



The Desert Voice



22 - 29 February 2004

Commander's Corner

CAMP UDARI, KUWAIT – The signal battalion wrapped up operations in Kuwait this week. Our purpose here has come to an end, and I can safely say that everyone is happy about that. Nobody will miss Udari and the over-crowded, dusty environment we endured for the last three weeks. It's definitely time to go!



Camp Udari at Sunrise.

The highlight of the week was the Convoy Live Fire Exercise, where the soldiers were trained on the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) of reacting to various scenarios that may occur on our approach



Soldiers preparing for the convoy live fire.

march into Iraq. It was excellent and timely training conducted by Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI) and quite a lot of fun too. Who wouldn't enjoy firing live bullets while moving in convoy?

We completed the add-on-armor modifications to selected vehicles that will be required to spend extensive periods of time on the road during the deployment. It would have been nice to fortify every vehicle, but the quantities of kits we received forced us to prioritize which vehicles would be modified. As I previously stated the priority went to those vehicles that will do a lot of driving such as maintenance, supply and command vehicles. We will receive additional kits from the unit we are replacing once we arrive at our final destination.

The 1st Infantry Command Team, MG Batiste and CSM McCarty, paid a visit to the battalion and spoke



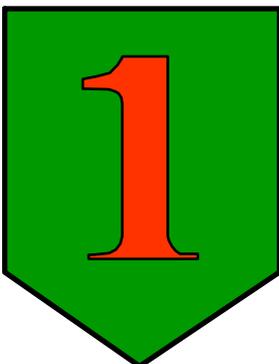
to all the soldiers about the mission on Thursday. They reinforced the importance of adhering to the Big Red One standards, discipline, and treating the Iraqi people with dignity and respect.

Following the CG's visit, I had the privilege to promote several soldiers. SGT Quentin, SGT Ryder, SGT Hubbard, and SGT Santiago were promoted from SPC to SGT. SSG Dale and SSG Dunkle were promoted from SGT to SSG. I congratulate all these great NCOs, and it's truly a pleasure to serve with them.

Next week's newsletter will originate from Iraq, as by that time we will have completed our nearly 700 km journey to our sector of operations. I know that many of you have been remembering us in your daily prayers. Thank you. It does make a difference!

Alpha Company

This week Alpha Company participated in convoy live fire training. On Monday morning we lined up the vehicles to leave for the Camp Udari range, which is about a 30-minute ride from the tents where we are sleeping. We actually departed at about 1400 and arrived to the area about 1600. We received a briefing about what to expect for the next two days and were released to go to sleep for the night. There were two tents for 121 Signal Battalion to sleep in which had carpeted floors but were a little too small for the number of soldiers sleeping there. We all



grabbed a little space, threw out our sleeping bags and got cozy for the evening.

Tuesday morning we woke up at 0430 and prepared for a day of Close Quarters Marksmanship. In the middle of a dust storm and on the coldest day we've experienced since arriving here we learned how to shoot while walking and running. It was somewhat dangerous because we were shooting very close to one another with real bullets, but we had plenty of practice runs and the event went very smoothly. The soldiers in the company told me that this was some of the best training we had received. SGT Miller managed to get all of his shots in the dead center of the target while shooting from the different positions and won the marksman of the day in the worst weather possible award.

Wednesday we moved to a different site on the range for convoy live fire. SGT Setters was lucky enough to celebrate his birthday at the range. We did some rehearsals and proceeded to shoot live rounds from the vehicles at targets on the side of the road. At the end of the course, we stopped and pretended SSG Chapman had been shot in the shoulder and a vehicle had been disabled. We then hooked the vehicle up to be towed while targets were still popping up for us to shoot at. PFC Quint and SPC Flores were so motivated to avenge the simulated casualty of SSG Chapman, they shot all of their bullets before the vehicle was actually recovered. After we towed the vehicle off and pretended to medically evacuate the casualty, we conducted a review of how we did and returned to our sleep tents on Camp Udari.

Thursday Alpha Company had welcomed two new NCOs into its

ranks, SGT Hubbard and SGT Ryder. Thursday and Friday were also spent preparing for our voyage north to Iraq. We had a great week of training in spite of the cold and sand storms, and the soldiers are trained and ready to go. Everyone is anxious to get the trip over with and get to where we will be for the next year.



SGT Hubbard very excited about CLF



PFC Burns gives the ready signal

Bravo Company

The company has spent another week in Udari, Kuwait. This week we completed the Convoy Live Fire exercise, did a promotion, gave an award, and had MG Batiste and CSM McCarty come to a battalion formation.

For the convoy live fire exercise, we learned "close quarters marksmanship," which is close to what you are used to seeing in Tom Clancy movies with the guys wearing black pajamas. It was real-world, real-cool kind of training in which everyone learned to shoot while walking, turning left and right, and turning all of the way around, and "run-stop-and-

shoot" scenarios. It was cold, and the dust was blowing, but in the end, the training was well received. Every soldier from the tallest (re: SPC Sawyer) to the smallest (re: PFC Jones) put holes in targets using techniques we were just taught that morning.

In addition, we conducted rehearsals on firing from the vehicles, and working on the vehicle crew coordination. It was a first time for me, and probably everyone, but by the time it was over we performed as well as the best of them.

Finally, we did convoy rehearsals, in which we learned techniques and planning principles to conduct tactical convoys. We asked several soldiers to step up and learn to accomplish tasks they had no idea they would perform. Among those soldiers was SGT Dale and SFC Teriipaia, who led the convoys establishing the speed, separation, and navigation for the convoy, SPC Edmonds and SSG Wilson, who took care of Aid and Litter (casualty evacuation) requirements, SFC Carter and SGT Bryan, who established all of our helicopter landing zones, and SSG Waiters, SGT Hanson, SPC Johnson, and PFC Bean, who performed hasty vehicle recovery drills (practicing for break downs and disabled vehicles).

MG Batiste and CSM McCarty came down from the Division Headquarters to give us the "pep-talk" about our mission and its importance. He went on to answer all of the questions the soldiers asked about where we are going and what ever else we asked. While at this formation, SGT Dale was promoted to Staff Sergeant and SSG Johnson received an Army Accommodation Medal for his being selected as the Distinguished Honor Graduate at

the Basic Noncommissioned Officers' Course prior to the deployment.

At the end of the week, we have been recovering ourselves (sleep, food, and showers with no hot water) and our equipment (PMCS, repack and reload), and getting ready for the long drive into Iraq.



Charlie Company

Charlie Company is doing great work at the Tikrit Palace after their long journey from Kuwait. The LEN Platoon has already stood up their communications node and we called them from here in Kuwait. Since Charlie Rock is now in Iraq and busy establishing the first 1st Infantry Division communications node, I'm going to relate a few of the details of their long journey from Kuwait.

Charlie was expressly requested by the division command group to move early to Iraq and a flight was arranged on 24 February. The company loaded up early in the morning for the bus trip to Ali Al Salaam Airbase south of here at Camp Udari. Glad to see Udari in the rear view mirror at long last, I lead the company's busses out onto the bumpy trail called ASR Dallas. Before reaching the airbase we received a call from the division Command Post (CP) that the flight had been cancelled. This was the first of five changes in plan over the course of the day from the CP.

Before we turned the busses around the call came to go to the airbase anyways and wait for a flight.

The soldiers on the bus made friends with the Turkish bus drivers and kept themselves by teaching the drivers some American slang. We proceeded to the terminal where CPT Poston and myself checked in with the passenger control terminal. They had no record of the flight but our instructions were to remain in place while the generals worked out the details. We waited for over two hours until we made the call to take the busses to the US terminal at the Kuwait Airport where we could allow the troops to go to the Subway, Pizza Blitz, and PX. While there C Co also arranged for a tent for the soldiers to stretch their legs and rest. While there the call came to move back to the airbase to get on the long-awaited C-130 Air Force aircraft for Iraq.

C Co bid farewell to their new bus driver friends and we prepared to move back to the airbase. Just as we were beginning to pull out, the call came that this flight had also been cancelled and that C Co should go back to Camp Udari to await the airplanes the next day. Enroute I made the decision to keep C Co at the Kuwait Airport in the tents they had arranged because it was much better living conditions and closer to the airbase than Camp Udari. One bus broke down on the way and CPT Poston was stranded on the side of the road for an hour while the bus company sent mechanics out to fix the bus.

Charlie Rock, spirits undeterred, returned to their tent at the Airport to await the flight which did, eventually get them out of Kuwait at long last. The rest of the trip was somewhat smoother

for Charlie Rock and I'll let CPT Poston update you in the next newsletter. We're all proud of Charlie Rock for their great attitude, patience, and tremendous proficiency, as they wasted no time in getting their mission accomplished upon arrival in Iraq. MAJ McCaffery, Battalion XO.

HHC

This week started out with a bunch of preparatory activities for our long road march north. We started out on Sunday, which was our Day zero of our convoy live fire exercise. 1SG Cromartie was busy directing the convoy into their serial order and in her usual stellar performance had everybody online and in order in no time at all. We left out of Camp Udari at 1245 for Range 2. Which of course is in the middle of nowhere and about two hours away. On the way, Chaplin Gilmore's prayer for rain was fulfilled, however, for only a few seconds. The rain did settle the dust, oh for about 30 min. After that it was a dusty road the whole way. The ride out there was incident free, however, SPC Calvin found out that soft sand and trying to accelerate madly in a 5-ton fueler does not work. But after a few adjustments, he made it out just fine.

In the distance through the dust we saw a wonderful mirage.

The range had it all, personal dorm rooms, PX, Porcelain Toilets, Pizza Hut, Subway and Dominoes Pizza. Unfortunately the truth of the matter is they had a fest tent with carpeted floor to sleep on and of course the wonderful portable



toilets. Needless to say I choose to sleep in my vehicle. The night started out great, not too cold not too hot. This ended about 0145 when the wind whipped the tarp of the 5-ton we were sleeping in and woke us all up. This was the beginning of the sand storm that would last all day Monday through training and then most of the night. I should mention that temperature also dropped. We almost felt like we were at Grafenwoher training area on a range. The only difference was we could not see because of the sand storm raging around us. We all thanked the Army for our Wiley X sunglasses they bought for us, which kept most of the sand out of our eyes. We practiced our close combat skills and learned how to fire from positions maximizing protection and efficiency. I must say the training was well worth it. Of course CSM Butler was right on at the 4-meter target, but by the time he got to the 15M, let's just say, "He missed the barn". He will protest this of course but targets like computers do not lie. The next day we did our live fire convoy exercise. The day started off with rehearsals, rehearsals and more rehearsals. I must say we all did a precise job. All of us are now informed, trained, and schooled in the arts of convoy operations. After the range was completed we reconsolidated and returned to Camp Udari. Upon



returning to Camp Udari we began final preparation for our movement north. We even received a briefing from MG Batiste that was very informative on our concerns and

what he expects. Today Thursday 26th, 2004 we got our basic load of ammo and are in the works of prepping to leave up north. From all of here at Camp Udari we have you in our thoughts daily and miss you all. Tough 6 out.

Chaplain

"For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength"

These are the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:11-13. He wrote this while being watched by a Roman guard. He was in prison, not for a crime he committed, but because he stood for something he believed in very deeply. He had made a commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and, for this, was arrested.

Doing the right thing and standing by your commitments is not always the easy thing to do. In fact, sometimes it causes great pain. As soldiers, we've committed our lives to ensuring the integrity of the Constitution of the United States of America. For that, we find ourselves, in a very dusty, very dry, very hot place. The chow isn't the greatest and the showers are often cold. You, as our families share in this difficulty in too many ways to mention here. But please know that we know your sacrifices.

My hope for you is that you learn, as Paul did, to be content by leaning on the Lord. Because you, too, can do all things when He gives you the strength.



CPT Gilmore, BN Chaplain

Soldier Spotlight

SSG Kevin Johnson from Bravo Company was recognized at the Battalion Formation on Friday as being the Distinguished Honor Graduate of his basic non-commissioned officer course. This is quite an honor for a NCO to receive. We are all extremely proud of SSG Johnson. Keep up the good work!



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
355-2616
- C Rear-D: SGT Garcia
355-2602

Family Readiness Group POC's

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