



The Desert Voice



05—12 September 2004

Commander's Corner

TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO DANGER - Greetings again! A great Labor Day week has passed for us here in Iraq. The good news is that the network has been so stable that it has been a very quiet week. A quiet week is very good for signal soldiers, but unfortunately doesn't provide me with many topics to write about in this newsletter. However, I'll take quiet over busy anytime because that means everything is working and that the soldiers are performing their duties well. Of particular interest though is that we had our first day under 100 degrees. Sunday, September 12, had a high of 99 which hasn't happened since sometime in early May. Believe it or not, this morning it was a crisp 67 degrees. It sure felt nice.

We did have a few significant events this week. First off we had 81 soldiers depart for R&R. Our numbers keep increasing and the soldiers' morale is continuing to rise as a result. Many have already taken their R&R and have returned to us refreshed and rejuvenated while others are eagerly awaiting their turn. It is clear now that everyone will get a chance to take R&R. Our last group will begin their R&R period in early Dec.

Secondly, we participated in a Pa-

triot's Day ceremony here on FOB Danger. A/115th led the honor platoon along with some soldiers from HHC and C/121. BG Morgan presided over the ceremony to remember and pay tribute to those who tragically lost their lives on September 11, 2001 and the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who have paid the ultimate price for freedom's sake in military operations that have taken place as a result of the terrorist attacks against our nation.

Unfortunately this week we experienced some technical difficulties with our SIPR network in the rear which caused us to cancel all scheduled VTC's this weekend. We are doing our best to fit the problem and restore our MWR VTC program to all of the families back in Germany.

Until next week, please continue to send your support to the soldiers over here. They are doing an outstanding job. There simply aren't words that can fairly describe how proud I am of them and the way they are doing our nation's business. You would undoubtedly feel the same way if you could see it. Remember us in your thoughts and prayers, it truly does make a difference.

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HHC, 121st Signal Battalion

Good day to you all! I bring greetings from wonderful Iraq. I hope that you all had a wonderful and safe Labor Day weekend. The Battalion Commander's convoy team received a wonderful labor day present. As seen here CSM Butler is hard at work building with the assistance of his convoy team.



CSM began building a sleeping quarters for our replacements that are due to start arriving in a few months. We were all glad to see 42nd ID folks here doing one of their first recons. We all can not wait, but we do know that it is still a little ways to go yet.



(CSM Crew: Left to Right: SPC Dupree, SPC Cox, CSM Butler, SPC Arnett, PFC Hawkes, SGT Williams, SPC Luna, SGT Sakala)

This week we were also able to promote PFC Jennings to SPC Jennings. It was about time for this soldier. His hard working attitude and experience in the motor pool has been essential to our daily efforts here. He is also a member of HHC Convoy team and helps out on maintenance matters and is a gunner on missions. Here he is with his crew minus SSG Parker who is on R&R right now.



(PFC Jurco, PFC Kelly, PFC Krulewicz, SPC Ross, SPC Jennings, SGT Santiago, SGT Housden) Big salute goes out to the motor pool in all they do!

Next we were able to re-enlist SGT Wilson. Here Chief Gilyard administers the oath to SGT Wilson. SGT Wilson and his EMS crew are a pivotal section in our unit. They are the most crucial links in sustaining and repairing our 1970-80's style equipment. Yes our stuff is that old, but the good news is they have made numerous upgrades over the years. One of EMS biggest areas now is all of the new

equipment and getting it to interface with old.



Network Operations Center (NOC) Section

If you take the time to look through the 121st Signal Battalion's documentation and SOP's you will not find a mention of a section called the NOC, The Network Operations Center. The reason for this is simple; the NOC did not exist in the 121st Signal Battalion until now. The NOC officially started on 10 March 2004 as we inherited the office and equipment from the 124th Signal Battalion. This inherited equipment provides vital voice and data gateways to the outside world. To put it simply the NOC is the gatekeeper for the Division's data and voice networks. To help manage these vital gateways the NOC has a

total of nine personnel who along with the ISYSCON manages and maintains the network on a continual basis. Here is Chief Van Engen working another IP phone issue.



There is never a dull moment

in the NOC because if we are not busy trying to maintain the circuits we already have; we are busy establishing new ones. The NOC also has the dubious duties of COMSEC, WEBMASTER, WEBSense, Blocking IP's, and the dreaded Firewall which has made some to believe that we have a certain "power over the network". Some have even gone so far as to change the acronym NOC from Network Operation Center to "Nerds Out of Control". But let me be the

first to say that the NOC serves largely in an advisory capacity when it comes to policy. Just like everyone else we take all instructions from the tower. All in all, the NOC just like every member of the 121st Signal Battalion team contributes daily to ensuring outstanding communications support to the Big Red One. "Duty First!"

Well, that is it for this week. Take care. 1SG and I wish you all a good week. See you next week.

A Company, 121st Signal Battalion

As yet another week has passed for Alpha Company here in paradise, we keep looking forward to the promise of cooling temperatures that were told is "only a few days away." We marvel at Power Point slides with graphs that show us that 5 days from now the temperature will drop. The fifth day kept changing from Monday to Tuesday to Wednesday until we realized it is the same information every day, only the name changed. But that's OK. We can enjoy historic Mesopotamia and all it has to offer without the cooler temperatures, and this week I'll share some stories with you so that you will understand how.

As I recall, it was a dark night about two weeks ago that SPC Moore and PFC Lovitt heard some russlin' around their site. Immediately they did what any two well trained sol-

diers would do in a combat zone when responding to an unidentified sound, they jumped up on the truck tailgate. SPC Moore reported she caught a glimpse of something, and that she could not say for sure, but something that looked like a fox with really long ears. SPC Moore and PFC Lovitt stayed on that tailgate until morning broke and the sunlight allowed them to see that the mysterious interloper was no where to be found. The long eared stranger would not be seen again in those parts for several days.

It was just three nights ago that SGT Freerksen, SPC Moore and PFC Lovitt were sitting outside enjoying the Iraqi weather when SGT Freerksen heard what he thought was someone walking up behind him. He quickly

turned around, only to see darkness. Moore's battle honed reflexes kicked in once again as she jumped on the truck tailgate. SGT Freerksen listened carefully and again thought he heard footsteps, but again when he looked he only saw darkness. SGT Freerksen went to get a flashlight as PFC Lovitt sat there and contemplated the possibility that his manhood would be presented in a less than flattering manner if he jumped onto the truck tailgate with Moore. He decided to sit tight where he was and pray for the best.

SGT Freerksen returned with the flashlight and spotted a tail going under the truck. "It's going under the truck" SGT Freerksen called out, which evoked high pitched screaming from SPC Moore. PFC Lovitt contemplated indulging in high pitched

screaming as well, but again worried about the possible stories that would be told painting his manhood in a less than flattering manner. He again made the decision to keep quiet and pray for the best.

SGT Freerksen quickly showed the beam of light under the truck, but could not see anything. Then he heard a noise coming from the bunker behind him. "Now I've got you cornered" SGT Freerksen said to himself as he stealthily made his way to where the heard the noise. As he approached the bunker, he heard what sounded like hinges creaking, but he knew that if the door had been opened wide enough for any human to fit through, he would have seen it.

Mustering all of his courage, SGT Freerksen threw the door open and quickly surveyed the whole of the bunker. To his disappointment and relief, he did not find anything out of the ordinary lurking in that bunker. After searching the general area, everyone went back about their business convinced that the mysterious long eared visitor was simply some desert creature who accidentally happened upon their camp.

It was the following day that a soldier from another unit asked to borrow the DVD set containing the fourth season of South Park. Having seen it only the day before, SGT

Freerksen assured him it would be no problem, he just needed a minute to retrieve the DVDs. It was then to his horror and dismay that SGT Freerksen discovered the fourth season of South Park was missing.

While this is stuff that legends are made of, it is now believed that the intruder, with the body of a fox and the ears of a rabbit, known to wildlife professionals as a fabbit, took the South Park DVD from the bunker. Perhaps the fabbit is a South Park fan. But it leaves questions to be answered, such as: one would assume that an animal living in Iraq would speak Arabic and probably not have had the educational opportunity to learn English. So why would he enjoy watching a television program in English? Also, we have not seen a lot of job opportunities for wildlife in Iraq, so how was the fabbit able to purchase a DVD player? It is within the realm of possibility that the desert dwelling thief could carry a DVD in his mouth, but not a DVD player. The mystery of the fabbit and missing South Park DVD goes unsolved to this day.

In sports news this week Alpha Company continued to dominate organized sports in Iraq. Team Jackson continued their winning streak on the basketball court. FOB Speicher held its Labor Day 3 on 3 basketball tournament on 6 September and the Alpha

Company team once again dominated the court. SGT Jamal Jackson, SGT James Welch and SSG Bernard Richardson beat all contenders to prove they are the best of the best. BG Mundt personally awarded the team their certificates in recognition of their outstanding sports abilities. Team Jackson has taken three out of the last four tournaments they have competed in. Is there anyone who can beat them? Congratulations to Team Jackson on a job well done.



BG Mundt, SGT Welch, SSG Richardson, SGT Jackson and some civilian guy

At FOB Remagen 1st Platoon took first place in the soccer and foosball tournament, and third place overall in the FOB Commander's Cup competition. SPC Acosta was the soccer MVP for his play at the position of goalie as they soundly defeated all comers to include the Iraqi National Soccer Team. SFC Branyan and SGT Martin made up the triumphant foosball team. It's good to see that someone of SFC Branyan's advanced age can find a sport to compete in. A

job well done goes out to all the Alpha Company athletes.



1LT Carbone, SGT Campbell, SSG Meiss, PFC Acosta, SSG Warren, PFC Muniz and PFC Gold pose with members of the Iraqi Olympic soccer team

We had a reenlistment this week to share with you. SGT Jamal Jackson, team captain of the aforementioned Team Jackson and a member of our EMS section reenlisted for four years on the 8th of September. As part of SGT Jackson's reenlistment contract, he will be changing over to the Military Intelligence branch

and will attend advanced training at Fort Huachuca, Arizona after our return to Germany. While we hate to lose him from the Signal Corps, we still consider it a great thing to be keeping him in the Army. With outstanding NCOs like SGT Jackson on our left and right flanks, we can accomplish anything.



SGT Jackson receives his reenlistment certificates while SGT Kent and SPC Houtman hold the flag

The company is busily preparing for the change of command inventories which begin next week. It will prove to be a good time of year to do it,

because any day now it will start getting cooler outside. We will experience the joy of ensuring that every screwdriver, socket wrench, hammer and circuit card is accounted for. As we travel around over the next couple of weeks, we'll be sure to get stories and pictures of how much fun the soldiers are having. It's sure to be a good time.

You really should come visit. In about 5 days the temperature is going to drop and it'll be very pleasant. If you start making plans and get your ticket now you'll be here to enjoy the cooler temperatures with us. And you can help with laying out equipment for the inventories. I can't think of a better time to be here. And don't forget about that bag of ice when you come. It hasn't cooled off yet. Wish you were here.
XOXOXOXO

B Company, 121st Signal Battalion

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!! Well another week down, and I am not really sure how many to go. Not that I am not sure when we are leaving, I just have lost track of how many weeks we have been here. We have had a great week all around we had some promotions, the 3BCT Labor Day Games, a re-enlistment, the network was green, the weather was nice, I could go

on and on.

We started out this week promoting two outstanding soldiers. The first was SPC Carter from the F41 SEN Team here on Warhorse. We promoted SPC Carter to the rank of SGT, a rank he has earned and is ready to wear. The second soldier was PFC Stewart from the Node Center section. We promoted him to

the rank of SPC. SPC Stewart is much deserving of this rank as well. Both soldiers are key performers on their respective teams and both are vital to their team's success.



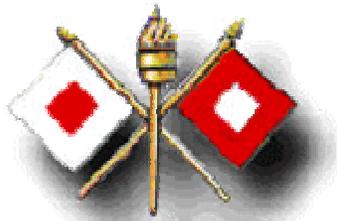
Newly promoted SGT Carter



SPC Stewart gets congratulated on his promotion

Speaking of success, I have been hearing stories of how well everyone else's Node Centers are doing. Well I checked the numbers today and out of the 12 big switches (Node Centers and LENS) Bravo Company currently has two Node Centers in the top five. Node Center 22 has a 98.30% reliability rate, which makes it #1, Node Center 52 has a 95.18% reliability rate which brings it at #5, just barely getting edged out for the number four spot. Now everyone knows that the numbers never lie, so that should quiet the negative vibes I have been receiving.

Also this week we took part in 3BCT's Labor Day Games. We thought for sure we would



be able to sweep the games. But after scrubbing the numbers we were not able to field enough teams to compete in every event so we narrowed it down to some events that we thought we had a good chance in. So we entered 1LT Kato in the 10k race, in which he placed 3rd overall. We also entered the HUMMVEE Pull. The team consisted of SFC Teriipaia, SGT Balacy, SGT Hanson, SSG Wilson and myself. We also have SPC Zuniga as an alternate. We placed third in that event. After that event we all agreed that we would never pull a HUMMVEE again, unless it was necessary. Those vehicles are meant to be driven and there is a good reason for that, they are way too heavy to pull around.



SFC Teriipaia charges forward



CPT Donley, SSG Wilson, SGT Hanson, SGT Balacy and SFC Teriipaia



LT Kato showing off his 10k medal

We also continued work on the "double wide" this week, all we have left to do is finish the roof. We are making good progress on it, and we can not wait to begin watching TV in there on the big screen. We also made things look a little nicer than FOB Danger, 1SG Peaytt acquired some palm trees for our area to give it that tropical paradise effect. Now all we need is a pink flamingo and we will be set.



1SG Peaytt getting the roof ready

this week. He re-enlisted to stay in Germany, he also got a nice little bonus for his decision. SGT Depriest will be a valuable member of the team for a few more years. We did it here at FOB Warhorse, standing on the Big Red One patch that is painted on the old helipad near the basketball court. The aerial photos are courtesy of LT Kato. Thanks again XO.

his re-enlistment

Well that about wraps it up from here from this week. Please continue your support of your loved ones here, every little bit counts. Thanks again for all that you do back there in the rear for us down here. Take care of yourselves and each other and have a great week.



One of our new Palm Trees



SGT Depriest with fans after



HAVE A GREAT WEEK!!!

SGT Depriest re-enlisted

C Company, 121st Signal Battalion

Greetings from FOB Danger! With another week down, the troops of Charlie Rock are doing well the duty that lies before them. This week, we promoted a few more outstanding soldiers, received a brief on the Law of Armed Conflict and even got in some Pilates to strengthen the body and the mind.

promotion was PFC Cory Johnson to the rank of SPC. He is a dedicated trooper from NC 53. The second was PFC Mary Steinke to SPC. She is a member of "Top Flight Communications" also know as our Cable Dawg section. Congratulations to these two outstanding soldiers!

I had the privilege of promoting two hard working soldiers this week in a beautiful setting from the balcony of one of the palace's on this FOB. Reportedly, this was the palace of Uday Hussein, one of Saddam's two sons. The first



Beautiful view from the balcony of Uday Hussein's Palace.



Newly Promoted SPC Cory Johnson with his supervisor, SGT Jeffrey Crum.



All smiles right before she gets promoted! Mary Stinke and her supervisor, SGT Cleveland Sweat.

The next portion of the Rock Steady Newsletter was written by SPC Smith Rimple, dedicated troop in the Charlie Motor Pool. Our Motor Pool has been preparing for a Corps

Inspection that is coming up next week. They have put in so many long hours and such hard work, that it is an honor to highlight them this week.

When thinking about readiness and hard work, it takes more than the eyes of the observer to notice the crew of Charlie Company, 121st Signal Battalion motor pool. Being a member of this gang gives large opportunities to discover what to do, how to do and when to do what is supposed to be done.



SGT Attao means business

From 0900 to forever, the personnel of this motor pool stand around the clock to provide maintenance service support for the rest of the company.



Home away from home

When we first set foot in the

building we lodge in now (Bldg 126), looks on our faces could show discontent. Leaving families and comfortable couches back home and landing here in these living conditions was hard. It didn't take long before the encouraging arms and skills of these mechanics transformed this building into a decent living area.

From cleaning, cutting grass, and chasing scorpions and cats under piles of dirt and debris, our yard became an open space to park Generators and HMMWVs for maintenance. Under the supervision of SFC Rohan Wallace, our Motor Sergeant, it was evident that this place was on its way to a better day.



SFC Wallace making sure it's done properly

From Germany to here in Iraq, excellence and competence are the only flags we raise, and their poles are held by everybody here. Our motor pool plays a major role here in FOB Danger by providing necessary maintenance assistance and expertise to ours, as well as, any other company having problems with their equipment. Let's spend some

time meeting every member of this professional crew. Starting with SFC Wallace. He's the motor sergeant, charged with supervising the soldiers and NCOs of the motor pool. When it's time to meet the Army maintenance standard, he's pretty sharp and wants everything to be as accurate as possible.



SGT Sukmanowsky looking for NSN's for HMMVW's

We are proud to have SGT Sukmanowsky working as a 63B. Nicknamed Sky, he is a hard working NCO who gives his best on a daily basis. He is also one of the many who enjoys his work. From building shelves for parts to fixing deficiencies, he is very motivated and an expert at his trade. Thank you for your dedication.



SGT Ballesteros tracking incoming parts

SGT Ballesteros is an Automated Logistics Specialist. He always wants to know what's going on in the system. A typical day for him is to be busy recording incoming parts and picking up parts from the warehouse.

He also has SPC Montgomery with him, a 92A, working diligently to get the job done. SPC Montgomery has the famous phrase for the every driver's license holder in Charlie Company; she asks you to keep your license in a safe place.



SPC Montgomery verifying the files.

As a signal Battalion, the successful mission here depends on electricity. If it weren't for the Generator mechanics, it would have been impossible to even run a phone line. Charlie company motor pool has the best mechanics ever, and the ones ensuring power is provided to the shelters are reliable. They work 24/7 to service, repair and maintain control over their equipment.



SPC Rimpel is confident.

SGT Cason is the one in charge to make that happen. Along with SPC Rimpel, he is able to do his job well.



SGT Cason with his baby, a 10K generator.

There is a strong pride here in this mighty motor pool. There is one soldier who always amazes everybody since stepping in our section for the first time. To us, it's just normal and there is nothing to write home about. Watching SPC Almirol working hard and in temperatures of 120 degrees is a morale booster for the rest of the HMMWV mechanics in the motor pool. When we say she works hard, believe it! She proves to everybody that a soldier is a soldier and her ROCK STEADY pride gives us strength and shows us professionalism.



SPC Almirol's gets greasy.

Here comes trouble at the door! Let's talk about SPC "I-Can-Do-It-All" Deller. Sometimes we wonder what his job is! For the record, he is a 63B, repairing HMMWV's. However, his performance far extends his skills and capacity. He is always poised to go beyond the requirements.

SPC Deller is currently a member of Charlie Company's convoy patrol team, in which he has conducted over 5000 miles in some of Iraq hostile areas. When asking him if he is scared, he said: "I love to go on convoys. It makes me happy. This is what I came in the Army to do!"



SPC Deller's ready to rock the road.

It's hot today! It even seems the temperature is about to break the thermometer. We don't really have to worry

about getting hot inside. SPC Guldeman is our AC mechanic. He works long days in and days out at MANTECH, to repair almost everything that keeps you cool. He is a quiet type soldier, however, proficient in his tasks. That is no joke - we are "FO SHIZZLE". After a busy day, in the evening, he always has a book to read.



SPC Guldeman chilling after a hard working day.

SSG Livingston, our shop Forman - Organized and always ready for anything that bears the name "action". Sometimes I wonder why he didn't go for 11B on his enlistment. Everything always has to be done on time and with positive results. One thing about him is that he doesn't like people taking his picture. Always hiding his face when a camera is around. A tip: he has to be exhausted and sleeping to snap a picture of him.



Tricking SSG Livingston, SGT Cason snap him a picture.

It takes a great and courageous team to enjoy the Army; the teammates make it stronger and ready for combat. No matter how hard a task may appear to be, when soldiers in the Rock join hands together, everything is possible. These soldiers of Charlie Company are evidence of that! Motivation brings strength, commitment and personal time generates accomplishment of the mission. We emphasize excellence and hold our wrenches high to tighten up weakness. We enjoy ourselves by working hard and having a lot of fun.



SPC Froeshner playing tough guy along with SGT Sky and SPC Deller while building the motor pool day room.

We are one team with one mission and we swear to always be on the front edge of maintenance and working smart. There can only be one conclusion drawn about the way we conduct business here. We love what we're doing and proud to do it with professionalism. We set goals on a daily basis and follow them to the letter. We never forget

what our mission is about. As long as we are called "the Charlie motor pool crew," excellence will always be our watchword.

MAINTENANCE LEADS THE WAY!

Thanks, SPC Rimple, for that great article and letting us get inside life in the motor pool crew.

Thank you all for your love and support from back home. The number of care packages that continue to pour in every mail day never cease to amaze me. You make a difference in these soldiers' lives everyday with your kind words as well as your thoughts and prayers. Until next week – **ROCK STEADY!**

A Company, 115th Signal Battalion

It may be football time in Alabama, but here at FOB Danger basketball season is just getting its start. Just last week the "players" of Alpha Company took part in the MWR sponsored Labor Day tournament. It was a double elimination contest, in which Alpha Company played a total of 7 games, with 5 wins. The North Alabama National Guard unit placed 2nd overall in the tournament.

But, the Labor Day contest was only the beginning. This week, the actual basketball season begins here at FOB Danger. Company A of the 115 Signal Battalion will put its best foot forward, with a team coached by Sergeant Alan Garner. The team will consist of the same soldiers who participated in the tournament, as well as 2 or 3 soldiers who are currently on R & R.

Alpha Company is no stranger to the game. In fact, earlier in this deployment, the

115 organized their own internal basketball contest. It was a 2 on 2 double elimination tournament, with the teams chosen at random. This will be different on several levels. For one, Company A will be able to compete together as one team. In addition, there will be officials to oversee the basketball season. The games will consist of two 20-minute halves during the regular season.

In addition, at the end of October a tournament is scheduled for the 29th and 30th, in which teams will be ranked for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. The tournament action, according to Sergeant Garner, will decide the best of the best for the basketball season here at FOB Danger.

The soldiers of Alpha Company 115th Signal Battalion, like all the soldiers serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, continue to focus on their number 1 mission...in this case: signal.

However, it's important to remember that a balance is necessary for not only physical well being but the mind as well. Throughout this deployment, the Alabama soldiers have participated in a number of different activities and competitions, such as: weight lifting, ping-pong, various runs, track and field, and more. And, now, as always the soldiers are not only up to the challenge, but look forward to it.

10 September 2004, SPC Sonya Harris



SPC Terry Pounders, SPC Chris Stokes, SGT Thomas Tank, and SSG Marty Jones "taking it to the street" at FOB Danger.

C Company, 711th Signal Battalion

This week we are featuring the orderly room section of HQ Platoon, C Co, 711th, or as we like to call them; the “office pogues or pencil pushers”. First, we have SPC Michael Howard, a.k.a. “Radar O’Reilly”, the company clerk. SPC Howard handles most of the paper pushing for everyone here and is the Captain’s personal you know what. SPC Howard has a diverse military background with 2 years in the Coast Guard, 4 years active duty Army and 6 years in the Alabama Army National Guard. He was born and raised and still resides in Tibbie, AL. SPC Howard is married with four children and his oldest child is serving in the military and is deployed to Afghanistan. In his other life, he works as a truck driver.

Next up is Supply SGT, SSG William Gault from Robertsdale, AL. SSG Gault was drafted in to the regular Army in 1970 and served in Korea. He has 20 years active duty

with his AGR position and looks forward to extending for a year and then retiring after we redeploy. SSG Gault is married and has three children.

2LT Steve Kizer, the XO for Charlie Company hails from ????. We do not really know where he is from! His father is a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the Marine Corps, so LT Kizer is from all over the world. He makes his home in Opelika, AL, close to Auburn University, home of the mighty, mighty Tigers. WAR EAGLE! He is married and presently has no children. In his other life, he is a network installer. That is right, a computer geek. LT Kizer has served in the Guard for 18 years and was direct commissioned in 2003.

Last but not least is Company Commander, CPT Berkeley Fred Shirah. He served 2 years in the regular Army and deployed to Saudi for Desert Shield/Desert Storm. CPT

Shirah was commissioned in 1997 and has served in the Guard ever since. He works in the civilian world for Safelite Auto Glass as a District Sales Manager. His wife, Cynthia and he have two daughters and one son and reside in Mobile, AL.



CPT SHIRAH



2LT KIZER, SPC HOWARD AND SSG GAULT

B Company, 125th Signal Battalion

This past week was much more enjoyable than the week before. The Company has shaken out all of the network bugs and has enjoyed a week of solid and reliable communication support to the Brigade Combat Team. We enjoyed a

Labor Day company bar-b-que for the soldiers here at Forward Operating Base Warrior and we promoted a ton of soldiers, even some to the prestigious rank of Sergeant First Class. We will begin with an update from Node Center 62.

The following was written by LT Erick Sutton, Node Center 62 Platoon Leader.

This week I will focus on milestones that were recently achieved by our soldiers. I would like to discuss the Non

Commissioned Officer (NCO) promotion system and how some of our young soldiers took steps to join this rank. This past week, we took the time to promote three of our Specialists to the rank of Sergeant. This elevates them to an important rank that is the first level of soldier leadership and adds them to the “backbone” of the U.S. Army.

It took numerous steps for these soldiers to rise to this rank. First, these soldiers had to be recommended to attend a promotion board. These soldiers had to prepare for and pass this board. To pass, they answered several questions fielded by First Sergeants and Sergeants Majors. Additionally, they must be deemed “promotable” by the board members. This task was completed earlier this summer. The soldiers were also required to pass strict height and weight parameters. Additionally, they had to utilize their latest range qualification scores and physical fitness test scores as well as other definable means of adding points to reach a certain score in order to attain the rank of Sergeant. Once all of this is complete and compiled, a total score is added up and the soldier waits for the points to drop (set by the Department of the Army) in order to advance to the next rank.

Our three latest promotions to the rank of Sergeant were SGT Jeremy Judd, SGT Jona-

than Smith, and SGT Ricardo Vidaurri. Congratulations to these three new NCOs on their new rank. With their increased pay comes the increased responsibility, but I have absolute confidence in all three of these new NCO's and look forward to see their accomplishments.



1LT Sutton and SGT Richmond promoting SGT Smith



CPT Campbell and SFC Coe promoting SGT Vidauri

Another fine addition to Node Center 62 is Sergeant First Class Eric Coe. He is our Small Extension Node section sergeant and has the largest responsibility in the platoon. His area of operations covers the entire At Tamin province. He travels the area with the convoy team and mentors and trains his young teams.



SFC Herring and SFC Coe cutting their promotion cake

With the aid of senior NCO's, who will help mold, mentor, train and prepare this upcoming new generation of true “backbone” leadership our new young sergeants will grow into fine leaders. I send gratitude to all of my NCO's for all they have done in order to keep everything running as smooth as possible as well as setting and maintaining a standard other units only attempt to emulate—Hele On.”

In other news, I must mention an additional volunteer activity that we have added to our repertoire. Recently we teamed up with another unit (835th CSB) and headed out to a local village to enjoy the “real” Iraq. SFC Wright and I have worked for months trying to coordinate this completely volunteer activity. After months of coordination we were finally told to provide three soldiers. SGT Burke, SPC Devlin, and SPC Kandle were the first interested in this new activity. The mission was to bring much needed supplies to needy children that



Soldiers providing security

lived in the village right outside Camp Speicher. While on this mission, the three volunteers from our platoon were assigned the task of forming the rear security/gun truck team. Once at the village, our three volunteers had the daunting task of providing security on the busiest street in the village. Each member of the team was rotated out to have an opportunity to go and have lunch with village members. SGT Burke states, "Although, I couldn't really identify the food, it was very good". The children were all elated to see the soldiers and crowded the trucks so they could get a share of the supplies that were being passed out. When it was time to leave, the children sadly followed but were assured that we would return soon. SGT Burke, SPC Devlin and SPC Kandle stated they had a great time and were moved by the popularity of our presence with the local populace. We are on the list and await another mission, as the popularity has created a waiting list for the platoon members as many more soldiers have shown interest in this awesome opportunity to

interact and mingle with our closest Iraqi neighbors...until next week, "First Strike" from 1st Platoon/ NC62—"we set the standard".



SGT Burke with one of the children during his visit

LT Langley is not here to provide an update from Node Center 63. He is at home on leave and I am sure he is enjoying it. Probably the biggest piece of news from Node Center 63 is that they promoted Staff Sergeant Herring to Sergeant First Class. SFC has the twin role of SFC Coe. He is also responsible for the Small Extension Node Section and has one of the most difficult jobs of any leader in the company. Like SFC Coe is teams are scattered and he must travel to visit them, mentor them, and take care of them. He has been filling this role for a long time and has been doing an outstanding job.

In our HQ platoon we had the pleasure of promoting SGT Cruz to SSG. He is one of our mechanics and I would even go so far to say that he is probably the best mechanic in our Brigade. Congratulations

on a well deserved promotion.



SSG McNear and CPT Campbell promoting SSG Cruz

This was a fun and enjoyable week for the company. We are proud to have fixed the network problems that plagued us in previous weeks. Our level of support to 2nd Brigade Combat team is five times higher than the support any other Brigade under 1st Infantry Division. We are proud of that and any time our supports diminishes, even a little, we work long days and nights to restore it. There were soldiers in this company that did not sleep for days last week as they worked to restore our communications to our optimum level. Be proud of them and thank them for all that they do. So few people understand the hours these young men and women put in to provide the best support we can. Hele On!



SGT Crumbly and his fine truck



Newly promoted SPC Duran and SPC Adams before they got dumped into the pool (funny thing was they did not expect that!)



CPT Campbell re-enlisted SPC Walker in Tirkit Iraq

B Company, 279th Signal Battalion

When managing a whole brigade, data and networks are critical. As home to the 30th BCT, FOB KMTB/Caldwell has high data needs. In addition to using the military data network, the more than 2,000 soldiers at the base have access to three Internet cafes to keep in touch with home. The 279th Signal Battalion Data Team is responsible for keeping these data networks operational.

Although small, the Data Team, including SSG Anthony Taylor, SSG Julius Moore, SGT Terrence Gaines, and SGT Jon Manders, has helped maintain one of the largest data networks in the division. Upon arriving at the site, there was no data network available. The Data Team worked with the 30th BCT S6 to establish the network, from running Ethernet cable to building the SIPRNET network server to

establishing NIPRNET communications. When the headquarters moved across the base in May, the team coordinated planning, tearing down, moving, and reestablishing data assets. They continue to work with the 30th S6 daily to maintain the network and resolve any issues.

“Since we have arrived at Caldwell, our Data Team has not missed a beat,” said CPT Allen Cheek, commander of B Company, 279th Signal Battalion. “We have kept the network running and have had no major complaints, quite an accomplishment considering the size and complexity of the network and the small number of team members.”

“The Data Team’s goal has always been to be the best at whatever we do,” said SSG Taylor. “In our AOR, I know we have accomplished that goal.”

At the same time, the Data Team was given responsibility for the MWR Internet and phone café, which serves as many as 1,000 soldiers per day. The team attended training on Segovia satellite systems, and for four months supported the only MWR Internet facility on the base. The team continues to coordinate with the two smaller facilities operated by the 30th BCT to maintain consistent policy, troubleshoot problems, and keep each other informed of issues. The 279th moved the facility to a new building, built booths, and made a number of technical and aesthetic improvements.

“We operate the largest and, our users tell us, the nicest Internet café at Caldwell,” said SSG Moore, the MWR NCOIC. “Our goal is to keep this system running for the soldiers

and deliver service with a smile.”

“I consider this as one of the most important aspects of our mission because we help raise the soldier’s morale and their overall standard of living,” said SGT Manders.

In order to establish and maintain the network, the team has received refresher training and learn several new technologies and equipment, including TACLANes, Prominas, satellite systems, Windows and Exchange 2003, Linux,

MCS Light, and a variety of software and network monitoring tools.

“We have learned an incredible amount since we’ve been deployed. I look forward to taking this knowledge back and training the rest of our team at home station,” said SGT Gaines.

The team continues to work with the 121st Signal Battalion and the 30th BCT to make improvements to the network, resolve issues, and work on ongoing projects. Judging from

performance to date, thanks to the 279th, data will continue to flow freely at Camp Caldwell.



Data Section: (Left to Right) SSG Moore, SGT Gaines, SGT Manders, and SSG Talyor

Chaplain

“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

These encouraging words,

penned by the Apostle Paul from a prison cell in Rome, illustrate the importance of wearing the proper gear for the battlefield. He was looking at a Roman soldier as he likened our emotional and spiritual battles to that of a soldier preparing to face an enemy. In those times, as it is today, a soldier put on two types of gear; defensive gear that would protect from injury and offensive gear that would ensure victory. We can relate to the “breastplate of righteousness” every time we put on our own body armor. And we know the protection of the “helmet of salvation” when we wear our kevlar. We also feel the confidence of the “sword of the Spirit” when we pick our weapon systems.

But the “TA-50” that Paul talks about here doesn’t protect us

from the physical battlefield. It is, instead, meant to give us victory in our spiritual and emotional lives. For he also says “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” These “powers” manifest themselves in discouragement, discord, and discontent; attitudes and stresses that we all face regularly.

The bottom line for us, then, is this: If we equip ourselves spiritually, by living right, studying God’s word, spending time in prayer, and encouraging others, we’ll stand firm when the days of testing come...days that we face more often than we prefer during this deployment.