



# The Desert Voice



17-23 May 2004

## Commander's Corner

TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO  
DANGER – The signal soldiers across the Division's area of operation continue to perform superbly. Just when I think the network can't get any better, they prove me wrong and make it better. So with things humming along nicely, all of us at the Headquarters focused on the future quite a bit this week.

We had stimulating discussions on things like how do we want the tactical network to look like at the Transition of Authority (TOA) between us and the Division that will replace us, how to integrate the commercial systems we're installing into the tactical network, and what pieces and parts do we need to procure to achieve our desired end-state between now and the TOA. Extremely exciting stuff! If you're a telecommunications engineer, you're probably on the edge of your seat by now in hopes of hearing the rest of the story. However, I'm guessing that most of you are not and would be more interested in watching paint dry.

As such, I'll share with you the 1LT Chris Nagelvoort story. He was the victim of an extremely cruel practical joke this week. Now Chris is one of the most conscientious, good hearted, hard working people you'd ever want to meet. He recently left the S3 section to become the XO for C Co. The villains in this story are none other than CPT Mike Tobias (you remember him – he's the guy

who thinks the PAC 10 has the strongest NCAA football conference, so you know he's nuts), the former C Co, XO and CPT Jay Anson, our nightshift Battle Captain in the SYSCON.

Last week Chris had his first opportunity to serve as the acting commander for C Co while CPT Poston was in Baghdad. Each night I hold a Netmeeting conference with all the company commanders to get an update on the day's activities. Chris was sitting in for CPT Poston. During the conference, I guess Chris was exercising the "private message" feature on Netmeeting. These are notes that you can send privately to another conference member without the others being able to see. Mind you, all this is completely unbeknownst to me.

The villains told 1LT Nagelvoort that I saw what ever it was that he was privately messaging, and that I was really mad at him and wanted to see him first thing the next morning. Chris buys this gag hook, line and sinker! He seeks counsel from all his buddies and his First Sergeant on how to mitigate the damage caused by his intended to be private but perceived to be public messages. I don't think he slept too well that night.

The villains conveniently made me aware of what was happening before I went to bed that night and since it is a lot of fun to have a laugh at a Lieutenant's expense, I decided to play along. The next morning as I exited the dining facility from breakfast there was

droopy-eyed 1LT Nagelvoort looking as if he had lost his best friend, girlfriend and all his worldly possessions. I walked up to him, put my hand on his back and said, "Chris we need to talk." Instantly, he began to spill his guts saying how sorry he was. For an instant I felt like a priest receiving a confession.

Before he incriminated himself too much I stopped him. I said, "Chris, your buddies are messing with you." He continued to confess. I said, "Chris, stop. I have no idea what you're talking about. Your buddies played a joke on you." The look on his face was priceless! The weight of the world had been lifted. We all had a good laugh and Chris laughed with us.

The question still remains as to who will have the last laugh. The villains are constantly looking over their shoulder anticipating what could be the mother of all paybacks. We'll see. Thank you for all the thoughts and prayers. It does make a difference.

## Alpha Company

Alpha company has had a very busy week this week. We did a little traveling, conducted a few promotions and tried a few new things in the network. The company has done a great job remaining flexible while implementing a lot of new commercial communications technology we haven't used before. At the same time, we're continuing with our ongoing mission of providing day to day

communications for the First Infantry Division.

Node Center 51 has been busy installing the commercial data package, commercial phone switch at the Division Rear (DREAR) and installing a Super High Frequency (SHF) radio shot to connect the Node Center and data package. The data package and commercial phone switch will be connected to the outside world by a satellite link using the Deployable Ku Band Earth Terminal or DKET. The SHF shot that is being installed will connect all of that commercial technology to the tactical network. The platoon has put in a lot of good work and it promises to make communications at FOB Speicher a lot faster and a lot more reliable; something akin to what we have in garrison.



*SFC Showell (kneeling) ILT Gates, SSG Lewis, LTC Garrison, CSM Butler, SSG Craig and SSG Prado*

This week we traveled to FOB Dagger where we conducted two promotions. PV2 Rodriguez became a Private First Class and PFC Moore became a Specialist. These two, from First Platoon and Second Platoon respectively, have done a tremendous job supporting the Second Brigade Combat Team and their promotions recognize their ability to perform at the next level. We're looking forward to great things from them in the future.



*CPT Long promoting SPC Moore*



*CPT Long promoting PFC Rodriguez*

This week SEN team F14 at McKenzie has been busy putting the finishing touches on their work area. Now that supply lines have gotten back to normal, the team was able to acquire the wood and nails needed to finish the project. With temperatures steadily rising, the shelter is being completed just in time. The final addition of the air conditioner will ensure it is a comfortable place to work this summer when things really heat up.

SPC Queen, from the Motor Maintenance section of Headquarters Platoon, reenlisted this week. At his request, the reenlistment ceremony was performed in "boonie caps", which is definitely a change of pace from the Kevlar helmets we are normally required to wear. After our return to Germany, he'll do a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move to Fort Riley in his home state of Kansas. Along with his ability to choose his next duty station, he also qualified for a tax free bonus. It was a great honor to

keep this outstanding soldier in the Army. He's done an outstanding job for Alpha Company both in Germany and here in Iraq.

## **Bravo Company**

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!! It has been a great week for all of us here. This week the soldiers from the motor pool and NC52 were able to move into new work places and the soldiers focused on force protection measures. We are now in that stage of the deployment that the network is "green", that we now can focus on the small comforts and improvements to make it just a little more comfortable around here. We also got a special treat this week from some entertainers.

The Motor Pool section and NC52 worked hard to score new working containers to work out of. These are very similar to what we live in and have for the Company Ops/CP. Even though they are a little smaller they come with air conditioning. And with the increased temperatures looming, will take every piece of comfort we can get.



*SPC Sargent relaxes with his sand bags and his new building*





*SFC Caldwell and SSG Allen hard at work in their new office*



*That is a lot of sandbags*

The supplies keep rolling in which has been keeping the Motor pool guys and supply section very busy lately. There have been a few late nights, as all of these parts and supplies get sorted out and distributed to their rightful owners.



*SSG Waiters and SPC Lennox sort through the goods*

Speaking of supplies, everyone here is receiving plenty of letters and packages from home. These “supplies” are the most important ones that we get here. At 3:00pm everyone eagerly awaits the day’s mail delivery. I just want all of you to know that the letters and packages that you send are making a difference in the morale of

everyone here. I have witnessed many soldiers walking away with their packages with huge smiles on their faces.

We also had a welcomed break and some quality entertainment this past week. Sponsored by Armed Forces Entertainment brought the “Comics on Duty” tour to FOB Warhorse. There were five quality comics, which put on a show for almost two hours. Most of these comedians have had their own specials on TV or have opened for major performers. So the laughs were plenty, it was a welcome change and the show was well received. Our thanks go out to those comedians that were here to raise our morale.



*One of the comedians giving us his all*



*The comedians after the show*

Everyone here is carrying on the best they can, they look for small missions to keep themselves busy during some of the slow times.



*SGT Johnson just wants to SAW something*



*SSG Spradley assembles his new satellite*



*SGT Kerkula works out with “homemade” barbell*

Well that pretty much wraps up this week, please continue your support, everything you do, reflects here. Thanks for your support and have a great week.

### **Charlie Company**

Greetings from Charlie Rock! As the temperature continues to rise in lovely Tikrit, the soldiers continue to find ways to make their living quarters more hospitable. The most recent project has been to create a larger living space for everyone in NC53. We recently added a room on the existing

building with plans for another addition in the next two weeks. This addition was primarily built by SPC Froeschner, SPC Berry, SGT Bell, SPC McLin, 1LT Nagelvoort and a number of other would-be Bob Villas.



*Everyone hard at work on NC53's addition*

Some soldiers also had the opportunity to partake in the Fighter Management Pass Program (FMPP) in Qatar. This allows soldiers the opportunity to spend 4-days relaxing somewhere else besides Iraq. Everyone loves going to Qatar for a number of reasons: American Restaurants, water sports, manicures-pedicures, and BEER.



*PFC Crosshall & SPC Froeschner enjoying a good old-fashioned American meal at Chili's.*

Everyone is also hard at work providing communications support to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. This week the members of F54 and NC53 emplaced an SHF line-of-sight radio link. This is seldom done and with very little previous training or experience the soldiers were able to have the link in radio to radio in less than 8 hours.



*SPC Johnson hard at work emplacing an SHF antenna*

In other news the "Cable Dawgs" ran a phone line across the Tigris River to an island where the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division will soon begin training soldiers in the Iraqi Defense Force. A challenging mission as one end of the line is on a cliff overlooking the Tigris and the other end is on the far side of the island.



*There is nothing SPC Edward's loves more than burying phone wire in 100 degree weather.*

When not manning their communications assemblages everyone also has numerous other duties ranging from cleaning their living areas to cleaning and maintaining their weapons.



*SGT Mikrut and PFC Pierce clean their weapons after a recent convoy.*

As the summer continues to heat up the members of Charlie Company continue to work diligently in their role in the War on Terrorism. We appreciate your notes, cards and packages. One soldier recently remarked during mail call, "Being deployed is like having Christmas everyday!" All correspondence is appreciated, as they know that this is a small token of support from everyone back home. A final parting thought:



*Some soldiers are just tooo happy to be out of Iraq for 4 days!!!!*

## HHC

Welcome back everybody to another weekly report from the Iraqi Theater. This week has been a very productive week. HHC has finally started to build our offices next door to the SYSCON. Now the orderly room, myself and the

ISG can get out of our tent and into a building. Now I must admit I did start the building myself. But, I only managed to get the floor built. But, in the last few days, more building has occurred at a phenomenal rate. Our National Guard unit with us, A/115 SIG, has lent more than just a helping hand. They provided us with some much needed wood and experience. Here is a few pictures of the past days work. Here is SPC Campbell nailing down the corner on the frame.



The next picture depicts the progress at the end of the day on Friday. We are hoping to finish by next week and I will send off a picture next week on our final progress.



The next photo is one of our unsung hero that makes sure we have all of the supplies and accounts for all of our property. Here is SGT Randolph once again on the phone trying to get us things from pens, paper, lumber, mosquito nets, and more. Many thanks go out to her for her hard work ethic each and everyday.



Here is the group that holds the whole network together. Without these individuals constantly monitoring, modifying, equipping, and preparing for the future. The whole network would crash and breakdown. Hats off to the S3 section and all of their diligent work they do daily.



*From the Back Row left to right: SFC Walker, PFC Hawks, SSG Lay, PFC Yelverton, SSG Gallagher; The only two in the middle: SFC Holliman and SSG Heiner; Front Row: CSM Butler, SSG Stotler, SSG Nejelski, SGT Smith, SFC Floro, SGM Mason.*

The last photos are of the R&R at Qatar. So far we have had about 20 personnel that have been able to participate in the program. Here is SPC Grinage, SPC Osborn, and PFC Robertson relaxing before their tour boat disembarked on the Persian Gulf in Qatar.



I leave you all with some of the buildings in Qatar. I hope you enjoy the pictures.



Keep sending us all packages and letters because even though email is fast we all love getting mail. Thanks for all your support. Tough 6 and 7 out.

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

Alpha Company of the 115<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion made a good showing this week in the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's Weapons Assembly Competition here at FOB Danger. The contest was held May 18<sup>th</sup> at the MWR palace, and featured 3 categories: 9mm pistol, M16A2 rifle, and the M249.

Private First Class Christopher Dodd took 1<sup>st</sup> place for the fastest correct assembly of the M249.

The Alpha Company soldier completed the assembly in one minute 17 seconds. Prior to the competition, Private First Class Dodd spent a number of hours practicing for the upcoming event. In addition to his top ranking with the M249, he placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 9mm pistol category. There were other Alpha Company soldiers who participated in the contest. Specialist Sherman Jenkins and Specialist Terry Pounders finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the M16A2 competition.

Also this week, Sergeant Tracy Stanfield was awarded the Army Commendation Medal. It was awarded based on Sergeant Stanfield's work during mobilization and in preparation for the IG inspection at the Florence, AL unit during September of last year. Her hard work and dedication is said to directly reflect the 115<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion's motto of "First in Duty."

The soldiers of Alpha Company continue to put their best boot forward here in Iraq, not only in signal – but in all the tasks at hand.

*Specialist Sonya Harris*

## C/711th SIG

Howdy ya'll. Hope this newsletter finds you healthy and happy! Another week has passed for C Company, 711<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion and so we are another week closer to coming home. The weather has been pleasant, but we are all bracing for the higher temperatures expected any day now.



*SGT Weeks and SPC Eckman*

This week SGT Daryl Weeks and SPC Matt Eckman were caught sharing a relaxing moment in the Node Center Switch (or were they preparing for opportunity training or better yet saving the network from a major melt down?). Without a doubt, these soldiers are hard workers always ready and willing to perform their duty!



CPT Fred Shirah and 1SG Teddy Taylor had the opportunity to visit Node Center 14 from Foley, Alabama based at FOB Danger. Everyone was glad to see them and the folks they brought with them during their brief overnight stay. But were the feelings mutual? The 1SG was heard saying "I just came for the ice cream". Thanks TOP we love you too!



CPT Shirah is seen here with two of his favorite soldiers. (Just kidding, everyone is his favorite). The lucky soldiers in the picture are SGT Richard Caudill and SPC Dan Eckman from the Transmission Section. CPT Shirah was heard saying he just came for the fishing. (I hear he got skunked). We miss you – come back soon.

## B/125th SIG

Another week in sunny, hot, and dusty Iraq has gone by. This week we will tell the story of three Iraqi goats named Billie, Bobbie, and Jill. This is a story of how we started the Free Iraqi Goat campaign (FIG) to help the Coalition's mission here in Iraq and for all of you that are soft hearted, how we helped the innocent Iraqi goats.



First, let us introduce the three goats. Billie and Bobbie are black, curly haired goats whose main ambition in life is to eat and take turns chasing Jill around. Jill is a brown haired goat with floppy



ears, an attitude problem, whose main hobbies include eating and running

AWAY from Billie and Bobbie. All of the goats grew up in the city of Kirkuk and were very excited to get out and see the world, and more importantly avoid becoming dinner.

We started the Free Iraqi Goat (FIG) campaign for a couple of reasons. In Iraq, bartering is the only way to make things happen. Obviously, we do not have the ability to pay for goods or services that are needed, nor can we just walk out to the local mall and shop. Therefore, a barter system develops. You rub my back and I will rub yours. I will trade you this for that. This leads to the founding reason for our FIG campaign.

We needed equipment. Certain people needed goats. For what exactly, I did not ask. Ninety plus days in Iraq can lead to strange desires. Bottom line, we needed some signal equipment that we could not reasonably purchase and these guys needed goats. They

promised a good life for the goats and plenty of exercise and space to roam. Anyway, we were off on our mission to get the FIG campaign off the ground. We decided to conduct this operation in three phases. Phase One was "Find and Free the Goats."

A little research with the Iraqi locals led to a possible lead on how to get our goats for the least cost. The Kirkuk local police department has a soccer team. This soccer team was reputed to be quite good and wanted a chance to play against Americans and beat us for bragging rights. Team Hele On has never played soccer before but we were the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division champs at football and isn't football another name for soccer? So we made the bet. One game, three goats and bragging rights.

We set the stage. We made arrangements to play on a fine, green, well watered, Kirkuk soccer field that reminds me of the beautiful parks in the movie Black Hawk Down. We policed up everyone in the company that ever heard the word soccer and convoyed into the city. The teams only good soccer players included SGT Holloway, SGT Gowie, SGT Horne, PFC Duran, and PFC Vasquez, but we brought the entire convoy team for security and just because it was fun. We moved



into a compound in the city guarded by local Shia guards, where we changed and moved out into the city's fine parks. The Shia

drifted out around us and provided a secure perimeter. This was a good thing as word of the game had spread and crowds formed on every roof and around the perimeter to watch.

We were in for a tough fight. Little did we know, but the Kirkuk local police were a semi professional team and were just on television the night before spanking some other poor souls who had challenged them. Lucky for us, it was a Friday, the equivalent of a Sunday in America and most of the local police were off dozing or drinking. The police chief ended up having to call everyone in at the last second and his full team was unable to make it and most of them were in such a hurry to get to the game they forgot their soccer shoes. Or maybe that was part of the bragging, "Iraqi team beats Americans, barefooted!"

These guys were good and we played for many hours. We really had no idea how to play soccer and our game plan was to just keep kicking the ball away from us and toward them. The Iraqi's on the other hand were very good and could make the soccer ball do just about anything. However, bare feet ended up tipping the tide in our favor. The cactus on the green, well watered field may have had something to do with that. We were able to pull the game out in the last seconds.



The local police were good losers and held a banquet in our honor. The awards ceremony included much boasting and the



delivery of the goats. We spent the night eating and boasting on the intricacies of

fine soccer with the Iraqi locals and returned to our base the following morning with goats in tow, Phase One a success.



*SSG Coe and SGT Horne rounding up the goats.*

Phase Two "Goat Storage" was supposed to be simple. All we had to do was keep the goats safe until our next convoy to Tikrit. A side note was that we had to keep them away from the crazy Sergeant Major who would probably shoot them and have them for dinner. This phase turned out to be a lot of fun. Soldiers took an immediate liking to the goat posse and built them a pen and house to live in right by the company command post. Hourly radio checks included updates on the goat status and daily walks of the goats were occurring, similar to the way people walk dogs. Soldiers never minded walking the goats, which I thought was odd until I discovered they were being used to attract the attention of Air Force ladies. Overall it was good for the company, as goats are a lot like lawn mowers and quickly trimming up all of the grass in our area.

Phase Three "Goat Delivery" was quickly upon us. Our delivery

of goats to Tikrit all the way from Kirkuk was the making of legends. To ensure proper goat protection



*SGT Camacho loading Jill into the truck for their journey to Tikrit*

during our dangerous drive south, the many friends in the Air Force who had formed a bond with the goats offered fighter plane coverage, while the Army offered Apache Helicopter protection and new up Armored Humvees. After a sad departure ceremony away we went, like a rolling circus, twenty well armed soldiers, several gun trucks, fighter jets roaring high overhead, helicopters hovering over our heads and a truck with three goats, Billie, Bobbie, and Jill “baa, baa, baaing” in good bye to Kirkuk..

Phase Three ended at our arrival at the palace complex of Tikrit. We delivered the goats to their new “masters” who in great joy quickly rewarded us for our efforts and moved our small goat herd to their new home on an island palace. Overall, we considered it a good trip even though Jill was a little worn out by the end of the trip after being locked in the back of a small truck with her two men, but she was quickly scampering around the island in pure joy. And of course Billie and Bobby were trotting after her just as happy. Our first mission in the Free Iraqi Goat campaign ended in success.

## Chaplain

**If you bury your gift, you’re making a grave mistake!** I

recently read a story about a man who collected rare and priceless violins simply because he loved them. He took great care and much pride in searching out the rarest instruments and buying those that were only of the finest quality. No one, however, knew about his passion until after he died. It was while his estate was being appraised that some 246 rare and valuable violins were discovered, hidden in his attic.

One of the most expensive violins discovered had been hidden in an old dresser. It was a Stradivarius he had purchased from someone else who only considered it a collector’s item. In commenting on this, the author noted that in all the time he had treasured and preserved the instrument, the man had robbed the world of the beautiful music it was intended to play. In fact, since others before him had done the same, 147 years passed before the Stradivarius was played again.

The gifts, talents, abilities and aptitudes that we all possess have been given to us by the Creator to be used and He intends for us to discover them so that we can be made complete. We should uncover who we are created to be...and not cover up what we fear we are. Today, think about your inner-self, your God-given giftedness. This is not only God’s gift to you, but also His way of blessing others through you.



## Soldier Spotlight:



**Soldier:** SPC Velez, Waleska

**Duty Position:** Parts Control for EMS

**Forward Operating Base:** Danger

**Home State:** Puerto Rico

**Family:** Married to Fernando

**What she has to say about serving in**

**Iraq:** I am proud of serving my country with honor. And pray that we all go home safely

**If you could receive one thing in a care package what would it be:** My husband...but since I can’t receive him in a care package I would like candy.

## Rumor Mill

**RUMOR:** Iraqi’s are hijacking the mail trucks that take the mail to the soldiers. They are getting home addresses that are on the return addresses from the letters. The families are being warned if they receive a package from Iraq that they are not to open it and take it to the post office.

**FACT:** Although possible, there have been no reports of activity such as this occurring. We all continue to receive our mail and take measures to ensure the return addresses are not compromised.

**RUMOR:** PERSTEMPO days are not being counted correctly.

**FACT:** Most soldiers PERSTEMPO days were wrong prior to deployment. Currently, all of the companies are working to correct the errors in the past. If your PERSTEMPO days are still incorrect, you should report the errors to your orderly room so they can fix them for you. Also, PERSTEMPO days are counted in sessions. You open the session when you deploy and close the session when you redeploy, therefore the days you earned since we deployed will not show up yet. They will appear upon the soldiers’ redeployment.

*RUMOR: Stop Loss / Stop Move has been extended to December 2005.*

FACT: There has been no change to the Stop Loss / Stop Move that was initiated in November 2003. All 1ID soldiers are stabilized for 90 after our redeployment.

*RUMOR: The deployment has been shortened to six months.*

FACT: The mission of the 1st Infantry Division and the 121st Signal Battalion has not changed. We are expected to continue our mission here until February 2005.