SGT Riddle*



*SPC Rich "I have to carry everything around here"*



*SGT Miller(B63) strikes a pose for the camera*



*SFC Teripai I really need something to fix*



*ISG Johnson "I love this new internet thingy"*

## Charlie Company

This article will be my last one as the Commander of Charlie Company. CPT Dawn Longwill will be taking command of C Company on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. As my last article I would like to focus on the many accomplishments of C Company during the time I have had the privilege to be a part of this great unit.

Charlie Company has always performed their communications mission in an exemplarily manner. The company has supported four different Brigade Combat Team exercises and four Division Command Post exercises processing over 200,000 calls with an average call completion rate of 96%. The company was awarded the Commanding General's Streamer for PT Excellence by having a unit physical training score average of 267 and having no PT failures. We were also awarded another Commanding General's Streamer for PT Excellence by running the 5-mile run in company formation in less than 40 minutes.

Charlie Company won both the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and US Army Europe-level Army Awards for Maintenance Excellence. This is the third unit in which I have attempted to win this award with no success until Charlie Company won it with ease. Charlie Company has consistently met or exceeded all reenlistment goals.

When deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II, Charlie Company was the **first** company from the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division to place their feet on Iraqi soil and Charlie Company has led the way ever since. Charlie Company, with the attached Node Center 53, supports subscribers at the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Main

Command Post, the Division Engineer Brigade, the 101<sup>st</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion, the 1/18 Infantry Battalion, elements of the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, and provides crucial command and control communications at the Division Tactical Command Post. Thus far, LEN 54 and Node Center 53 have processed nearly 2 million calls with nearly a 96% call completion rate, the battalion best for two large switches in the same company. The soldiers of Charlie Company have also began the process to commercialize communications here in Iraq installing over 5km of commercial phone cable and 8km of telephone wire. The soldiers of Charlie Company have conducted Combat Logistics Patrols in excess of 5500km here in Iraq. The unit was also awarded the Department of the Army Deployment Excellence Award for this operational deployment to Iraq.

During this deployment Charlie Company has also endured loss as we have had one soldier, PFC Shawn Edwards, killed in action while participating in a combat logistics patrol.

My wife, Laura, has established a robust family readiness group which keeps all of the Charlie Company family members in touch with all of us here in Iraq. We sincerely appreciate her and the rest of the Charlie Company family members for their tireless efforts and support during this deployment.

Laura and I are privileged to have served such great Americans as the soldiers and family members of Charlie Company. Thank you for all of your support and may God continue to bless each of you in your future endeavors.

## HHC

Well, it's that time of the week again. The weeks seem like they are passing by so quickly right now. I am sure that will slow down some now since the heat indexes are steadily increasing. This week the heat was about 100-120's. Translation is...hot, very, very, hot for those of us used to the temperate weather of Germany. This last Sunday 6 June, 2004 we had the combat patch ceremony here on FOB Danger for 121 SIG, 4-3 ADA, 101 MI, and DIV Eng. The ceremony was hosted by BG Morgan (Below) the DTAC commander.



*BG Morgan at the Division patch ceremony on FOB Danger*





*CPT Poston and CSM Butler discussing last minute concerns before the ceremony.*

The weather was nice for the ceremony, we could not have asked for better weather in June, sunny and not too hot.



*LTC Garrison is seen here in front of HHC 121, A 115 and C 121 at the two minute mark.*



*HHC rendering honors to the colors.*

After the playing the National Anthem BG Morgan gave the short speech from the CG on D-Day and OIF II. BG Morgan then presented the BN CDRs and CSMs their combat patches.



*CSM Butler is awarded his Combat Patch by BG Morgan*

And who could forget the soldier with the toughest job in the whole formation, SPC Sakala, seen here with



LTC Garrison holding the BN Colors. SPC Sakala was thankful the wind was calm for the ceremony. For those

that don't know, holding a whipping flag at the position of attention is no easy task in any kind of windy weather. Imagine holding a sheet on a stick in the wind and then add another 10 pounds on the top for the BN Streamers all while your feet are together, no easy task I assure you. And the last picture is of all the participants in the Ceremony. Have a great weekend and 1SG and I wish you all the best.



### **A/115th SIG**

For the soldiers of Alpha Company, 115th Signal Battalion this week in Iraq has been business

as usual. Our first soldier to go home on R&R is now back in the Middle East following a two week visit at home in Alabama. SGT Betsy Hennington was the lucky one in Alpha Company. SGT Hennington is part of the D11 team at Forward Operating Base Summerall.

Two Alpha Company soldiers were promoted this week. Congratulations are in order for Joseph Drennon and Bradley Peck, who both now hold the rank of E4. The two newest SPCs are both stationed here at Forward Operating Base Danger. Both are members of the regular convoy team for the 115th, in addition to their regular duties.

SPC Drennon is widely known as "Doc" among his fellow Alpha Company troops. In the civilian world, he works as a medic. Since joining the company, SPC Drennon has spent a number of hours working with the combat lifesavers in the unit to improve their skills. SPC Peck works with the headquarters section of Alpha Company. He joined the Alabama National Guard as the company's Armor custodian.

Operation Iraqi Freedom II continues to bring new challenges to the table for all the soldiers here in the Middle East. Alpha Company continues to meet those challenges head on, putting the mission and their fellow soldiers first in all that they do. The soldiers here at Forward Operating Base Danger and at FOB's across Iraq consider their missions and accomplishments nothing extraordinary, just the job to be done.

*SPC Sonya Harris  
11 June 2004*



*Newly promoted SPC Joseph Drennen and SPC Bradly Peck.*

## C/711th SIG

This past week, we had a visitor with us from Mobile, Alabama, the home of the 711<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion. Mr. John Watkins, from WPMI, Fox 15 News in Mobile, came up from Babylon, where our battalion headquarters is located. John spent a couple of days here at FOB McKenzie interviewing and recording “shout outs” by soldiers from the 711<sup>th</sup>, B Battery 113<sup>th</sup> FA and 1-4 CAV to be viewed by our families and friends back home via the local news in Mobile or over the Internet at WPMI.com. Many thanks from the troops go out to John for his work and sacrifice from the pleasures at home.



*John Watkins videoing SPC Hurd picking his guitar.*

We loaded up John on a convoy and took him to see some of our other troops at FOB Paliwada and FOB Brassfield-Mora. He gave RR15 and D13 (115<sup>th</sup> Sig Bn) at Paliwada the opportunity to record their “shout outs.” At Brassfield, John got to visit with our Z15 relay

team and the soldiers from G43 (125<sup>th</sup> SIG BN) and RR50 (121<sup>st</sup> SIG BN).



*Z15 L to R: SPC Middleton, SSG Clemmons, SPC Thompson*

Z15 is comprised of team chief, SSG Del Clemmons and operators, SPC David Thompson and SPC Darren Middleton. They have built them a miniature palace at FOB Brassfield, through very hard work and the talents of “want to be supply sarge” Middleton. Their site set up is second to none. They have definitely found a way to beat the heat. I think they enjoy being away from us at Node Center 15, but we sure do miss having them around. Once again, we thank John Watkins for visiting us!

## B/125th SIG

This has been a week of many events and trips. After cleaning up the rubble and broken glass and repairing our homes after last week’s explosive night, we visited the Great Truck Stop of Iraq, other wise known as FOB Speicher. We had a great BBQ at the pool in Kirkuk. We sent a young soldier (SGT Brandt) over to work with the Army Special Forces. We visited the first operational Super RAU in Iraq. SGT Macias trained the Civil Affairs teams in Kirkuk on how to use their radios and install radios in their civilian sport utility vehicles. We installed real



*SGT Holloway relaxing in the pool on FOB Warrior*

doors at the front and rear entrances of our company command post and we had a pool table installed in our break area. Overall, it was one of our busiest weeks in the last month.

The last few days of this week we drove down to visit Node Center 62 (1LT Sutton, SFC Wright). Node Center 62 has the dubious distinction of having to live at what all of the soldiers call the Truck Stop of Iraq, FOB Speicher near the city of Tikrit. FOB Speicher, is the logistics hub for the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. What does that mean? That means that fleets of semi trucks and trailers roll in and out of there all day, everyday. It is already dusty in Iraq, and all of that traffic makes Speicher seem like a dust bowl.

The soldiers of Node Center 62 have a great reputation. They completed a relief in place with 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in four days, months ago when we first arrived. This feat was never matched during 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division’s arrival. They have continued to perform above all other platoons in the Division. They co-located with an engineering unit and apparently, an engineer’s desire to build something is contagious. Within days they built a cottage for the platoon operations center complete with porch, kitchen, and swimming pool, sun deck, and small fountain. The primary carpenters for the house were SPC Ramirez and PFC Devlin. The platoon also built a huge carport for the Node Center itself (SSG Bauer, SSG Bracewell, SGT Burke, SGT Atkinson, SPC Kaimuloa, SPC Biesiada, PFC Howell, PFC George) and have



*SPC Biesiada working in his shelter on FOB Speicher*

built small carports for every other V3 shelter and local RAU (SSG Heuring, SGT Whitener, SGT Millikan, SPC Mori, PFC Smith, SPC Davidek, SPC Harris, PFC Dupuis, SPC Ritchie, SPC Vidaurri, and SPC Judd). The site sits in an open field and it is impressive to see all of the improvements that have been done since our arrival in February.



*SPC Ramirez and Spannoux*

We visited the site of Small Extension Node G32 (SGT Correa, SPC Hunter, PV2 Pratt, SPC Schleger, SPC Johnson, and SPC Osorio) supporting the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry



*SGT Correa*

Division Rear Headquarters. During the visit we learned that SPC Hunter, normally a RAU specialist, recently returned from Midland, can be taught new tricks and has learned to patch long distance phone calls from a Small

Extension Node. We promoted to specialist PFC Johnson, (for the second time) and PFC Schleger.



*Schleger being promoted to the rank of Specialist.*

Both soldiers have been in Bravo Company since I took command and it was a privilege to recognize them for their continued hard work.



*CPT Campbell promoting Johnson to the rank of Specialist.*

On the way home from Speicher, we visited Remote RAU 62 and ZULU 62 located on top of the world, FOB Midland. RAU stands for Radio Access Unit and is basically an Army cell phone site and we call line of site radio relays ZULU. This site has been home to many records in Iraq. The longest line of site radio shot in Iraq is held by SGT Millikan and the original Midland team. The first double relay in Iraq is now held by SGT Richmond and the current Midland team (SPC Leffel, SPC Rangel, SPC Tolley, SPC Devlin, SPC Smith) on the hill. The Midland crew established the second longest line of site shot in Iraq at the same time. So now Midland is home of the best RAU coverage in Iraq, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> longest line of site radio shots, and

the 1<sup>st</sup> double relay. This beautiful view from the hill makes it a fine spot for promotions and shortly after establishing another record on the hill we promoted PFC Leffel to Specialist. Each time we promote someone or a record is broken we name the different summits on the ridge. We currently have Millikan Hill, Richmond Hill, Miller (time) Hill, and now Leffel Hill. SPC Leffel stated that he had learned the Army is all about team work and that is obviously supported by the many records held by the soldiers on the hill.



*CPT Campbell and SGT Richman promoting SPC Leffel at FOB Midland*

One other visit of note was our stop earlier in the week to visit the first operational Super RAU and Zulu 63. This combined team can be considered the strongest in the company. Each soldier on the team is a stellar performer. Super RAU 63 (SGT Antonetty, SPC Santana, SPC Hutchinson, SPC Goodwin, and SGT Zavala, SPC Pruden) was established a few



*Super RAU 63 and ZULU 63*

weeks ago at FOB Gains Mills and has already made a name for themselves as outstanding signal soldiers. This Super RAU now provides secret internet capability

and phone lines for the operations centers at Gains Mills and allows real time information about enemy activity to be relayed to the Brigade Headquarters. Zulu 63 has been on the hill since we arrived in Iraq. This team's ability to maintain a line of site radio shot has given 121 Signal Battalion a satellite van back to re-use somewhere else. Satellite vans are scarce resources and the ability to free one up assists the mission of the entire Division. SGT Antonetty and his team are considered heroes at the FOB for providing the ability to both call home, and radio line of site relay to 1-27 Infantry, and the ability to coordinate with the brigade headquarters.

All of the soldiers that live on FOB Warrior participated in a



*SPC Parker and SPC Ritchie*

company BBQ. The feast was held by the pool.....yes, the pool. We scrounged up enough steak and beer (N/A beer) to satisfy everyone and even invited the Air Force, Special Operations community, the infantry types from brigade combat team and soldiers from the support battalion. The steaks were good (same type we provided for the 121 Signal Commander's Conference) and the cooking team (PFC Duran, SPC Parker) made



*PFC Duran grilling the steaks near the pool on FOB Warrior*

the day outstanding. Again, we were by the pool...enough said.



Overall, the past week was extremely busy. A lot of sites were visited and a lot of steak was eaten. Our soldiers continue to perform well and we continue to be proud of them and their accomplishments every day. Hele On!



## Chaplain

In 1994, golfer David Love III called a one-stroke penalty on himself during the second round of the Western Open. He had moved his marker to get it out of another player's putting line. A couple of holes later, he couldn't remember if he had moved the ball back to its original spot. Since he was unsure, he gave himself an extra stroke.

As it turned out, that one stroke caused him to miss the cut and he was eliminated from the tournament. If he had made the cut and then finished dead last, he would have earned \$2,000 for the week. When the year was over, Love was \$500 short in winnings to automatically qualify for the Masters Tournament. So he began 1995 needing to win a tournament to get into the event.

Someone asked Love if it would bother him if he missed the Masters for calling a penalty on himself. He quickly answered, "How would I feel if I won the Masters and wondered for the rest of my life if I cheated to get in."

Fortunately, the story has a happy ending. The week before the 1995 Masters, Love qualified by winning a tournament in New Orleans. He finished second in the Masters that year, earning \$237,600.

There are times when it seems costly to preserve one's character. However, it is always more costly to abandon it.



*CPT Gilmore, SPC Williams and CPT Tobias making care packages at BN HQ's on FOB Danger.*



*SPC Schlegar flexing for the camera*