



The Desert Voice

16—22 August 2004



COMMANDER'S CORNER

TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO DANGER – Hello again. While those of you in Germany have been complaining about the cool temperatures and abundance of moisture you are receiving, we here in central Iraq have not been so fortunate. However, we have achieved a significant milestone this week by experiencing a low temperature that crept just under the 80 degree mark. While 79 degrees may not seem all that significant, the sight of soldiers donning pieces of their cold weather gear and being excited about it was indeed an emotional event. To fully appreciate the contrast you have to know that under normal conditions in Germany when cold weather gear is needed, which is **most** of the time, soldiers find this a bit depressing. However, we were quickly shocked back into reality as the day went on and the high reached its normal 108 degrees.

This week I'm going provide a synopsis of each of the staff sections and give you a peek inside at the daily rituals that occur in them. Essentially, the staff is segregated by their focus on either operations or logistics. The S1, S4 and BMO make up the ALOC (Administrative/Logistical Operations Center) and the S3 and G6 sections focus on operations. The S3 section is further divided into the SYSCON (Systems Control) and the NOC (Network Operations Center), whereas the G6 resides in the DMAIN, DREAR and DTAC.

My office sits between the ALOC and the SYSCON with a hallway that leads to a cross-hallway and a decision point for me multiple times a day. I can turn right to go to the ALOC or left to

the SYSCON. The decision is, am I in the mood to work or play? In the ALOC there is always someone laughing and spirits are generally high. For example, I've walked in on swing dancing, football throwing, comedy tours and sing-alongs to Jimmy Buffet. However, lately the S1 is swamped with processing all the end of tour awards, the S4 is busy with end of year closeout and planning the redeployment and the BMO is preparing for upcoming inspections. So, they are getting a taste of what's its like to do more than a full day's work.

In the SYSCON, they tend to have their game faces on 24 hours a day managing the largest divisional tactical communications network ever created. While I'd like to describe to you how they get relief from the constant stress, I keep drawing a blank. They do some sort of sick humor like putting sound effects and comic strips in my morning Battle Update Brief. There are slow periods in the SYSCON which is good, but instead of singing and dancing they withdraw into a state of meditation in expectation of the next crisis period. The NOC deals in 1's and 0's. There are generally two reasons to go there. If you enjoy having someone make your head hurt discussing firewalls, routers, switches and multiplexers, that's where to go. Or, if you're just looking for a place to hide.

Should I not feel like turning left or right, I can go to DMAIN and spend time with the G6 soldiers. They are at the tip of the spear so to speak with the Division's most impor-

28th Edition

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COMMANDER'S CORNER	1
HHC, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION	2
A, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION	3
B, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION	5
C, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION	7
B, 125TH SIGNAL BATTALION	9
A, 115th SIGNAL BATTALION	12
C, 711TH SIGNAL BATTALION	12
B, 279TH SIGNAL BATTALIONC	13
CHAPLAIN	14

tant subscribers. They are the face of our business to the CG and the division staff. They work hard managing the email servers, installing or moving phone and computer lines, operating the command and control systems in the "pit", pushing procurements through the maze of bureaucracy,

answering to the Signal officers in the major subordinate commands, and, and, and...you get the point. Like in the S3, when there's the rare quite moment, they take a deep breath and enjoy the peace.

Somehow, it all comes to-

gether and the next time you get an email or a phone call from your soldier, you'll know that the moving parts are in synch and the soldier of this great Task Force are doing their duty for their country. Thanks for the thoughts and prayers. It does make a difference.

HHC, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

Whew, I hope that your week went by as quickly as ours did. I just received my weekly newsletter reminder which reminded me that it was Friday already. HHC has had a busy and productive week. As a matter of fact a good number of our soldiers are out on the range right now qualifying with their weapons. There is always good competition at the range between soldiers who are trying to out shoot each other. I have placed a large bet against the Battalion CSM which has made the competition that much more exciting. I have placed my money on my soldier SGT Candice Quentin. She is a great shot and that would be a huge victory for us girls if she can pull it off. I will be sure to update you next week on the outcome!!!

As for this week I would like to tell you a story and highlight one of our best sections that work long hard hours with little to no recognition. OUR MOTOR POOL!!! They have a very demanding and important job. They keep us moving which at times can be a huge task. We have renamed them the "Slim Shaddy Motor Shop". Have you ever gone to get your car worked on and felt that the mechanics might not be giving you a straight story?? Have you ever felt like

you are paying too much money for the services you are receiving?? Well, at least we don't have to pay for our vehicles. I think the entire company has come to realize how important these guys are and none of them are lacking in new found friends!! Not only do they pull services on every vehicle, generator, and trailer, they spend endless hours working on the Company and Battalion Commanders convoy team vehicles. They literally stop what they are doing for one of these trucks to get it mission ready as quickly as possible. About half of the crew is also part of the company and Battalion Commander's convoy team. They are drivers, gunners, and "on the road mechanics." I can truly say that this section gets very little downtime, not because SSG Parker doesn't try to work it into the schedule, there just always seems to be a vehicle in need and these guys jump right on it!!!

Let me introduce you to the HHC Motor Pool. SSG Parker is the head "Slim Shaddy Motor Sergeant", he leads his guys with an iron fist (and swiss cakes occasionally).



(SSG Parker with his secret weapon)



(SSG Parker hard at work)



(SGT Housden preparing to depart on a convoy)

Under SSG Parker is the shop foreman SGT Housden. He is one of the hardest working guys I have ever met. He takes enormous pride in his work (thank goodness for us) and really cares about training his soldiers. SGT Housden is part of the company convoy team and everyone feels better when they have him out there on the road with them. We all know that there are not too many problems that could occur that he will not be able to fix quickly!!!

SSG Parker and SGT Housden have a great supporting cast: SGT Santiago, SGT Bingham, SPC Bowen, SPC Ross, PFC Kelly, PFC Jennings, PFC Jurco, PFC Krulewicz make up the rest of the team. SGT Bingham and SPC Bowen are actually not mechanics but our PLL clerks, who are in charge of ordering all the parts, dispatching all vehicles, and are an integral part of the team.

a generator)



(PFC Jennings hard at work and actually not to dirty yetJ)



(SPC Ross, SPC Bowen, and SGT Cason (from C. Company) hanging out)



(PFC Jurco performing services on a vehicle, and yes, that is his happy face)



(SGT Bingham dreaming about dispatching vehicles)



(SGT Santiago is actually our only generator mechanic but works on vehicles when he is not busy with



(PFC Kelly getting the tools he needs from the tool truck)

These guys and girls are working hard keeping HHC on the road in the best maintained vehicles in the battalion!! Slim Shaddy's garage is the best around FOB Danger!!!

I promise to update you all on the outcome of the range in next week's newsletter!! Until then, have a great week and please continue to keep us all in your prayers!!!

Tough 7 out!!

A COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

I must start this week with yet another correction. In the Desert Voice two weeks ago SPC Francisco was incorrectly identified in his promotion picture as SPC Rodriguez. They are, in fact, two

different people. All of the great things I wrote about SPC Rodriguez's great work in the motor pool should be attributed to SPC Francisco. My apologies go out to the Francisco family.

The big story this week is the three day weapons qualification range Alpha Company ran on FOB Speicher. The range started at 0600 each morning in an attempt to get a jump on the heat.

1LT Gates acted as OIC for all three days with Headquarters platoon, 2nd Platoon and our Hawaiian contingent from NC62 each providing the NCOIC and range personnel for a day. The last time most of the soldiers fired their weapons was in Kuwait preparing for the move into Iraq, so this provided a great opportunity to keep their marksmanship skills sharp.

The range here is very flexible in that we were able to run an M249 and an M16 range simultaneously, which really helped with our goal of getting done early in the day before the sand, wind and heat really picked up. All 150 soldiers from A and B Companies, 121st Signal Battalion, C Co, 711th Signal Battalion, B Co, 279th Signal Battalion, A Co, 115th Signal Battalion and B Co, 125th Signal Battalion fired during the three days. The range personnel did such a great job that we were also able to accommodate soldiers from the 38th PSB. Overall, it was a well run event by the officers and NCOs and a great three days.



SSG Johnson from Headquarters Platoon performs his duty as a range safety



Soldiers on the firing line at the FOB Speicher range

SPC Kearney wrote about this week's highlighted section, maintenance. Hard work and tireless dedication make the A Company, 121st Signal Battalion Headquarters Platoon the true Standard Bearers. These unsung heroes have been leading the way in all aspect of "Strength and Honor" Operations.

Always looking for more projects and new challenges, the NCO's and soldiers have "raised the bar" for convoy vehicle preparation, logistics and technical support. This involves precise recovery and staging plans, both at the motor pool site and last minute additional vehicles from other companies.

Motor pool personnel have also achieved mission accomplishment with the installation of air conditioning and armor plating for convoy vehicles. This task, completed in a remarkably brief time frame, demonstrates their complex capabilities and vast resources. The Alpha Company, 121^s motor pool also participated in and ran the qualification range of M16A2 and 249 gunners.

We also must congratulate the promotees in the Alpha company motor pool, SGT Queen, SPC Gibbs, SPC Creed and SPC Francisco, who are without a

doubt worthy of this new level of responsibility.

It's never a dull moment when EMS arrives to the scene especially when they arrive to a trouble call at 0200 in the morning. When EMS repairs a crashed Switch Board, or the shot mysteriously drop, before they leave the troubled and distressed site they leave them with words of comfort "Normally we don't do this but, keep the communication flowing." Their infamous saying allows FOB Speicher sleep well at least for another night.



SPC Francisco explores the merits of human powered trucks



The Alpha Company EMS crew – SPC Houtman, SPC(P) Jackson and SGT Kent

We had two promotions this week here on FOB Speicher. The first was SPC House from 2nd Platoon. SPC House works in the (V)3 relay section of NC51 and has been a tremendous asset this deployment. His promotion recognized that fact. His skill and expertise have been instru-

mental in ensuring our link with D72 at FOB Summerall continues providing outstanding communication support to 1-33 Field Artillery. Always willing to take on any mission, SPC House has also been instrumental in helping fill the taskings we get on the FOB to escort Local National contractors as they go about the business of making improvements here on beautiful FOB Speicher. SPC House hails from Washington State and after his enlistment plans to pursue a doctoral degree in Computer Science and ultimately become a college professor in that discipline.



SPC House receives his promotion certificate while SPC Gonzales looks on

Or second promotion this week was PFC Bordelon. PFC Bordelon's promotion date actually occurred while she was on R&R so we got her promoted as soon as she got back. PFC Bordelon is an integral part of SEN team F22 which provides secure and non-secure internet and voice support to the 601st Aviation Support Battalion. PFC Bordelon's efforts ensure the 601st can get the replacement parts when and where they are needed to keep the division's aircraft flying. PFC Bordelon hails from Louisiana and after her enlistment plans to pursue a degree in homeopathy. She ultimately plans to settle in Pennsylvania.



PFC Bordelon displays her promotion certificate while SGT Hammond looks on

Overall, it's been a very productive week for the company. The soldiers have been accomplishing required training tasks while continuing with the mission of providing communications for the 1st Infantry Division. Those two tasks combined with the absence of personnel due to R&R makes for long days and requires plenty of flexibility. These soldiers take it all in stride and make it look easy. And so we will sign off until next week when you tell you about more great Alpha Company accomplishments.

B COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALON

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!! Things continue to be going good for us here in our neck of the woods. This week went by fast as we pushed out more R&R folks. We also brought a few back into the mix this week. We had a very busy week as we brought in a new team, had a VIP visit, and took a little jog around Warhorse.

I first want to welcome a new SEN Team to the Bravo Company Team. F54 from Charlie Company joined us this week here at Warhorse. Before they came here, they were at FOB

Danger supporting the Division Engineers and 1-18 Infantry. Their mission here will be to help support the 3BCT TOC and the 201st Forward Support Battalion.

On August 14th, 3BCT supported a 5K run honoring those that have received a Purple Heart and those that are going to get one. It was a great run, we had about 25 people volunteer to participate in the run showing support to their wounded comrades. Everyone finished in good time and even had a chance to get some photos with the 3BCT

Commander, COL Pittard.



The runners and COL Pittard



LT Kato hustling to the finish line



SMA Preston answering soldiers questions



The supply side is ready to go



SPC Kubilis, LT Bagocsi, and SPC Wilhelm



SMA Preston shows off the "new" BDUs



SGT Johnson looking over next half



SPC Letourneau, SSG Wilson, and SPC Kubilis

We also had a very distinguished visitor this week. The Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth Preston, came to Warhorse to check on things and talk to soldiers and NCOs about the changes that will be coming in the future Army. It is always good to see the senior enlisted person in the Army come out and visit. He even took time to show everyone the new BDUs, that we will eventually get fielded.

The work on the "Double Wide" continues, I am happy to report that the first half of the building is about 90% complete. We had some help from KBR to run the electricity to our new building we should be able to move supply room over to it, in the next few days. We also began to lay the groundwork on the second half of the building which will contain our state-of-the-art Day Room for soldiers to hang out in. We are currently working on a big screen TV or a projector for movies and more importantly football season. We have had a lot of great help on this project so far SGT Johnson, SPC Quick, SPC Alexander, PFC Ginoba, SPC Jackson, SPC Eaton, PFC Lane, SPC Yarley and some others deserve credit for making this project stand up and take shape. They have pretty much taken over for 1SG Peaytt and SFC Teriipaia. I am starting to sense the real makings of Union here.

I had to dig a little to get this next story from SGT Riddle, but I got it out of her. While she was returning from R&R, she flew through the airport in Atlanta, where her and some other soldiers were hanging out waiting for their flight, when Rap Music Star 50 Cent came by. SGT Riddle said he was a little shy at first, but he soon came around and his group spent about 30 minutes hanging out and talking with the soldiers there. SGT Riddle said that they all were thanking for soldiers for doing what they are doing over in Iraq, it is appreciated by more people than they think, and many people respect them for doing it.



SGT Riddle and 50Cent

Well that about wraps it up from here for this week. Next week I am going to change this up a little bit, and have someone else write this article, so everyone can see it from there point of view, instead of mine. Thanks again to all of the families out there that support us, without you we could not get this mission done. You are the most important members of the Bravo Company Team. Thanks again. Take care and have a great week!!!

C COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALON

This week's newsletter article, I would like to share photos of the VIP we had in the area as well as highlight one of our SEN teams that we sent off on a mission for the rest of the deployment.

First up, the VIPs. It is always a great pleasure to welcome the Division Commander to our company to show him how we keep him talking and surfing the internet, and it is even more wonderful to have him recognize some of our outstanding soldiers. MG Batiste, Commanding General of 1st Infantry Division, came to re-enlist a great Cable Dawg for four more years in the US Army and to PCS to Ft. Huachuca, AZ. SGT Winema Catron raised her right hand and repeated the oath that the CG read to her. She has done outstanding work around the DMAIN installing, maintaining and troubleshooting all of the phone and LAN lines. It was truly a great day for our Army to keep her in for another term.



MG Batiste re-enlisting SGT Winema Catron, 31L.



Congratulations to SGT Catron!

Next, the CG handed out a few of his brand new and shiny 2-star Iraq coins shaped like the Big Red One patch. He awarded one to SSG Dennis Markie first. SSG Markie is the NCOIC of the Technical Control Facility at the DMAIN. He is spearheading the commercialization of the FOB to decrease reliance on our tactical equipment. You can read this as the faster this equipment comes in, the less necessary our tactical equipment becomes. He is a masterful technician, and his recognition by the CG was well deserved.



MG Batiste awarding SSG Markie a coin. SSG Gallaher standing in the background.

The CG also handed out a coin to SPC Brian Pierce. SPC Pierce is a MK-19 gunner on the Battalion Commander's convoy

team. He has been on over 100 convoys enjoying the countryside all over Iraq and providing valuable force protection to the Battalion Commander. He also moonlights on our company convoy team on his off-days. He is a true warrior that loves to be on the road.



MG Batiste awarding SPC Pierce a coin.

Next, the CG left the BN Headquarters and toured NC53, the most reliable node center in the Battalion's network. He toured the node center site and was very impressed with the wooden structures we have built to keep the shelters cool in this blazing Iraqi heat. He stopped to talk to the soldiers and gave a few coins to some more deserving soldiers. He also gave us the great news that the Division should be getting enough slots now for everyone to be able to get home while we are here. This was great news for all, as I am sure it is you to at home as well.



1LT Barry, SFC Harrise and MG Batiste



PFCs Eric Hyland (center) and Tyquan Felder (right) receive coins and handshakes from the Commanding General of the Big Red One.



CSM McCarty, Division Command Sergeant Major, looks on as SPC (P) Kasandra Ryan and PFC Lynnea Pelafique receive coins from MG Batiste for their hard work on the Division Retrans team.

The next portion of this article is dedicated to the decorated "Best SEN team in the Division," F54. We had to bid them farewell this past week as they traveled from FOB Danger down to FOB Warhorse to join our brothers and sisters in B Company for the remainder of the deployment. While they were excited to have a new mission in a new location, it was a heartfelt farewell as we toasted them with our pseudo-beer to a safe journey and sang the Big Red One Song and Army song. The team members, SSG Jason McGowan, SGT Michael Renfroe, SPC Patrick Molitor, SPC Clifton Johnson, and PFC Casey Gutierrez were the team that rolled out of here Wednes-

day morning, and have been set up and in system since Thursday. Best of luck down there guys, and know that the picture of you all on the barracks door will not come down until you are back or we leave this place together.



The F54 Team with 1LT Gunther (PL), 1SG Brown and CPT Longwill on the day they left FOB Danger to provide their Division-wide renown services to the folks at FOB Warhorse.



SGT Renfroe and SSG McGowan enjoy a non-alcoholic cold one at their SEN-d off this week.

While I could go on about all of the fabulous things these soldiers are doing, I must end for this week. As always, your prayers and thoughts are most appreciated and definitely assist with the tough times down here. Take care of yourselves, and we will do the same. Have a great week! Until next week – **ROCK STEADY!**

B COMPANY, 125TH SIGNAL BATTALON

Amazing and as wonderful as it is, another week just passed us by! Again, time does not actually fly by here, but we are busy enough to make it seem like it was just yesterday that we were finishing up our newsletter for last week. Node Center 62 conducted range week this past week and recovered Small Extension Node G32 back to the Platoon area after a six month mission supporting the Division Support Command. Node Center 63 conducted ranges as well and continued to layout equipment in preparation for the signing of platoon hand receipts. Headquarters platoon supported urban operations training in the city of Kirkuk and continued to be the glue that keeps the company running well. 1SG Lemasters returned from emergency leave and is eager to jump back into the fray of activity here in Iraq and I am sure Rachelle has missed the Family Readiness Group the she has done such a great job of leading. On the same day we did our first face to face meeting with our REPLACEMENT unit leadership. They are scheduled to arrive here early next year, but to see them is always a morale boost as it physically announces we are on the downward slope of our long deployment. We continue to squeeze a few soldiers out on leave with only one slot remaining for the month. Our leave slots for next month have not been announced yet, but we hope to have another surge and we continue to work toward every soldier having the opportunity for leave.

The following was written by **LT Erick Sutton, Node Center 62 Platoon Leader**. This week Node center 62 conducted a weapons qualification range. We finally got to fire our weapons and qualify in order to build confidence and familiarize ourselves with our assigned weapons. Several platoon members stood out as top firers this time around. They were SGT Richmond, SFC Wright, LT Sutton, SPC Tolley, and SGT Whitener.



SFC Wright at the range

The range was a necessary requirement in order to meet training objectives directed from above, but it was also a fun time to coach each other on the fundamentals of marksmanship. This was a time to bond with each other as we teamed up with one another and those in other units in order to test our skills that have been rusty (luckily) from seven months of not firing our weapons. We fired M16's and M4's as well as the Squad Automatic Machine Gun. One other thing to note was that since the range was outside the gate of Speicher, we had to do something that we are not used to when firing on a range back in Hawaii—that being we were always “locked and loaded”.



NC 62 at the range

SGT Correa came to us from Fort Bliss Texas and along with the love for his team, he also shares his love for his wife and new baby of whom was born just a few months ago. He leads five team members. They are PFC Pratt from Michigan whose last duty station was Korea. SPC Schleger who hails from Ohio, SPC Johnson from Tennessee, PFC Osorio from California, and SPC Jones for the Blue Grass, Kentucky, all of whom are fairly new to the Army as Hawaii is the first duty station for all of them. You would never know it with a track record that included a successful extended mission within a mission that was originally intended to last 45 days, but lasted six months. Their mission was to support Colonels, Generals and other very important people who worked for Division Support Command. The team actually had subscribers move their phones from other small extension nodes to their small extension node because of their reputation for reliability and customer support. They hit the ground running when ordered to relieve the outgoing unit. They relieved them in less than 45 minutes. It is truly amazing to think of all that G32 has done in the last six months and certainly shows that they know

how to work together as a team in order to accomplish the mission. With no room for error and no complaints, G32 has passed the test if there was one, by maintaining seamless and reliable communication for all of the VIP's that they supported, which included flawless support to DISCOM and Division Rear elements with 31 telephone lines and 13 secure internet lines that enabled many decision makers the ability to pass vital information to where it could be used to enable a smoother and safer mission for all of us.



G32 – SGT Correa, SPC Johnson, PV2 Pratt, PFC Osorio and SPC Jones

The following was written by SFC Stephen Harbst
....headquarters platoon sergeant and convoy team leader. Headquarters platoon and the convoy team started out the week with some of the best training to date, close quarter combat. The convoy team is probably the ONLY signal soldiers in Iraq to actually conduct such realistic training, with local Iraqis and actually inside an Iraqi city, in this case Kirkuk.

The day started early for our security team with a 0745 departure time from FOB Warrior for a day of MOUT Training. Of course, the always prepared Team was ready and standing by

at 0730 awaiting the command to start engines from our fearless Commander (still sleeping). Once the Commander arrived, late as always, and delivered his order to go the Team executed and moved like lightning down the hard and dangerous 3 minute trek out the gate to the Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) in the middle of the city of Kirkuk.

After arrival at the CMOC, the Team was swiftly moved to a building that is under renovation by the local Iraqi police department with our instructor, SGT Rico Cano (Rico).



Instructors, Cano (Rico) and Dave along with Iraqi police and PFC Duran

Rico is a SWAT Team leader for the city of Houston when not on active duty. Just a point of note, the temperature in the building at 0800 was already over 100 degrees. Once we received our briefing we were forced to test the simulation rounds so we would know what to expect. We were lined up against the wall execution style and shot repeatedly from about 15 feet by our Commander until we said uncle. SGT Cruz and SPC Peabody were the first to bail out after one round screaming like little girls. SGT Miller, SGT Horne, and PFC Duran bailed after two, and SFC Harbst, SPC Donahee, and SSG Coe held out through three. SGT Nunez and SGT Macias were

able to withstand five rounds before passing out from the pain. CPT Campbell was not dumb enough to let himself get shot. He already knew the bullets hurt.



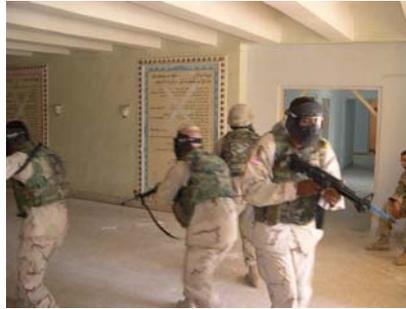
Simulation rounds



We were taken through building clearing procedures from the ground up. Our first task would be to learn how to enter a room by ourselves and take out a possible kidnaper without harming the hostage. First we would need a bad guy. SPC Donahee, a member of Super Remote Access Unit (SR63B, supporting the CMOC and highlighted last week), volunteered to be our bad guy for the day. He had no idea what he was getting into. Second, we needed a hostage, CPT Campbell being the outstanding leader he is, volunteered to be our hostage for the day. Definitely no idea what he was getting into as we basically decided to 'shoot the hostage' from the beginning.



First to attempt this daring rescue would be our hero, SGT Horne. SGT Horne is a self declared ladies man and is quick to take any role that will increase his reputation as "the Man". Objective, enter a small room fast and furious, scan the room, identify bad guy from the good guy and destroy the enemy. Well let's just say our first hero wasn't very fast or furious. He was pelted with 3 rounds by Donahue before he could raise his barrel. New nickname for SGT Horne, "Wannbe the Man!" Next up SGT Miller, his attempt was a little better. He was able to enter, scan, and engage however two of the three rounds ended up in CPT Campbell and the third went out the window. Our attempts to rescue poor CPT Campbell went on like this for about an hour. We did get very proficient at the end of the hour. We all were able to kick down the door, clear the room, and drop Donahue before he could blink. So...final count, our bad guy, SPC Donahue, received 30 rounds and our hostage only suffered a total of 12 rounds. What can we say....it was our first time?



SGT Horne, SPC Peabody and team clearing the room

Next up would be a two man team entering a small room with one bad guy and one hostage. By this time the temperature in the building was around 110 degrees. We broke up into four teams and developed our plan of attack. First team up to save our beloved Commander would be SGT Macis and PFC Duran. Their strategy included some forward rolls and summersaults. Needless to say, this plan of attack did not work out to well. SPC Donahue was able to pound them and our instructor Rico was ready to quit the training for the day out of frustration.

After some remedial training the teams and several rounds into our enemy and hostage the Team became very proficient.

Our last task of the day was clearing a hallway. It would take four quick moving, highly accurate soldiers to maneuver a long hallway with rooms along both sides. SGT Cruz, Peabody, Horne, and Nunez attempted the clear the hallway first. By this time our hostage was tired of being ill-treated by his rescuers decided to change sides. His plan was to let the team pass his room and after they passed he would jump out and shoot them in the back. Unaware of how proficient his soldiers had become with all

their new training, his plan was sure to back fire. After his team passed, CPT Campbell jumped out to execute his excellent plan. He didn't count on the cat like reflexes of SGT Nunez and promptly received three rounds center mass of his chest. Better luck next time Commander.

At the end of the day our Security Team had received a new skill that, if needed, they could execute with confidence. Our bad guy received many welts and bruises, and our Commander received the confidence that his team could enter a building as a team and exit as a team. He also got a few welts to help him remember the day.

Overall, an outstanding week. Be proud of your soldiers as they continue to go above and beyond all expectations to make missions happen and prepare themselves for any possible event! Hele On!



SPC Besiada, Kamiloa, SPC George, SPC Jones, SPC Rangel



SPC Besiada, Kamiloa, SPC George, SPC Jones, SPC Rangel

A COMPANY, 115TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Node Center 30 is tent city no longer! This week at FOB Danger, Alpha Company 115 moved into their new building, which houses not only the node center but the company's operations as well. There are still some minor projects to be finished at the site, including the completion of an additional office space. However, the node center crews along with the majority of Alpha Company's unit operations are now at home in the new structure.

The recent construction would not be possible without SSG Charlie Newton who oversees the building projects for Alpha Company. In addition to SSG Newton's construction know-how, SSG Tim Behel is instrumental in the electrical wiring for the company. Both NCOs have stepped up to the plate since arriving in Iraq, to create better living and working conditions for the soldiers

of Alpha Company.

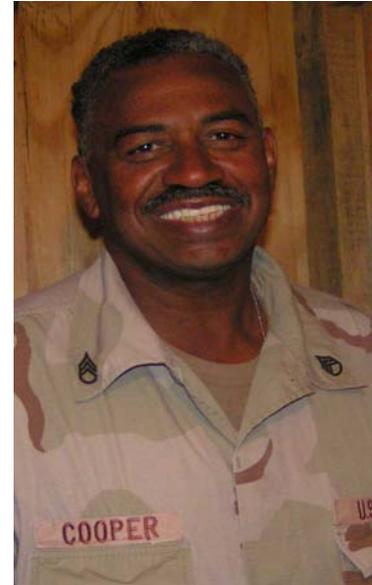
Also this week, the North Alabama National Guard unit promoted one soldier to Staff Sergeant. SGT Lawrence Cooper is now sporting E-6 stripes. The promotion ceremony took place Thursday at the Node Center 30 site. SSG Cooper is a former member of the 279th Signal Battalion. Here at FOB Danger, SSG Cooper is instrumental in maintaining smooth operations of the generators at Node Center 30.

Alpha Company 115th Signal Battalion continues to drive on in their signal mission for Operation Iraqi Freedom II. The soldiers continue to be successful in their various endeavors toward mission completion. Whether it is signal, convoys, or site improvements the men and women of Alpha company drive on...looking forward to the day when the mis-

sion at hand will be the deployment home to the states.

20 August 2004

Specialist Sonya Harris



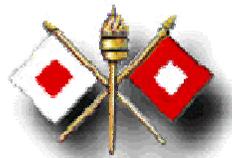
SSG Lawrence Cooper of A/115

C COMPANY, 711TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Hello families and friends back home in L.A. Lower Alabama that is. Mid-August has arrived and it is a bright sunny day here in Iraq as always.

Once again it is time to receive an issue of winter clothing to help prepare us for the cold times ahead. No one said anything about it getting cold over here in the brochure, but I have been assured that it will happen. Nonetheless we will be quite warm in our new fleece coveralls and winter boots.

NC14 is holding strong and maintaining its signal mission for AO Danger quite well. Our soldiers are in good spirits and getting creative on how to stay busy to pass the time.



**Supermodel "magnum" or
LT Beber.**

SFC Bodiford has gone to visit his remote SEN teams over at FOB Speicher. He wanted to check on them and

stay a week or two to visit and make sure they were all doing well.



SFC Bodiford

This month SPC Phillip Adams learned from his wife that they are now expecting their first child. Way to go Phillip, we

know what you were up to on R&R. Congratulations on your great news from us all.



Our Future Father to be SPC Adams

The Summer Olympics are in full swing and we are all watching anything that is on from

Badminton to Handball. We hope the USA basketball team can do better than what they have shown us so far, but hey I am just an armchair coach.

Attentions are already beginning to settle in on collegiate FOOTBALL here at NC14. The age old "IRONBOWL" controversy is afoot. Will it be Auburn or Alabama this year?

All in all, it has been a good week for Co. C. Some phone lines were run to new subscribers and another group of soldiers will be getting ready to come home next month for

B COMPANY, 279TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Sergeant First Class Al Fowlkes, of Huntsville, is Company B, 279th Signal Battalion's 2nd Platoon Sergeant. He is responsible for logistical and administrative coordination of the platoon. That just means he looks out for our health and welfare.

With 21 years of service, he has served at Fort Richardson Alaska and Fort Campbell Kentucky along with Thailand "and now beautiful Iraq."

At home, Fowlkes has worked as the Information Technologies Manager for Beason and Nalley Financial Services in Huntsville for two years prior to deployment. They have been very supportive, and have sent numerous care packages, letters, and emails. He pointed out several differences in managing here and at home, including a much harsher environment and a higher stress

level. The problems we face here are so much different than those we face in the workplace. "It is a testament to everyone's professionalism that they're making it through this together."

He misses Vicki, his wife of 17 years, and his children Dustin, Lesley, and Kate. Fowlkes expressed his thanks not only to his family and friends, but to all of our supporters. "People talk about the service and patriotism of the people that are serving. If it wasn't for the people at home taking care of business, we couldn't do our job. Whether they support the war or not, they support our armed forces. This is something service members don't take for granted."

He shared this letter with me that he sent to his family and friends. He has seen the same things I have seen and shares my pride in and thankfulness for our

freedoms as Americans.

Hello all: I hope this letter finds you well and in good spirits. I was looking at the weather on Yahoo today and it is supposed to hit 112 degrees in Baghdad while just 89 degrees in Huntsville, Alabama. We thought we might get lucky today and get a little rain because there were some clouds in the sky this morning around 5 AM when we went out to run. But it was not to be and the sky was solid blue and letting all the sun (and heat) through by 7 AM.

The tempo is obviously picking up over here as the insurgents are trying their best to disrupt the stabilization of Iraq and affect the upcoming US presidential election. The following is a comment that was told to someone who told someone who eventually told it to me – and so

you are now who knows how far removed from the source. But the story goes that when one of the local translators was asked, “who is it that is doing all the killing,” he replied, “It is the poorest of the poor, the uneducated, the foreigners who are here for the money. The educated people of Iraq are not the ones doing this to our country. The educated people are behind the ouster of Saddam and for the new coalition government.” Most Americans can’t imagine what it would be like to live in a country like this, for as long as these people have lived in these conditions. Imagine how it would be, that if you spoke out against anything the former regime did, it was very likely you would not live out the night.

Freedom is a precious thing – and being here – and doing this – and seeing this first hand, has really enlightened me to just how precious it is. To say I’m proud of being an American doesn’t say enough – I’m thankful to be an American. There were times in my life when I envied wealth, and dreamed of winning the lottery, well I still

do that from time to time, but have you ever imagined what it would be like to wish you were an American. I can’t recall ever – ever wishing I was anything other than American. I never wished I was from anywhere else but where I am from. Can you imagine being a Christian in Sudan? Can you imagine being a Shiite or Kurd in Saddam’s Iraq? Can you imagine being born in Haiti or Cuba? Can you imagine being in the middle of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict? I can’t. Now the rightful argument might be – well if these people want a better life, let them fight for it - we did, twice with the British and also ourselves in the Civil War. And to an extent, we do today between the liberal left and conservative right. But the difference is that today we are free to choose, as a group, what our destiny is. And in doing so we have become the greatest, most powerful, most compassionate, nation in the world.

There are those who resent us for being American and are desperately trying to destroy our way of life. I don’t know about you but I am fearful of terror-

ism. If terrorist acts ever happen in the US with the frequency with which they happen in other countries then life as we know it will cease. And all that we accomplished, all that we have built, and all that we feel comfortable with will end. Imagine your kids not going to a professional or college football game due to biological threat. Imagine they can’t go to the shopping malls for fear of a bomb attack. Imagine our economy going from what it is today – to what it is in Iraq. These terrorists don’t want to live like Americans – they want Americans to live like them. And I’m certainly not for that.

Albert L. Fowlkes
SFC, USA



CHAPLAIN

Coping with the Mid-Tour Blues – Part 3 of 4 – Be Purposeful: In Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, a conversation takes place between Alice and the Cheshire Cat. As Alice is leaving a house, the Cheshire Cat that wouldn’t stop smiling is seen

sitting on a tree branch. Not knowing where to go, Alice asks him, “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here.” “That depends a great deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat. “I don’t care much about where-”, “said Alice. “Then it doesn’t matter which

way you go,” said the Cat. “--so long as I get SOMEWHERE.” Alice added as an explanation. “Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

For us, getting SOMEWHERE should never to be good enough. We need to be

going in the direction and headed to the right place. This can only happen if you know your purpose in life. Why are we here? What are we to do with our lives? Where should I go from here? These are the questions we should be asking ourselves.

To be sure, only you can answer those questions for yourself. However, in our situation, our purposes work together to fulfill the greater mission to which we have been called and

to which we have agreed to follow. For us, knowing that purpose is pretty simple: to ensure the Iraqi people have a safe and secure environment in which live and prosper. But for you on the home front purpose, mission and satisfaction sometimes become clouded and elusive because there never seems to be an end to your efforts. But be sure of this, your purpose in raising the children in the absence of a spouse or keeping the household in order or hold-

ing that gainful employment or paying the bills on time or doing any myriad of things I haven't mentioned IS accomplishing the mission and will bring satisfaction. So, stay focused on your purposes during this mid-tour time and you'll find the incentive you need to prosper.



As Sulay



Some local police



Soldier's Palace