



The Desert Voice



15 - 21 February 2004

Commander's Corner

The soldiers of the 121st Signal Battalion kicked things into high gear this week beginning with port operations at the Shuaiba Port in Kuwait City and ending with a signal systems validation exercise here at Camp Udairi. Our equipment was aboard the USNS Britton which sailed from the port in Antwerp, Belgium in late January and arrived in Kuwait City last weekend. While afloat, the battalion's trucks and trailers where under the able supervision of SGT Rivera from Alpha Company and SGT Kudriaszow from Charlie Company who served as the Super-Cargos aboard the vessel. It was good to see them again, and I know they're glad to have their feet back on solid ground. These were the first two soldiers in the battalion to depart on this mission and they'll be the first two to come home.

The port operation was quite a



ISG Cromartie (center) giving the convoy briefing to her soldiers prior to departing the port.

site to see. The Britton contained more the 1700 pieces of the division's

equipment, of which over 400 were ours. We moved in groups of drivers from 70 to 120 personnel to the port on buses to recover our vehicles. Each company commander then led a convoy

from the port back to the camp. Needless to say, an operation of this magnitude has some chaotic moments but the NCOs took charge and by the end of two very long days the battalion was light



SGT Housden and PV2 Jennings, members of CW2 Davis's maintenance team during port operations.

years ahead of other units and had recovered the

equipment and safely delivered it to the motor pool. Except for a couple of minor bumps and bruises, the equipment made it here in good shape. A special thanks has to go to CW2 Davis and his crew of maintainers whose tireless efforts set us up for success at the port. It was a true team effort with NCOs out front...just the way it's supposed to be.

The battalion moved immediately into a signal systems validation exercise which we conducted on Camp Udairi. After being craned onto barges in Germany, and then moved onto the Britton surrounded by salty air for several weeks, it was prudent that we make sure everything works properly before we make our journey north into Iraq. We also took this opportunity to upgrade the switching software and to validate our new data packages that were delivered to us here by Jeremy Brady and his team from the Program Executive Office for

Command, Control and Communications-Tactical. These systems are a great addition to our arsenal and the soldiers are excited about working with this new, state-of-the-art equipment. Our exercise was facilitated by our good friends at the 72d Signal Battalion, deployed here from Mannheim, Germany.

Additionally this week, Charlie Company loaded its trucks and trailers onto contracted line-haul trailers for its movement into Iraq, and the equipment has departed for Tikrit. Charlie Company personnel will fly via C-130 and CH-47 helicopters soon and marry back up with its equipment in Tikrit. Charlie's Large Extension Node will provide communications to the division Main Command Post, and in order to have the command post as mature as possible when the main body arrives. Charlie Company will be the first 1st ID company to enter Iraq.

It was a busy and very productive week. The soldiers are doing great, and are extremely motivated.

Like me, they are anxious to get to our final destination in Iraq so that we can get on with the mission. Finally, I'd like to formally welcome CPT Fred Shirah and his team from C/711th.



CPT Callo and CPT Miller, Port OIC's, enjoying themselves at the port.

I had the privilege of meeting with Fred this week and I'm confident they will be a tremendous addition to our Signal Task Force.

Also, I would like to recognize CPT Onufrak, SFC Peaytt and WO1 Walters who are in Tikrit coordinating with 124th Signal Battalion on the final adjustments to our network. Thank you for the hard work.

Correction: Last week I identified C/711th Signal Company as being from South Carolina. They are actually from the great state of Alabama.

Alpha Company

This week Alpha Company had an attack by possible Iraqi infiltrators as well as led a desert caravan across Kuwait. This past Tuesday, I was awakened by screams from SFC Sadler and SSG Porter that an Iraqi man was attempting to enter the tent and kill them. I quickly loaded my 30 rounds of force protection ammunition in my rifle and burst through the divider curtain. The first thing I saw was a man who was obviously of Middle Eastern decent holding what appeared to be an electrical shock device attempting to enter the female side of the tent.

I quickly brandished my rifle and ordered him back out of the tent. SGT Page and I then proceeded to question him. We asked him why he had snuck into Kuwait from Iraq and picked our tent to torture women. He explained that the electric shock device he was holding was a multi-meter and that he was attempting to determine the reason we did not have electricity on one side of the tent. I remembered that 1SG Frasier had submitted a work order to have an electrical problem fixed earlier that day. Satisfied that he

was probably not an Iraqi assassin, we released him to fix the problem.



Discussing tactics for the next Iraqi invasion

Wednesday the company went to the sea port to pick up our equipment being offloaded from the ship. The company arrived at the port at the lovely hour of 3:30 a.m. and quickly proceeded to find our vehicles in the sea of division equipment in the marshalling yard. The company had lined up 57 vehicles for the convoy back to Camp Udari when some soldiers from HHC, 1ID asked if they could tag along. That brought the total number of vehicles in the convoy to 72. It was a beautiful site to look out the window and see the string of green vehicles silhouetted against the desert background.

During the trip, 1LT Gates, who was in the rear vehicle, notified me by radio that SGT Freerkson, PV2 Clark and SPC Hubbard had pulled off to the side of the road for unknown reasons. Fearing that they had suffered a mechanical breakdown, the maintenance team was quickly dispatched to find out what the problem was. Upon arrival to the stopped vehicles SSG Johnson reported that the only mechanical problems were that the driver's bladders had apparently retained more water than they were designed for. Luckily, these individuals were able to relieve the situation and continue the voyage. Everyone and all equipment made it to Camp Udari safely.

Bravo Company

This week started with the establishment of the Danger's Voice motorpool in Udari, Kuwait. Helping CSM Butler in this process was SGT Matelski and his team, SPC Edmonds, PV2 McNair, PV2 Peltz, PV2 Jenkins, and PV2 Kubilis. The motorpool was corded off, fenced in with double strand concertina, and broken down into company lines.

Then the company undertook the task of filling sandbags. Using very sophisticated guessing, we determined that we needed 50 sandbags per HMMWV and 100 sandbags per 5-ton truck, giving us a company total of 3,400 sand bags required. We accomplished the task in just under four hours. This was a true company effort with every soldier and leader in the motorpool helping out to get the job done.

Then we picked up our vehicles at the port. First, no action at the port would have been possible without the efforts of SPC Graves and PV2 Kubilis, both of which performed key roles in identifying our trucks and preparing them to drive to Udari. SPC Graves came back from a port recon and identified several trucks that would need work, and PV2 Kubilis gathered the necessary parts and tools and headed out to fix what he could. Through the work of these two soldiers, we didn't have a single vehicle breakdown on a three-hour convoy after the vehicles were on a boat for several weeks. Our convoy was 77 vehicles long and contained equipment from three different units.

Then the battalion led all of the companies in a SWITCHEX to test out our communications equipment. This was a two day effort, in which everything we

have been tested, fixed where needed, and prepared to be able to perform “as advertised” once we get into Iraq. The heroes of this SWITCHEX are too many to mention as sunburned faces and worn out muscles were more of the rule than the exception. Of note, SSG Allen and the Node Center 52 section completed all checks with the rest of the platoon, and then headed to the 72nd Signal Battalion to do a compatibility test with equipment we have never seen before. In addition, the Battalion Commander commended the entire platoon for their efforts. Also of note was the effort to make the MSRT in B6 work. Before all was said and done, SSG Cady, SGT Bryant, SPC Jackson, SPC DePriest, SPC Land, SPC Edmonds, PFC Mathias, and PFC Zuniga had their hands on that equipment and it worked beautifully by the end of the day. In addition, SGT Matelski, SPC Cicci, and PFC Mathias got a better understanding of what is like to perform as a Company level SYSCON.

Finally, the vehicles all got uploaded with equipment and the sandbags in preparation for the Convoy Live Fire Exercise that will be conducted next week.

Charlie Company

The soldiers of Charlie Rock have completed their second week in Kuwait. During this week we soldiered hard as we prepared for our move up north. We received all of our equipment from the port and also had a few soldiers participate in MOUT (or urban terrain) warfare. This was great training that our soldiers are not often given the opportunity to participate in. While participating in the MOUT training, SGT

Benjamin Growden made the cover of the “Desert Voice” which is the Kuwait military community’s news magazine. We also had a number of promotions and awards that were presented this week.

PFCs Edwards and Almirol were promoted to the rank of SPC. PV2s Steinke and Salazar were promoted to the rank of PFC. SPCs Molitor and Edwards received the Army Award for Achievement for their outstanding performance during exercises Danger Focus II and Warfighter. SPC Froeschner also received the Army Award for Achievement for his performance during the company’s deployment preparations.



Charlie Company soldiers at Camp Udari

Charlie Rock is already looking forward to next week with our movement north into Iraq and to relieving the 124th Signal Battalion.

HHC

This week has been a busy one



Leadership using a sand table to plan our convoys from the port. From Left to Right: CW2 Davis, 2LT Marquis, MAJ McCaffery, Chaplain Gilmore, CPT Steyer, and CPT Long.

for all of us in HHC. The week began slow as we waited out high winds and sand storms so the ship could finally dock. So, like good soldiers we waited out the storm.

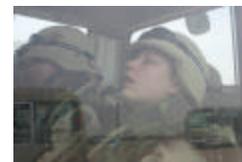
After the Navy decided to dock The USNS Britton, we immediately were spun up to get to the port. After lengthy discussion and setbacks the call came forward to go to the port. As you can see from the picture (below)



SGT Thompson, SPC Santiago and SPC Williams on their way to the port.

things got off to a rocky start. Chaplain Gilmore (Bald guy with glasses in the rear of

the bus) and PFC Manangan (right) while waiting on the bus loaded with about 30lbs of extra gear was able to get a few extra



PFC Manangan sleeping on the bus to go to the port.

winks before our departure to the port. While traveling to the port from Camp Udari we saw some of the wonderful views of the desert. Now their camels, we are told go for around \$10,000. I say they are worth about \$2.50 and a bottle of water. At the port we got a warm welcome from our vehicles.



We conducted some PMCS and prepared for our departure. After another delay of 2 hours we began our journey back to Camp Doha. Upon departure this wonderful Police Car escorted us, a BMW 535i...now wouldn’t your local police officer just love to have that be his cruiser. We convoyed back to Camp Udari with 72 vehicles.

Let's just say the convoy was long and very spread out. Upon arriving we parked our vehicles in our newly stacked out motor pool and went to sleep. The next few days Wednesday thru Friday were container chase down days. We had to locate the trucks, find our containers, separate them from the other units and coordinate for some port equipment to download them? Today, Friday 20th, February we did a lengthy check maintenance check on our vehicles, sandbagged them and prepared them for the upcoming Convoy Live Fire Exercise, where we will practice, practice and execute convoy operations. Stay tuned for next weeks article. Until then join us for a cup of joe.



Tough Six out.

CPT Byrd, CPT Donley, SSG(P) Walker, SFC Brown, and CW2 Davis enjoying a cup of coffee in their tent at Camp Udari.

Chaplain

On leave recently everyone seemed to ask, "Do you want to go to Iraq?" My answer was always the same: American soldiers don't generally think in terms of what we want to do or what we don't want to do. We think in terms of duty.

In a recent Time Magazine article John Keegan said this: The American soldier is a volunteer and a professional. He is a patriot who possesses an outspoken devotion to flag and homeland. He feels a special kinship with his

Commander in Chief...He ships out. Ordered to a far corner of the world, often at the ends of the earth, he packs his kit, says his farewells and departs. He does not ask how long he will be away or where he is going or why. If the president gives the word, that's enough.

While Keegan stopped there, I'll take that thought further and say that the same is true of you, our families. You are as much a part of this higher calling and devotion to country as the soldier. The child whose mom or dad is deployed sacrifices greatly. And the spouse left in the rear to raise that child experiences much pain. For those and many more reasons, Army families understand duty like few people in America. Without your love and support, this job would be impossible. We appreciate beyond words your commitment to our nation and your love for us, your soldiers. Please continue to pray for us, that God would give our leaders wisdom and give our soldiers courage.

Soldier Spotlight

SFC Roy Daniels from HHC gets this week's Spotlight recognition. SFC Daniels is serving as the battalion's Liaison Officer to the Division and will perform similar duties for the battalion working in the III Corps Network Operations Center in Baghdad once we move north. SFC Daniels was a Task Force of "one" during port operations, synching up the arrival of equipment with escorts and keeping the unit informed on what's happening in the Command Post. Additionally, he briefs the Commanding General each morning on the status of the unit. His performance this week was simply superb. HOOAH SFC D!



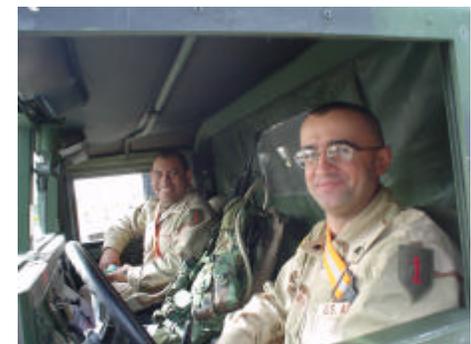
SFC Daniels in his tent at Camp Udari.

Rear-Detachment POCs

- Commander: 1LT Lamborn
355-2967
- NCOIC: SFC Young
355-2864
- HHC Rear-D CDR: SFC Jaggernaut
355-2885
- B Rear-D CDR: SGT Versie
355-2746
- C Rear-D: 1LT Cushing
355-2600

Family Readiness Group POC's

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



SGT Gonzalez and SPC Kahraman waiting for the convoy to depart.

