

# **THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM**

**“WILDCATS NEVER FORGET”**

**802ND ORDNANCE COMPANY (AMMUNITION)**

**(Gainesville, Georgia)**

**January 2003 - February 2004**



**Office of Army Reserve History  
United States Army Reserve Command  
Fort McPherson, Georgia**



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**802ND ORDNANCE COMPANY  
(AMMUNITION)  
(Gainesville, Georgia)  
January 2003 - February 2004**

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Introduction/Lessons Learned  
Editor**



**Office of Army Reserve History  
United States Army Reserve Command  
Fort McPherson, Georgia  
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**DESCRIPTION:** On a dark blue disk the bust of a Minuteman (Captain John Parker) in cocked hat on a pedestal, between two branches of olive or within a dark blue designation band with gold inner and outer borders inscribed UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE in gold.

**SYMBOLISM:** The minuteman has traditionally been used to represent the citizen soldier. The wreath signifies achievement and accomplishment. Gold is symbolic of honor and excellence and dark blue signifies loyalty.

**BACKGROUND:** The emblem was approved for use as a plaque in 1972 and is used as an unofficial identification device of the United States Army Reserve. (US Army Institute of Heraldry.)

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## Foreword

*The Global War on Terrorism-Operation Iraqi Freedom: 802nd Ordnance Company (Ammunition)*, is one in a series of histories of Army Reserve units deployed in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). This includes Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom. The histories are based on primary sources collected by the Office of Army Reserve History's GWOT Military History Task Force. The task force provides program management, central collection, and archiving of unit histories. The former Chief, Army Reserve Lieutenant General James Helmly, stated the importance of this collection effort:

The Army Reserve is experiencing a time of great transition to meet present and future challenges to our national security. The events of this transition, while still fresh, must be captured and documented to preserve the story of the Army Reserve's contribution to this unprecedented war. The result will be a unique archive of the wartime accomplishments of all mobilized Army Reserve units, not only of this war, but for all future defense commitments. Nowhere else within the United States Government does an official archive of the Army Reserve exist.

The records collected include narratives with a mission statement, after action reviews or lessons learned, personnel rosters, mobilization orders, demobilization orders, unit briefing slides, photographs, and autobiographical sketches. This information is used to record and to preserve the Army Reserve's contributions to GWOT. This volume and other unit histories included in the series, as compiled from these records, provide an invaluable resource for the Army Reserve and its Soldiers to

learn from their own experiences and retain lessons learned for future operations.

Fort McPherson  
Atlanta, Georgia  
January 2007

LEE S. HARFORD, JR., Ph.D.  
Army Reserve Historian  
United States Army Reserve

## Introduction

*"Through their service, Reserve personnel play an important role in our efforts to advance democracy, peace and freedom across the Nation and around the world. These dedicated men and women train vigorously and work closely with our active duty forces, serving as equal partners in our integrated Armed Forces."* President George W. Bush (11 August 2002)<sup>1</sup>

11 September 2001 was a watershed in the history of the United States. The terrorist attacks had a profound affect on the country. In his address to the nation that night, President George W. Bush said the attacks had moved "a great people . . . to defend a great nation." Bush set the tone for his evolving doctrine by stating the US "will make no distinction between terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them." On 20 September 2001 in a joint session of Congress, Bush further defined his policy by stating, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."<sup>2</sup>

On 15 September, Bush ordered a partial mobilization of reserve forces with the first call-ups starting on 22 September. The Army Reserve quickly reacted to the largest deployment since Operation Desert Storm. Even before the official call-ups, eighty-five Soldiers from one Army Reserve unit, the 311th Quartermaster Company (Mortuary Affairs), were on the scene at the Pentagon by 17 September 2001.<sup>3</sup>

In New York after the attack on the World Trade Center, Army Reserve Soldiers aided in the recovery efforts. Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers were quick to answer the call for assistance. Army

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<sup>1</sup> Article, Notable Quotables, "Army Reserve Magazine, Volume 49, Number 1, 03, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Statement, President George W. Bush, Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation, 11 Sep 01,

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Testimony, Lieutenant General Thomas Plewes, "Army Reserve Overview," Statement Before the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, US Senate, 13 Feb 02; Article, Linda Kozaryn, "Army Reserve Duty Has 'Changed Forever,'" 22 Jan 02, <https://isarcintra/CdrsCorner/ArmyResDutycgmsg.htm>; and Email, Sergeant First Class Christina Steiner with attached article, Gina Cavallaro, *Times* "Army Reserve deploys greater percentage of soldiers," 19 Mar 03.

Reserve Soldiers provided equipment, reserve center space, and other logistical support. Like the Pentagon recovery effort the actions of Army Reserve Soldiers at the World Trade Center preceded official mobilization.<sup>4</sup>

Military intelligence determined that Osama bin Laden's Islamic al Qaeda was responsible for the 11 September attacks. Al Qaeda's base of operations was in Afghanistan where the fundamentalist Taliban regime controlled the country and harbored al Qaeda. A loose coalition, the Northern Alliance, opposed the Taliban. On 7 October 2001, less than a month after the 11 September attacks, the US, with support from Great Britain, launched an air and naval attack as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. The campaign pinpointed airfields and air defenses along with command and control centers. In a national address Bush said the military action was aimed to "cut the military capability of the Taliban regime." Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld explained that the assault was intended to "make it increasingly difficult for terrorists to use Afghanistan as a base of operations."<sup>5</sup>

The ground war or "boots on the ground" began on 19 October 2001 with a number of twelve-man Special Forces Operational Detachment A teams who joined the Northern Alliance in fighting the Taliban and al Qaeda. By November 2001 over 50,000 American forces involving ground, sea, and air operations were in the theater. "The fighting in Afghanistan," wrote Brigadier General John Brown, director of the US Army Center of Military History, "fractured into several miniature campaigns as each allied Afghan warlord advanced on his own objectives,

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<sup>4</sup> Testimony, Statement of Lieutenant General James Helmly Before the Subcommittee On Defense, Committee on Appropriations, US Senate, National Guard and Reserve Programs, 7 May 03.

<sup>5</sup>Coordinating Draft, Brigadier General John S. Brown, *American Military History* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 26 Nov 03), chapter 29, p. 8; Pamphlet, Dr. Richard Stewart, *The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom, October 2001-March 2002* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, no date), p. 7; Article, author unknown, "Afghanistan wakes after night of intense bombings," 7 Oct 2001, [http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/gen.america.under\\_attack/index.tml](http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/gen.america.under_attack/index.tml); and Article, author unknown, no date, "Defense officials Air Operations to last several days," <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/ret.attack.pentagon/>.



carefully protecting the tiny contingent of Americans who gave him . . . awesome firepower."<sup>6</sup> The fall of Kabul and Kandahar and the "destruction of organized resistance in Tora Bora" spelled doom for the terrorists. By late 2001, American Soldiers working with Afghan forces were successful in "decisive[l]y defeating the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies and in liberating Afghanistan."<sup>7</sup> Operation Enduring Freedom "marked the first commitment of American forces in what would become simultaneous combat operations across multiple theaters of war since World War II."<sup>8</sup>

In his state of the union address on 29 January 2002, President Bush told the American people "in four short months," the country had "rallied a great coalition, captured, arrested, and rid the world of thousands of terrorists, destroyed Afghanistan's terrorist training camps, saved a people from starvation, and freed a country from brutal oppression."<sup>9</sup>

But, as seen later the terrorists rallied, albeit in a weakened state. By January 2002, the US and its allies began to set the stage for Operation Anaconda which lasted from 2 March through 19 March 2002. Its mission was to destroy remaining al Qaeda forces. Although the operation was successful, a number of al Qaeda fled into the nearby mountains and into Pakistan. While the terrorists suffered substantial losses, fighting still persists in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Operation Enduring Freedom continues as does the mobilization of Army Reserve Soldiers.

The Army Reserve played and is playing a vital role in these operations. According to Lieutenant General James Helmly, Chief, Army Reserve, "What was once a force in reserve has become a full partner

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<sup>6</sup> Coordinating Draft, Brown, *American Military History*, chapter 29, pp. 10-12 and Pamphlet, Stewart, *The United States Army in Afghanistan*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Pamphlet, Stewart, *The United States Army in Afghanistan*, pp.27, 45.

<sup>8</sup>Fontenot, et al, *US Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Address, President George Bush, "President Delivers State of the Union Address," no date,

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/02/200020129-11.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Coordinating Draft, Brown, *American Military History*, chapter 29, pp. 9-17; Pamphlet, Stewart, *The United States Army in Afghanistan*, pp. 30, 44-45; and News Story, Joe Burlas, subject: Shinseki pins on medals on Anaconda heroes, 10 Apr 02. Also see Charles Briscoe, Richard Kiper, James Schroder, and Kalev Sepp, *Weapons of Choice: U.S. Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 03).

across the spectrum of operations to satisfy the demand and need for Army Reserve Soldiers and units around the world. Wherever the Army committed forces in the world . . . Army Reserve Soldiers are an integral part, providing critical specialized capabilities and augmentation."<sup>11</sup>

Army Reserve Soldiers were there in Afghanistan serving alongside active component Soldiers. For example, the 911th Forward Surgical Team supported the 10th Mountain Division during medical assistance missions in Afghanistan. The 310th Psychological Operations Battalion served in the isolated mountain regions of Afghanistan determining the needs of the people and organizing the delivery of non-perishable food, bottled water, and medical aid.<sup>12</sup> The 345th Military Intelligence Detachment assisted the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) in intelligence operations leading to the identification, location and targeting of the Taliban and al Qaeda. What Army Reserve Soldiers accomplished proved "vital to the war on terrorism." "We," said one Soldier, "helped out the active duty forces that were there and needed the augmentation." Some civil affairs units, known for their distribution of humanitarian aid and assisting in rebuilding projects, found themselves on the front lines working on combat operations with the infantrymen.<sup>13</sup> In fighting terrorists there often was no clearly defined front line.

The concept for what later became Operation Iraqi Freedom was long in the making dating back some viewed to 1 March 1991, the day after Desert Storm. Based on intelligence that Saddam Hussein had developed weapons of mass destruction President Bush decided that a regime change in Iraq was warranted. He also based his decision on Iraq's

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<sup>11</sup>Testimony, Statement of Lieutenant General James Helmly Before the Subcommittee On Defense, Committee on Appropriations, US Senate, National Guard and Reserve Programs, 7 May 03.

<sup>12</sup> News Release, Lieutenant General James Helmly, "The Army Reserve Engaged in the Global War on Terrorism," Apr 04, <http://ww4.army.mil/USAR/news/word-01.php>; Photo caption, "Cpl. Dominic M. Pileri, *Army Reserve Magazine*, Volume 49, Number 1, 03, p. 27; and Article, no author, "Units That Serve," *Army Reserve Magazine*, Volume 49, Number 1, 03, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>Article, no author, "The Units That Serve," *Army Reserve Magazine*, Volume 49, Number 1, 03, pp. 19-20 and Photograph, *New York Newsday*, 8 Feb 02, <http://www.neynewsday.com>.

probable connection with terrorists and the belief that Iraq posed a danger to the stability of the Middle East. As some of America's allies questioned the threat of Saddam, Bush was prepared to act alone to crush what he included in his "axis of evil." Others wanted to wait on the results of recently readmitted UN weapons inspectors. Britain sided with Bush as his determination for a regime change in Iraq increased.<sup>14</sup> In a statement to the United Nations General Assembly on 10 September 2002, Bush said:

My nation will work with the UN Security Council to meet our common challenge. If Iraq's regime defies us again, the world must move deliberately, decisively to hold Iraq to account. We will work with the UN Security Council for the necessary resolutions. But the purposes of the United States should not be doubted. The Security Council resolutions will be enforced -- the just demands of peace and security will be met -- or action will be unavoidable. And a regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power.<sup>15</sup>

Seven days later on 17 September 2002, Bush released his administration's National Security Strategy which, in short, set forth the reformulation and posture of America's foreign policy. It was a major shift from a "shape, respond, prepare" posture to the new posture of "assure, dissuade, deter forward, and decisively defeat." It affected how the Army was to reshape itself and went hand in hand with the Army's ongoing transformation. The new posture included preemption to handle rogue states and terrorists with weapons of mass destruction. As Bush

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<sup>14</sup> Fontenot, et al., *US Army Operations in Iraqi Freedom*, p. xxii and Coordinating Draft, Brown, *American Military History*, chapter 29, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Address, President George Bush, President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly, 10 Sep 02, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>.

said, this was "a matter of common sense and self defense."<sup>16</sup> It would set the stage in 2003 for the invasion of Iraq.

When Bush made this address to the UN plans were already in the making for a campaign against Iraq. In fact on 4 December 2001 General Tommy Franks, commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), briefed the secretary of defense on the first draft war plan. By 1 February 2002, Franks had plans for a four-phased war involving deployment of troops into theater, air strikes, a ground war, and reconstruction.<sup>17</sup>

On the eve of the campaign, the Turkish parliament decided not to allow the 4th Mechanized Infantry Division to pass through the country and thereby set up a front in northern Iraq. "This obviated a major feature of the preferred war plan, left the division's equipment out of play as it hastily transshipped from standing offshore from Turkey to Kuwait, and perturbed deployment schedules because the ships carrying the 4th Mechanized Infantry Division equipment were not available for other purposes for a prolonged period of time."

Franks and the ground forces commander, Lieutenant General David McKiernan, had to reassess their strategy in the light of the impending conflict. Franks had several contingency plans. One called for a "rolling start." According to this plan, the campaign would begin by using forces already in theater and supplementing them as needed with "reinforcements as they arrived. Iraqi dispositions and circumstances," wrote Brown, "did not suggest significant resistance much south of Baghdad, so why not sweep up relatively uncontested terrain with a lesser

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<sup>16</sup> Statement, *The National Security Strategy of the United State of America*, 17 Sep 02; Article, anonymous, subject: "Chronology: The Evolution of the Bush Doctrine," no date,

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/iraq/etc/cron.html>; Article, anonymous, "Chronology," no date,

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lonroad/etc/cron.html>; and Colonel Gregory Fontenot, Lieutenant Colonel E.J. Degan and Lieutenant Colonel David Tohn, *US Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom: ON POINT* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 04), p. 23.

<sup>17</sup>Study, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Pierett, subject: Outline of Mobilization-Draft, p.1, 21 Jan 05 and General Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (Harper Collins: New York, 04), p. 366.

force and feed in further forces as they arrived?"<sup>18</sup> The plan was tactically driven given a twelve-year air campaign dating from Desert Storm with the no fly zones, American ground forces "acclimatized for operations in Iraq" with experienced defensive operations protecting Kuwait, and intelligence reportedly pinpointing Saddam's location.<sup>19</sup>

Operation Iraqi Freedom began with an air assault on 19 March 2003 in the "shock and awe" phase. Within twenty-four hours the 3rd Mechanized Infantry Division, 1st Marine Division, and the British 7th Armored Division were on the move. They quickly traversed the theater without much opposition, moving along the west side of the Euphrates River toward Baghdad, reaching the vicinity of Al Najaf with minimal resistance, overrunning the Rumaila oil fields and securing the facilities "virtually unscathed," capturing Umm Qasr and mounting other offensive operations. Western and northern Iraq had virtually been neutralized.<sup>20</sup>

However, "the campaign did not stay easy." The Fedayeen, special Republican Guards, and other forces mounted a counterattack "with a vengeance." They proved to be "wily and ruthless opponents," ambushing US forces, sniping, attacking the extended supply lines, firing shoulder air defense weapons, and using suicidal tactics. "They knew the American rules of engagement and exploited them to their advantage." An Nasiriyah was one of the most "hotly contested" areas. The expected moral support from the Iraqi Shiites did not materialize as they "seemed to present an overall attitude of sullen indifference." Lieutenant General William Wallace, the V Corps commander, responded to the "troubling surprises" when he remarked that the Iraqis were "'not the enemy we war-gamed against.'" Strategy and tactics had to change to combat the "dynamic battlefield."

The Army Reserve responded by mobilizing primarily combat service and combat service support units. Army Reserve Soldiers were involved in providing military police protection, operating ports and

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<sup>18</sup>Coordinating Draft, Brown, *American Military History*, chapter 29, pp. 27-29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-30.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 31 and Article, author unknown, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: A Chronology, May 03,  
[http://www.ansa.org/www/army\\_mag.nsf](http://www.ansa.org/www/army_mag.nsf).

ammunition facilities, repairing equipment, building bridges, hauling fuel, and supporting the theater on a broad-spectrum.<sup>21</sup> Army Reserve units like the 802nd Ordnance Company (Ammunition) received mobilization orders and deployed to Kuwait and then to Iraq.

By the end of 2003, the Army Reserve had mobilized a total of 2,322 units (AA UIC's and derivative UIC's).<sup>22</sup> The total number of Army Reserve Soldiers serving on active duty for the Global War on Terrorism was 71,587 incorporating Operations Noble Eagle (home front), Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.<sup>23</sup> Helmly described the mobilization as "for percentage wise the largest mobilization we've had since World War II."<sup>24</sup> In a message to Army Reserve Soldiers and their families, Helmly told them: "Today the nation is asking Army Reserve Soldiers to be prepared to serve on active duty when called. Just as the generation of World War II answered the call to service, we are being called upon to sacrifice in defense of our Nation in the Global War on Terrorism."<sup>25</sup> He described 2003 as an "absolutely volatile, tumultuous year."<sup>26</sup>

Major combat operations in Iraq officially ended on 1 May 2003 when President Bush declared "mission accomplished."<sup>27</sup> However, as

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<sup>21</sup> Fontenot, et al., *US Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, pp. 72-73, 91.

<sup>22</sup> Email, Sergeant First Class Charron Jones, USARC G-3 to Dr. Kathryn Roe Coker, subject: Mobilizations Stats, 8 Feb 05.

<sup>23</sup> Battle Update Brief, USARC G-3, subject: Mobilization of Army Reserve Units and Soldiers, 30 Dec 03. This is the total Headquarters, Department of the Army mobilized Army Reserve Soldiers. There are discrepancies in the number of mobilized soldiers according to different sources. Email, Lieutenant Colonel Bill Davidson to Dr. Coker, USARC G-1, subject: Data for Historian, 27 Apr 05. According to the USARC's G-1 there were 53,555 Army Reserve Soldiers mobilized. This is the number of Soldiers who were actually being paid. Email, Colonel James Shoenhard to Dr. Coker, subject: Noble Eagle/Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom RC Daily Update, 2 Mar 05. According to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, which obtains its statistics from the G-3, the number was 89,629. That figure represents mobilization authorization -- how many members a unit is authorized to be mobilized for a given event. It does not represent people directly.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Lieutenant General James Helmly by Dr. Coker, 11 Mar 04.

<sup>25</sup> News Release, Lieutenant General James Helmly, "The Army Reserve Engaged in the Global War on Terrorism," Apr 04, <http://ww4.army.mil/USAR/news/word-01.php>.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, Helmly, 11 Mar 04.

<sup>27</sup> Article, Kathleen Rhem, "President Bush proclaims end to major combat operations in Iraq," 2 May 03.

with Operation Enduring Freedom, the insurgents were relentless. The Global War on Terrorism continued with the nonstop mobilization and deployment of Army Reserve Soldiers.<sup>28</sup> The Army Reserve remained committed to the warfight and to the warrior ethos. For the 802nd Ordnance Company, that meant recovering, counting, cleaning, packing, hauling and reissuing enormous amounts of war munitions to coalition forces fighting in Iraq.

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<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123004771>.

<sup>28</sup>Interview, Helmly, 11 Mar 04 and Article, Lieutenant General James Helmly, "The Army Reserve at War And Marching to the Future," *2003-04 Army Green Book*, p.110.







Map of Iraq and surrounding countries, showing the two main camps from where the 802nd Ordnance Company operated in 2003.

## **Lineage and Honors**

15 September 1942: Constituted as the 802nd Ordnance Light Maintenance Company, 102nd Infantry Division.

1964-March 1968: Redesignated 802nd Quartermaster Company, First Army, 81st Army Reserve Command.

April 1968 to present: Redesignated 802nd Ordnance Company, First Army, 81st Regional Readiness Command.

28 February 2003: Assigned to 377th Support Command, 38th Ordnance Group, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

1 June 2003: Assigned to 321st Ordnance Battalion, 377th Support Command, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

10 February 2004 (estimate): The 802nd Ordnance Company members are authorized wear of the 377th Support Command insignia on the right shoulder sleeve in recognition of wartime service. The unit is also authorized the wear of two Overseas Service Bars.<sup>29</sup>

20 February 2004: The 802nd is reassigned to the 81st Regional Readiness Command.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Army Regulation 670-1. To date, no official lineage has been certified for the 802nd Ordnance Company by the Center of Military History. The lineage described here is unofficial, obtained through official Department of the Army orders, records of the 81st Regional Readiness Command, public sources, and Soldiers assigned to the 802nd Ordnance Company.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. The Meritorious Unit Commendation for service while under the command of the 377th Command in Iraq and Kuwait while assigned to the 38th Ordnance Group and 321st Ordnance Battalion in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, February 2003 to February 2004 is pending. Request for recognition and supporting documentation was submitted to the Center of Military History in October 2006, copies of which are contained in the unit's history file. Request for recognition and supporting

# Heraldry

## 81st Regional Readiness Command



### Distinctive Unit Insignia

**Description:** A gold color metal and enamel device 1 1/8 inches (2.86 cm) in height overall consisting of a blue octagon bearing a vertical gold stripe throughout the center charged with a blue star at the top and overall in base a black wildcat and extending over the left side of the octagon a gold eight-rayed sun and over the right side a gold fleur-de-lis; arched across the top on a gold scroll the inscription "TRAIN" and convexly arched in base, terminating on each side in back of the sun and fleur-de-lis, a gold scroll inscribed "MAINTAIN" on the left and "SUSTAIN" on the right, all in black letters.

**Symbolism:** The black wildcat is from the shoulder sleeve insignia of the 81st Division and also refers to that unit's nickname. The sun from the flag of the President of the Philippines commemorates the division's World War II Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, and the fleur-de-lis is for the World War I Campaigns. The octagon and vertical stripe allude to the numerical designation of the organization. <sup>31</sup>

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documentation to award the battle streamer was also sent to the Center of Military History in October 2006 and are retained in the unit's history file.

<sup>31</sup> US Army Institute of Heraldry, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The 81st Regional Readiness Command is the unit's parent company.

**Background:** The distinctive unit insignia was originally authorized for the 81st U.S. Army Reserve Command on 12 June 1970. It was reassigned to the 81st Regional Support Command on 16 April 1996. The insignia was redesignated for the 81st Regional Readiness Command effective 16 July 2003.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>US Army Institute of Heraldry, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.



Traditional  
Shoulder Insignia



Desert Insignia

### Left Shoulder Sleeve Insignia

**Description:** On an olive drab disc edged with a 1/8 inch (.32 cm) black border a black wildcat passant. The overall dimension is 2 1/4 inches (5.72 cm) in diameter.

**Background:** The shoulder sleeve insignia was originally approved by telegram on 19 October 1918 for the 81st Division. On 29 June 1922 it was officially announced. The insignia was redesignated for the 81st Infantry Division on 11 May 1964, retroactive to 1 August 1942. On 22 April 1968 it was authorized for the 81st US Army Reserve Command. The shoulder sleeve insignia was reassigned to the 81st Regional Support Command on 16 April 1996. The insignia was redesignated for the 81st Regional Readiness Command effective 16 July 2003. The 81st Division is credited as being the first unit to have a shoulder sleeve insignia.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

## 377th Support Command



### Right Shoulder Sleeve Insignia

**Description:** On a shield 2 ¼ inches (5.72 cm) in width and 3 inches (7.62 cm) in height overall within a 1/8 inch (.32 cm) red border a yellow filed charged with two blue arrowheads above the apexes of two red interlaced chevrons.

**Symbolism:** The supply and services and maintenance elements of the organization are represented by the two red chevrons and the arrowheads refer to the combat units which the organization supports.

**Background:** Activated in New Orleans, Louisiana, November 1948 as the 377th Transportation Major Port; transferred to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, September 11, 1950. Later the unit moved to Fort Eustis, Virginia, until October 10 1952. From 1953 until 1963, the 377th remained in an Army Reserve status and experienced several changes in unit designation. On 11 May 1966, it was redesignated 377th Support Brigade under the Army Logistical Concept; renamed 377th Corps Support Command on 19 October 1979; retained that designation until 16 July 1981 when redesignated as a Theater Army Area Command (TAACOM). Designation was changed to the 377th Theater Support Command on 1 October 1998; redesignated 377th Support Command on 19 October 2000. Effective 16 September 2007, further redesignated as 377th Sustainment Command. Combat theater insignia of the 377th Support Command,

officially authorized in February 2004 to be worn on the right shoulder by the 802nd Ordnance Company in Kuwait.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

The 802d Ordnance Company served under the 102d Infantry Division during World War II. The division was activated on 15 September 1942 and arrived in Cherbourg, France on 23 September 1944. The division took part in the Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns, fighting in Belgium, Holland and Germany. On V-E Day, 8 May 1945, the division was posted on the Elbe River, 48 miles west of Berlin.



*The 802d Ordnance Company went to work the minute they set foot inside Germany. One of their first big jobs was to help clear the great tank battlefields south and east of Geilenkirchen. Here they are retrieving a tank knocked out by land mines.*



102d Infantry Division  
The Ozark Division



# **Organizational Structure for Operation Iraqi Freedom**

## **377th Support Command**

### **Camp Arifjan, Kuwait**

Commanding General	MG David E. Kratzer
Provisional Commander	BG Michael J. Diamond

## **38th Ordnance Group (28 February - 31 May 2003)**

### **Camp Arifjan, Kuwait**

Commander	COL Lew Tyree (to April 2003) Colonel Reed Hauser (April to May 2003) LTC Paul Howard (to end of operations)
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## **321st Ordnance Battalion (1 June 2003 - 14 February - 2004)**

### **Camp Arifjan, Kuwait**

Commander	LTC Larry L. Fuller
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## **802nd Ordnance Company (Ammo)**

Commander	1st Lt Tom J. Williams
First Sergeant	Master Sgt James S. Quillian

## Mission Statement

The 802nd Ordnance Company (Ammo), mobilized at manpower strength of 114 but deployed with 107 enlisted Soldiers, three warrant officers and one commissioned officer, supported the Class V<sup>35</sup> mission at the Southwest Asia Theater Storage Area and Ammunition Supply Point, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The 802nd was responsible for the receipt, storage, warehousing, shipping and issue of ammunition to coalition forces operating in the CENTCOM (Central Command) area of responsibility to include Coalition Joint Task Forces -7, -180 and -the Horn of Africa (HOA). It provided modular ammunition platoon support<sup>36</sup> to the 377th Support Command, the 38th Ordnance Group and the 321st Ordnance Battalion. The 802nd Headquarters Platoon provided administrative, maintenance and supply support, and all other necessary mission support to other modular ammunition platoons placed under the operational control of the 38th Ordnance Group and later, the 321st Ordnance Battalion.

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<sup>35</sup> In the Army logistics classification system, Class V refers to ammunition supplies and materiel.

<sup>36</sup>Telephone interview, Captain Tom Williams, commander, with Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: Modular platoon, 7 Jul 06, unit history file, GWOT Historical Collection (GWOTHC) US Army Reserve Historical Research Collection (USARHRC), Office of Army Reserve History (OARH), US Army Reserve Command (USARC). Unless otherwise stated all information is from the unit file, GWOTHC, USARHRC, OARH, USARC. Williams explained the term "modular platoon" as self-contained technical entities, or modules, deployed as needed within the theater, operating semi-independently.

## Chronology

5 December 2002	Alerted by Headquarters, First Army for mobilization. <sup>37</sup>
19 December 2002	First Lieutenant Tom Williams takes command of 802nd.
3 January 2003	Unit is mobilized at Gainesville, Georgia.
4 January 2003	Unit given official deployment ceremony.
5 January 2003	Unit departed Gainesville; reported to Power Projection Point, Fort Stewart, Georgia.
29 January 2003	First false departure alert, Fort Stewart.
8 February 2003	Unit moved to Hunter Army Airfield, Savannah, Georgia.
20 February 2003	Second false departure alert, Hunter Army Airfield.
25 February 2003	Third and final departure alert, Hunter Army Airfield.
27 February 2003	Departed United States en route to Kuwait.
28 February 2003	Arrived at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Assigned to 38th Ordnance Group.
9 April 2003	Advance party from 1st Platoon, deployed to Tallil Air Base, Iraq.
1 June 2003	Assigned to 321st Ordnance Battalion, Camp Arifjan for duration of deployment.
3 June 2003	1st Platoon returns to Camp Arifjan from Tallil Air Base.

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<sup>37</sup>Department of the Army Permanent Orders 339-3, 5 Dec 02.

14 February 2004	Redeployed to Fort Stewart, Georgia.
20 February 2004	Return to home station, Gainesville, Georgia.
7 May 2004	Unit is officially demobilized. <sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Department of the Army Demobilization Order 124-04, 1 Jul 04.

## **Mobilization and Preparation for Deployment**

The 802nd Ordnance Company (Ammunition), a subordinate unit of the 81st Regional Readiness Command (RRC), is located near the North Georgia mountain region, in the city of Gainesville, approximately sixty-five miles northeast of the city of Atlanta. It is an ammunition ordnance unit, trained in the handling, transport, packaging, storage and distribution of all Army munitions. The Soldiers of the 802nd are also skilled in establishing and operating ammunition supply points (ASP), ammunition holding areas (AHA), and theater storage areas (TSA). On 5 December 2002, this unit received orders to mobilize for the newly-declared Global War on Terrorism.

Prior to mobilization and subsequent deployment for Operation Iraqi Freedom in January, 2003, the 802nd trained over the years in many ammunition depots across the United States and overseas at places such as Okinawa, Japan, and Miesau, Germany. In its many years as an Army Reserve unit, the 802nd had never before mobilized and deployed for war, although it was in a state of alert for the short duration of the Gulf War in 1991. In 1999, the 802nd played an active role during the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) air campaign in the Balkans by preparing, packaging and shipping Air Force munitions stored at Tooele Army Depot, Utah, and at Hawthorne Army Depot, Nevada. As late as 2000, one platoon of the 802nd was alerted for deployment to Kosovo, only to be cancelled.

Master Sergeant James Scott Quillian, who, for the last seven years served as first sergeant, was assigned to the company for thirty years and had recently retired. No one knew the Soldiers of the 802nd better than him. They had trained long and hard together for years, and he was not about to let this historic moment pass with him on the sidelines. It was a foregone conclusion he would come out of retirement to help lead the company through its first wartime mission. After just two months as a civilian, and with the help of his former battalion commander, Quillian's retirement orders were revoked; he put on his uniform and came to work

at the 802nd, just as he had for the past thirty years. Just in time, it turned out. Captain Kent Allen, the commander of the 802nd at the time, was caught in a quandary. He had been to war during the 1991 Gulf War, his wife was pregnant, and he did not relish the idea of having to deploy at such an inopportune time with so many other critical events going on. After a meeting with the RRC and battalion commanders, it was decided the only platoon leader currently assigned to the 802nd, First Lieutenant Tom Williams, would take command and lead it during this time of deployment.<sup>39</sup> Lieutenant Williams, an Adjutant General branch officer with no previous command experience or specialized knowledge of ordnance units, was grateful and much comforted to have the experience of an icon such as First Sergeant Quillian, especially knowing that as the only commissioned officer in the company, he would need all the help he could get.

From 19 December 2002 until 3 January 2003, events were blurred as the men and women of the 802nd inventoried, tested, cleaned and packed their equipment. Twenty-three additional Soldiers from the 450th Ordnance Company in Aiken, South Carolina, were transferred to the 802nd to fill critical vacancies. These Soldiers were housed in local hotels and provided meals contracted through the nearby L & K Cafeteria. In addition to getting equipment ready for war, Soldiers of the 802nd tended to personal readiness as well. The 171st Area Support Group provided additional help in each of the critical staff sections within the 802nd to ensure all tasks were completed on time. Soldiers were medically screened and given initial anthrax immunizations by a contracted civilian medical services provider. Dental screenings and panarex x-rays were efficiently performed on short notice contract by a local dentist who graciously made room on his appointments calendar for the 802nd. Mobilization files were established for each Soldier and legal assistance officers were on hand to make wills, ensure insurance documents were updated and correct, and powers of attorney drawn and delivered. A great

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<sup>39</sup>Telephone interview, Master Sergeant James Scott Quillian with Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: Mobilization and Preparation for Deployment, 27 Sep 06.

deal of command assistance assured all logistical and administrative details were handled, keeping the commander and first sergeant free to conduct training and attend to personnel matters. Everyone was given a half day off on Christmas Eve and a full day on Christmas.<sup>40</sup>

An emotional farewell ceremony took place at the Georgia Mountains Center in Gainesville on 4 January 2003; the event was covered by several Atlanta and local television stations and newspapers. The ceremony was a dignified and solemn affair attended by 400 guests, including the mayor of Gainesville, the Honorable Myrtle Figueras; the 81st RRC commander, Major General Michael Mayo; and various other military commanders. War with Iraq was imminent. No one knew what the future would bring to these brave Soldiers but the Gainesville community was determined to bestow upon its citizens in uniform the greatest sense of pride of honor. And so it was, with heavy hearts and bottled emotions, the 802nd boarded buses on a cold and wet morning early the next day, buses bound for Fort Stewart, just south of Savannah, Georgia. Comprising a total strength of 114 Soldiers, the unit would undergo final training to ensure it was combat ready before boarding transport aircraft to the war theater.

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<sup>40</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Mobilization and Preparation for Deployment, 3 Aug 06.

## Fort Stewart, Georgia

The 802nd was among the first units to be mobilized for the war, and the unit's main body arrived at the Fort Stewart mobilization station the evening of 5 January 2003. They were housed at the Georgia National Guard Camp, a place described by one Soldier as "some old cinder block barracks in the middle of nowhere" and furnished with "old bunk beds that looked as if they had been at Stewart since the Viet Nam war."<sup>41</sup> Men and women were housed in separate barracks located some distance from each other but on the same street. There was no concession made for the solitary married military couple within the 802nd.<sup>42</sup>

The men's shower and latrine facilities were located in a separate building approximately thirty yards from the barracks, which meant a chilly walk on winter mornings. Inside, the facilities were the same as Army latrines everywhere since the advent of the flush toilet in the 1880's.

"It was little more than a cold, damp room with a bunch of toilets lined up next to each other, and a small square walk-in closet in the back with about ten shower heads ringing it [inside]."<sup>43</sup> The toilets were communal in the sense there was no privacy whatsoever. There were no dividing walls or doors, just free-standing commodes about twenty-four inches apart. There was a natural reluctance to this form of intimacy but most Soldiers eventually overcame their embarrassment, simply because they had no other choice. Latrines like these often became social centers or meeting halls of a sort, where anything from cars and girlfriends to mess hall food was discussed, sometimes with great alacrity. The women's facilities were the same; the only notable exception for both sexes was that men in ranks staff sergeant and above, and women in ranks of sergeant and above, had their own rooms with private or semi-private toilets and

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<sup>41</sup>Autobiographical sketch, Sergeant Robert Edward Baggott; subject: Deployment, no date.

<sup>42</sup>Telephone interview, Staff Sergeant Patrela Lawrence with Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: Operations at Fort Stewart, 5 Oct 06.

<sup>43</sup>Autobiographical sketch, Baggott; subject: Deployment, no date.



showers in the barracks. Rank did have its privileges.<sup>44</sup> Food was provided by a dining facility to which Soldiers were bused for nearly half an hour across post, only to have to wait in long lines to eat, and then take the bus trip back. Many found it easier and more convenient to simply order food from local restaurants and pizzerias off-post for delivery to their barracks. Since privately owned vehicles were not allowed – not that anyone had the opportunity to bring one – Soldiers walked or hired a taxi to their destinations.

Although the 802nd had not yet received orders stating the unit's destination, it was not hard to figure out where they were heading. One of Fort Stewart's home units, the 2nd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, was already in Kuwait, and the 1st Brigade was preparing to go even as the 802nd was arriving.

All Army units are required to go through a validation process at the mobilization –“mob”-- station, which included extensive medical and dental examinations, mission essential and common task training. Training performed at home station in the weeks prior to mobilization paid off handsomely for the members of the 802nd and the unit was validated for combat service in just three weeks. All that was needed was to board a plane and fly away. That day came soon enough when, on 29 January, the unit received its 24 -hour deployment alert. An adrenalin charge took over as the 802nd steeled itself for the greatest mission it had ever undertaken. Soldiers called home to say their goodbyes to wives, husbands, parents, children, boyfriends and girlfriends. Some farewells had far reaching consequences, but none was without deep emotional impact.

War has forever torn families apart as men, and recently, women, are forced to leave their homes and loved ones. It is a strange irony when some are brought together by war. For at least one Soldier, the farewell to his mother had a much deeper impact than he could ever have imagined. By his own admission, he was never emotionally close to his mother, but called to let her know he was leaving. Their conversation was awkward. Neither knew quite what to say as neither had ever faced this situation

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<sup>44</sup> Telephone interview, Staff Sergeant Kathleen Mitchell; Personnel Specialist with Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: Operations at Fort Stewart, 16 Oct 06.

before. Just as he was about to hang up, he heard crying and a moment later he heard her say she loved him. “I don’t really remember her ever having said that to me before,” he revealed. “That got to me and I actually started to cry a little myself.” As suddenly as it came, the alert was called off. Most were relieved and called home again to notify distraught loved ones they were still safe in the United States. But this young Soldier did not want to ruin the solemnity and significance of that profound moment with his mother by having to relive it again later when the real departure would come. “I could not keep saying goodbye,” he wrote of that day. “It hurts too much.”<sup>45</sup>

The unit was a bit bewildered by the cancellation but they persevered even as boredom set in. With typical GI<sup>46</sup> resourcefulness, several Soldiers commandeered an unused mess hall and turned it into a computer/video café. By linking their collected laptop computers, they created a computer game room in which all could break the boredom by playing computer games. They also organized impromptu company barbecues. During the week immediately after the false alert, the 802nd moved from their austere quarters on Fort Stewart, ostensibly to make room for more incoming units, to nearby Hunter Army Airfield. Hunter did not have the resources needed to continue their recreation as before. They shared more modern, but filthy, barracks with the 1st Ranger Battalion, whose Soldiers were also preparing for deployment. Being the type of Soldiers for whom they are famous, the Rangers left some gifts behind for their Army Reserve friends. Several ear plug cases, the small rectangular plastic boxes with flip lids that all Soldiers are required to carry for hearing protection, were found discarded on the floor and on tables. When the reserve Soldiers opened them, they were surprised with a small, but irritating, dose of tear gas from pellets activated when the lids were opened.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Autobiographical sketch, anonymous by Mr. Dennis Hatcher’s discretion; subject: Deployment, no date.

<sup>46</sup>Government Issue, idiomatic reference to all things belonging to the federal government; in this case US military personnel, particularly Army Soldiers.

<sup>47</sup>Autobiographical sketch, Baggott; subject: Deployment, no date.

Whatever advantage was gained from being validated for deployment in record time was lost as the days wore on at Hunter with no flight in sight. Other units that arrived after the 802nd had already departed and the situation was fast becoming stressful and demoralizing. There was, however, at least one advantage to the delay: family members left behind in Gainesville were now allowed to visit Soldiers and many took full advantage of this privilege. Still on twenty-four-alert, Soldiers could leave the post so long as they stayed within a fifty mile-radius and available for immediate recall. As the cold days wore on without word, discipline began to suffer. Lieutenant Williams and First Sergeant Quillian were hard pressed to keep their Soldiers occupied and out of trouble's way. Some Soldiers became frustrated with boredom and sought any form of entertainment they could find. Others rented cars and traveled the local area. For at least one single Soldier, the long delay proved to be a delightful blessing when romance blossomed with a young woman he met nearby, and with whom he continues to share his life today. The 802nd was expecting another alert and on 20 February it came. This time the anxiety level was higher than before. With each landing of an airplane, word spread that this was the flight that would take them out of Hunter Airfield. Each time the rumor proved false. Anxiety soon turned to anger. It was harder than ever to maintain control and discipline; morale sank lower and as each new day passed without word the commander faced a growing challenge to provide answers to his disgruntled Soldiers. While no one could honestly say they wanted to go to war, neither did they want to stay as they were here, in a state of limbo.

During this time of inactivity, the unit commander and first sergeant desperately pushed the NCOs (noncommissioned officers) to provide meaningful training to keep the 802nd in a high state of readiness, but their efforts were futile in nearly every sense. They were prevented from training with their own vehicles and equipment because it had been shipped out of Charleston harbor weeks before. Garrison resources at Hunter were not available for use out of fear of breakage; every transportation asset was sorely needed, and the risk of losing vehicles unnecessarily was something no one was willing to take.

With little or no garrison support, “hip pocket” training centered on NBC (nuclear, biological, chemical) first aid and desert ammunition operations—lessons gleaned from the Persian Gulf War of 1991. Physical fitness training was also discouraged out of concern that Soldiers could be injured and rendered unfit to deploy to the combat theater. Indeed, those concerns were valid. One 802nd Soldier, Sergeant Reginald Hardy, fell and dislocated his shoulder while playing an impromptu game of touch football. He required corrective surgery and was placed in the medical holding unit at Stewart, which meant he was non-deployable—a condition that caused much consternation to Fort Stewart’s mobilization team.<sup>48</sup> There were other Soldiers with medical problems who were forced to stay behind as well. Staff Sergeant Jeff Flowers was taking medication that rendered him non-deployable overseas but he stayed on active duty as a bus driver with the mobilization team there at Fort Stewart. Specialist Kristy Baldwin was also kept at Fort Stewart where she worked at the ammunition supply point following recovery from surgery. She rejoined the 802nd in Kuwait seven months later, in September.

The winter weather at Hunter Airfield was in true form, freezing rain and winds, when the third alert came on the evening of 25 February. The 802nd had to be ready to board a plane the next night for Kuwait, the staging area for the war with Iraq that was now certain to come. At first, everyone was skeptical that this would be any different from the other false starts, but as the day of the 26th dawned and people were still preparing, it was evident that this might be the real thing. All that day, the men and women of the 802nd busied themselves by clearing out of their barracks, drawing weapons and stacking baggage in a rainstorm. Family members watched as the Soldiers loaded their baggage in the freezing rain into the bellies of the buses that would take them to the air terminal. This

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<sup>48</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Operations at Fort Stewart, 12 Oct 06; Sergeant Hardy eventually recovered and rejoined the 802nd in Kuwait in January 2004, to the surprise of Captain Williams who knew nothing of his arrival. Two weeks later, Hardy went back to Fort Stewart with the unit for its scheduled redeployment. Other 802nd Soldiers were injured in-country and were redeployed early for treatment and hospitalization, to include Specialist Michael Wilson who was featured on the front page of the Atlanta, Georgia, *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* newspaper for a story on medical care in the war zone, in Oct 03.

time it was real, and there was little time to say goodbye again. Once inside the terminal, that was where they stayed, quarantined and cut off from all outside contact.<sup>49</sup> The United Services Organization, or USO, was present in the terminal, supplying snacks and drinks for the weary Soldiers. Once again, the 802nd found itself anxiously waiting out the long, chilly night. Just when they were finally ready to step aboard the plane, the flight was delayed yet again, for several hours. After having stayed awake and prepared continuously the past twenty-four hours, this latest delay was insufferable. Mercifully, anger gave way to physical exhaustion, and soon many were sitting against the walls, sleeping soundly, while others wrote last minute letters home, or called loved ones one last time. At last, just as dawn was breaking, the 802nd, weary and relieved that the wait was finally over, boarded the plane that would take them half a world away to a strangely mythical place that before now had existed only on a television screen. “I have never taken a flight on which I didn’t say a quick prayer before taking off,” explained then-Specialist Robert Baggott. “On this flight I made the prayer a little longer.”<sup>50</sup>

## **Kuwait**

In the early morning hours of 27 February 2003, with a thundering roar, the powerful jet engines sucked in the cold wet air that propelled the lumbering jet ever faster down the slick, watery runway atop the Georgia coastal soil. Like a massive goose struggling to alight from a lake, the plane -- stuffed full of people and heavily laden with fuel, baggage and equipment, -- finally broke the bonds of gravity. The Omni Air International chartered DC-10 headed into the cold, gray eastern skies, then turned northward, over the New England states, onward past Nova Scotia, then eastward again across the North Atlantic. About nine hours after taking to the air, the plane landed for refueling in Shannon, Ireland, where the men and women aboard it were allowed to get off, walk around,

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<sup>49</sup>*Unit History Report*, 802nd Ordnance Company (Ammo), page 5.

<sup>50</sup>Autobiographical sketch, Baggott; subject: Deployment, no date.

and take a long-needed stretch. Because of the constant threat to the security of US forces at European airports, they were not allowed into the main terminal or to interact with anyone other than themselves. After leaving Shannon, the DC-10 continued its journey, flying southward to the Mediterranean island-country of Cypress. At Lanarca airport, the plane again refueled, but this time the soldiers were not allowed to deplane, nor were they allowed to stand in front of any open hatchway that would expose them to outside observers.

Their 21-hour journey came to an end just after dawn on the morning of 28 February, when the plane touched down at the Aerial Port of Debarkation (APOD), more commonly known as Kuwait International Airport. The final half hour of the last leg of the trip saw the sun rise in the east as they flew above Saudi Arabia, illuminating for them the endless expanse of light brown Saudi sand below, as they approached Kuwait from the south. It seemed a discouraging sight, as desolate and lifeless as the surface of the moon. Then someone remembered it was the last day of the month, and that was something to be happy about. Army regulations state a Soldier only has to serve but one day a month in a combat theater to be credited for the entire month, which meant they would earn tax-free salary and hostile fire pay for the entire month of February. That knowledge was of little practical concern at the moment, since there was no place to spend their windfall, but it made them a little cheerier to be finally setting down on Kuwaiti soil.

The Soldiers deplaned and in a reversal of the day before, unloaded their own baggage. This was, after all, a war zone and the luxury of paid baggage handlers was not possible. They boarded contracted Kuwaiti buses for the short drive to Camp Wolf, the in-processing and receiving site located in the dry patch of ground between the runways, away from the airport terminal. While the reception unit at Camp Wolf processed the 802nd's in-country assignment, the flight weary ordnance Soldiers were directed to a large tent where they were allowed to rest. Many napped on the dusty wooden floor, while others walked around and explored their new surroundings. They soon discovered thousands of other American soldiers, mostly from the 101st Airborne Division, were pouring into the

camp, as were a large number of British troops. Camp Wolf also supported a combat field hospital that stayed busy, constantly. It was from this hospital that injured Soldiers were medically evacuated to station hospitals in Germany and the United States. By mid-afternoon, the unit received its assignment orders and was taken by bus that evening to their new headquarters, the 38th Ordnance Group, located approximately forty-five minutes away at Camp Arifjan.

## **Camp Arifjan**

### **Warehouse 7**

In those early days of the Iraqi campaign, Camp Arifjan was a far cry from what it would quickly become in the months that followed. By February 2003, it was already seriously overcrowded as troop build-up for the impending invasion continued. Originally designed to accommodate 2,000-3,000 Soldiers, by April that number swelled to more than 23,000. Because there were no available barracks, the 802nd was housed in Warehouse 7, a facility designed as a storage shelter for prepositioned vehicles and combat equipment. The voluminous open space quickly filled with humans. The 802nd shared the warehouse with other Army Reserve and National Guard units on cots laid side by side, crammed together with little room to move about. As crowded as it was, it provided respite from the heat of day but only limited protection from the hot sand that routinely blasted through the closed bay doors. Men and women were not separated and lived among each other in close quarters. Surprisingly, there were few tension and temper incidents, but that was not to say everyone liked whom he or she found next to them. Rather, it is testimony to the level of tolerance most Soldiers were able to maintain during those difficult days. This closeness, however, was not without other problems and soon gave rise to the “Kuwaiti Crud,” a respiratory condition which swept swiftly among them. There were also some incidents of illness due to food poisoning. The only privacy achieved between the sexes was through the creative use of Army sleeping bags, which quickly doubled as dressing-room sacks, in spite of their tight, cocoon-like design. Latrine

and shower facilities were outside, across the street.<sup>51</sup> With war preparation already operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, there was little time to recuperate from the effects of fatigue and jet-lag; the 802nd began its mission planning right away. This lasted for three weeks. Lieutenant Williams was more than clear on how he felt about this situation.

“I was desperate to get [my Soldiers] out of the warehouse,” he lamented. “This was right when the war kicked off, so while dealing with that, we also had to move into barracks space that the 38th Ordnance Group found for us in Zone 1...I believe we would have been better off in tents. The 38th didn’t give us much of a choice: either move into the barracks or live in the warehouse indefinitely. The 38th screwed us on this because the staff who were (*sic*) already living in the barracks wanted to keep things for themselves. I ended up splitting my company among three bays, two for the males and one for females. The separate female bay was not an issue, but splitting my males up between two bays was a pain in the ass for us. It was impossible for Platoon Sergeants to keep tabs on all their Soldiers. All this because the 38th did not want to switch out of the bay they were in and share a bay with Soldiers from the Combat Support Hospital.”<sup>52</sup>

Adding to the stress of the poor living conditions were the daily enemy scud missile attack warnings. While no scuds ever hit the camp, the alarm system frequently detected missile activity, which sent all Soldiers scurrying into basement shelters while dressed in their bulky, hot and tedious protection suits and masks. After a few weeks, the threat of enemy missile attack was finally eliminated and the alerts ceased. Eventually, Soldiers were no longer required to carry their protective suits with them at all times. Ironically, Soldiers came to fear being trapped or killed from the collapse of the floors above their heads rather than from the missile attack itself, a fact borne of the unnerving reality that all casualties from previous missile attacks or bombings came from being

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<sup>51</sup>Autobiographical sketches, Mitchell, et al, subject: Warehouse 7, no date.

<sup>52</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Warehouse 7, 3 Aug 06.



trapped and crushed by falling debris from the very place Soldiers sought shelter.

## **Zones 1 and 2**

In the early months of 2003, Camp Arifjan was still under construction and under developed, a condition that would last for many months to come. Designed as a storage base for pre-positioned war materiel and equipment, it was divided into two zones. Zone 1 is residential, designed to house the permanent party Soldiers and families who would live there and operate the facility. Zone 2 was the industrial hub, home of warehouses, maintenance and storage facilities, and most of the life support activities. At the time of the 802d's arrival, the only dining facility for the troops was located in Zone 2. By April 2003 it provided meals for more than 20,000 US, British and Australian Soldiers. Serving four meals each day, its capacity peaked to 45,000 meals per day. It was rumored to be the largest dining facility in Army history. Later that year, a second dining facility opened in Zone 1. Although much smaller, it considerably eased the congestion and logistical problems associated with mass feeding out of the single facility in Zone 2. The 802nd provided cook supervisors for both dining facilities. Alternative dining choices were available as well in Zone 2: Burger King, Subway Sandwiches, Baskin Robbins Ice Cream, a Chinese fast food restaurant and more, all operated by third country national, or TCN, contracted workers. During security precautions, times when the TCNs were prohibited from coming on-post for several days at a time, MREs – Meals, Ready to Eat – were used when all food concessions, to include the dining facilities, were closed. Zone 1 contained the Troop Medical Clinic which moved out of its earlier location in Warehouse 8. Arifjan's Combat Support Hospital also relocated to Zone 1, just behind the 802nd's permanent barracks.

Moving into barracks in Zone 1 meant the 802nd had indoor plumbing and showers—no more standing in long lines to use the outdoor showers—but little else to recommend them. The open bays were designed to accommodate 80 people, but now were holding 120 each.

Bunk beds were so close together there was no room to move between them. Soldiers entered the beds from the ends.

During the month of March, the men and women of the 802nd wasted no time doing what they were trained to do. After retrieving their vehicles and equipment-- which, due to the long delay at Hunter Army Airfield, arrived ahead of the unit -- from the port of Ash Shuaiba, they began working with platoons from the active army's 60th and 63rd Ordnance Companies. Their immediate mission was to issue basic ammunition loads to units entering the theater which were then heading north. Within the first few weeks on the ground, the 802nd issued or assisted in the issue of ammunition to over 300 divisional, non-divisional, corps, and echelons above corps units. These included the 3rd and 4th Infantry Divisions, 1st Armored Division, 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, and the 2nd and 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiments. Some 802nd Soldiers were detailed to support air missions at Al Jaber Air Base, shipping ammunition to Coalition Forces in Jordan and Afghanistan. The 802nd also participated in the downloading of the prepositioned ammunition ship *Chippewa Belle* and completed inventories of ammunition containers in the theater storage area.<sup>53</sup>

## **Tallil Air Base, Iraq**

Days after the start of offensive operations in March, the 38th Ordnance Group tasked the 802nd commander to send a detachment to Logistic Storage Area Adder at Tallil Air Base, Iraq. Tallil was a tough, hardscrabble assignment for anyone. It was an Iraqi military installation consisting of several sub-camps that were overrun and captured in the early days of fighting. As coalition forces continued to push northward to Baghdad, Tallil became an important logistics staging area for essential war fighting materiel and equipment. 802nd Soldiers were needed to operate an ammunition supply point (ASP) and assist other ordnance units with the issue of captured enemy equipment and ammunition to Iraqi National Congress fighters. The National Congress fighters, known as FIF

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<sup>53</sup>*Unit History Report*, page 6.

-- Friendly Iraqi Fighters—were Iraqi expatriate military men numbering in the thousands, whose mission was to come in behind the coalition forces to help stabilize the population and transition the government after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Ten people from 1st Ammunition Platoon were hand picked for this mission. Only the most professional and emotionally strong Soldiers, both male and female, would man this outpost, away and completely separated from their home base at Arifjan. Sergeant First Class Taylor, the platoon sergeant, carefully reviewed his Soldiers to pick only those he felt would not panic if their convoy route came under attack. The selection standards were somewhat primitive, but valid: anyone who was prone to tears during stress, or was openly consumed by fear of capture, was not considered.

“At least one young woman was terrified of the possibility of being captured and raped. Naturally, Taylor did not pick her,” explained Staff Sergeant Kathy Mitchell, a married mother of three grown children--one of whom was also serving in Iraq. At 42, she was one of the oldest females in the unit. “Us older women never even thought about it and just went about doing our job.”<sup>54</sup> Eventually, most of 1st Platoon would rotate in and out of Tallil as the region stabilized and fighting diminished. But on the morning of 9 April 2003, the day the convoy with four 38th Ordnance Group Soldiers and ten from the 802nd departed for Iraq, fighting was still very much a grim reality, one that would be evident to them all by day’s end.

## **Convoy to Tallil**

Six vehicles, loaded with tents, a generator, water, food, and night vision goggles, made up the advance party convoy to Tallil: four from the 802nd, with the lead and trail vehicles from the 38th.<sup>55</sup> The senior officer of the

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<sup>54</sup>Telephone interview, Mitchell with Hatcher, subject: Operations at Tallil Air Base, 16 Oct 06.

<sup>55</sup>Telephone interview, Staff Sergeant Michelle Johnson with Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: Convoy to Tallil, 30 Oct 06; events verified separately by other eyewitness reports.

group was Major Odell Washington from the 38th, riding in the trail vehicle along with 39 year-old Sergeant Michelle Johnson from the 802nd, and one other Soldier. The lead vehicle contained the convoy leader, First Lieutenant Rowsey, also from the 38th. The route to Tallil would be along the main supply route, code named MSR Tampa, a modern paved road resembling an interstate highway. The eight hour trip would be in daylight all the way, easing somewhat the anxiety of the dangerous journey. And dangerous it was, evidenced by this excerpt from the 38th Ordnance Group's Convoy Handbook:

“The main threat in the area is Regime Death Squad [RDS] guerillas...They will carry weapons as small as an AK-47 up to 40mm mortars. Tactics will mainly be “drive-by” shootings or small suicide squads or one to two attackers. Car bombs are also a threat in this area. Guerillas may try to place obstacles in the road to slow convoys.”<sup>56</sup>

At Convoy Service Center Navistar, located at the Kuwait-Iraq border, the party made the mandatory stop before crossing into Iraq. Navistar was one of only two fueling points along the route. It was also the place where convoys would pick up an armed military escort. But there would be no escort this time, as all available security personnel moved north as the fighting progressed. By now it was 1830 hours, and a decision had to be made to stay the night there, or continue on. The convoy leader decided to press on with the hope of reaching Tallil later that night. Major Washington said nothing, opting instead to let the young lieutenant get real life experience, but stayed ready to take control if necessary. Onward and northward they traveled, ever deeper into Iraq. Even as darkness fell, they pushed onward, carefully watching the road ahead in the glow of their headlamps. Sometime around midnight, at a point somewhere south of Al Nasariyah, Lieutenant Rowsey realized he was not on the road he was supposed to be on. He came upon a bridge and could tell by its

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<sup>56</sup>*Convoy Handbook for Operation Iraqi Freedom CAMP ARIFJAN TO LSA ADDER*, 08 Apr 03; paragraph 1. b., Enemy Forces and *Unit History Report*.

haggard appearance and rubble-strewn surface, it had seen some action during the recent fighting. The bridge was narrow, just wide enough for one lane of traffic, but he continued on. About halfway across, he halted the convoy to take stock of their situation. That was when a group of US Marines patrolling in a Humvee<sup>57</sup> and in full combat gear approached from the front, out of the darkness and into the glowing circles of light. The Marines seemed happy at the sight of the vehicles and the Soldiers inside, but only for a very brief moment. The Marines' delight turned to looks of alarm when they realized these were not the men and materiel they were expecting to reinforce them and informed the wayward travelers they were headed directly into a firefight with the enemy!

The Marines took immediate action. Continuing ahead was certain destruction. If they didn't get the convoy turned around and off the bridge quickly, they all would be sitting ducks if the enemy got a bead on them. With headlamps blazing to give anyone in the area a clear target, that would be an easy and much-needed victory for the Iraqi forces. The convoy managed to turn around and follow its Marine escort off the bridge just as small arms fire erupted in the distance and illumination rounds were bursting in the skies above. After a short trip, the convoy pulled into a secure Marine outpost where the relieved Soldiers could spend the rest of the night, in their trucks, safe from combat. Major Washington, a religious man, fell to his knees and offered a prayer of thanks for all the lives that had just been saved from the jaws of doom.<sup>58</sup> He thanked the Marines, too. "I'm sure they were glad they were able to assist us," Sergeant Johnson proffered. "Even though we're from different branches of the military we're all one and working towards the same end result."<sup>59</sup> After spending some time together reviewing their route, Lieutenant Rowsey and Major Washington devised a new game plan. As daylight broke upon the Iraqi desert, the convoy set out once again for Tallil, armed with a new map given them by the Marines. They arrived that morning

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<sup>57</sup>High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle, also called "HUMMER" or "HUMVEE" in military vernacular.

<sup>58</sup>Autobiographical Sketch, Major Odell Washington, subject: Convoy to Tallil, no date.

<sup>59</sup>Email, Johnson to Hatcher, subject: Convoy to Tallil, 2 Nov 06.

without further mishap, after learning they were only about five miles from Tallil.<sup>60</sup>

The small but effective crew set about building their camp consisting of six tents. Compared to Camp Arifjan, Tallil was modern Stone Age. Aside from an MWR-- morale, welfare and recreation-- tent containing stores of water, and later, a DVD player and a large screen television, there was nothing even remotely resembling the infrastructure needed to support even the most basic amenities. Toilet facilities consisted at first, of a home-made outhouse of plywood, tin, and a scrounged seat. Later, an engineer unit constructed an Army standard 3-holer which was a vast improvement. Regardless, the latrines required routine maintenance in the form of waste burning, one of the most unpleasant jobs there could ever be, but one that everybody had to do. A chore normally given as punishment for some discipline infraction, at Tallil the delightful task was designated by a duty roster devised by Major Washington; no one was exempt from burning the honey buckets. Following a traditional recipe developed many decades past, this low-tech job skill consisted of pulling the 1/4 barrel waste containers from under the house and adding diesel fuel to the contents-- stirring it to make a good blend-- then igniting the flammable mixture. It took a long time to burn and several Soldiers were sickened by the smoke.

Early on, showering was difficult when they had to depend on the Quartermaster field shower. Because of water shortages and long waiting lines, the unit simply couldn't efficiently handle the demands made upon it. The 802nd Soldiers at Tallil solved that problem by using good old GI ingenuity and made their own shower: a barrel full of water, hand-pumped through a hose to a makeshift shower head (a Gatorade bottle punched with holes), draped over a makeshift plywood and canvas stall. The plywood was an unused rocket storage crate. Showering was a team effort; one person would operate the hand pump while the other bathed, lathered and rinsed. After drying and dressing behind the canvas screen, the team would switch places. It was primitive in the strictest sense, but

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<sup>60</sup>Autobiographical sketch, CW4 Earl C. Hokansen; subject: Convoy to Tallil, no date.

effective and refreshing. Laundry was washed by hand in plastic tubs filled with precious, life-sustaining water.<sup>61</sup>

Life support for the Tallil troops came by regular resupply convoys from 802d headquarters at Arifjan: mail, food, water, supplies, equipment and personnel came at intervals of several days. These convoys were wrought with danger of attack by insurgent and renegade Iraqi Army soldiers. But the convoys were also lessons in mercy, and mystery. “There were villages all along the convoy route,” Sergeant Mitchell remembered. “Starving men and children reached their hands out for food as we passed by. We gave them everything we had, but as soon as they saw I was a woman, they drew back their hands; they wouldn’t take anything from a woman. I just could not understand that.”<sup>62</sup> Sergeant Johnson had only pity for what she saw. “It made me so sad to see people carrying water jugs and filling them with dirty water from muddy ponds, filthy ponds. I couldn’t believe they would drink that terrible water or cook with it.”<sup>63</sup>

The mission at Tallil expanded and changed rapidly. 802nd Soldiers established an ammunition holding area [AHA] to receive ammunition from coalition forces in the Al Nasariyah region, receiving, inventorying, repackaging and storing small arms and munitions from units preparing to move south, and from those redeploying. They also provided courtesy storage in the AHA to units located in the Tallil base cluster. The 1st Platoon’s Stock Control section maintained the only functional SAAS-MOD [Standard Army Ammunition System Modernization, an automated ammunition management, reporting and accounting system] in the Iraqi zone of operation. In addition to small arms and munitions, the 802nd received and inspected Patriot, ATACMS (Army Tactical Mission

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<sup>61</sup>Autobiographical sketch, Mitchell, subject: Living conditions at Tallil, no date. “I got yelled at for using bottled water to wash my hair,” said Mitchell. “I told the guy, ‘you were giving this water away to Iraqis, so why are you concerned about how I’m using it?’”

<sup>62</sup>Telephone interview, Mitchell with Hatcherr, subject: Living Conditions at Tallil, 16 Oct 06.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

System), TOW (tube launched optically tracked) missiles<sup>64</sup> and reactive armor tiles. The platoon handled over 900,000 rounds of 50 different types. Soldiers of the 802nd also assisted US Special Forces, the 38th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance) and the 203rd Military Intelligence Battalion with the collection and destruction of captured enemy ammunition. Ironically, some of those munitions were US manufactured 155mm artillery rounds. This work included inspecting and transporting enemy munitions collected from an Iraqi ammunition supply point and abandoned camps around Tallil to a disposal site. At the site, the 802nd assisted explosive ordnance disposal personnel from the other ordnance companies with Class V retrograde, the process of preparing ammunition to be inspected, reconditioned, repackaged, reissued or destroyed. As part of the retrograde, the 802nd inspected and cleaned Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and ATACMS (Army Tactical Mission System) pods for shipment to the continental United States, Pacific Command, and European Command theaters.

The story of the operations at Tallil would not be complete without telling of the unsung hero of the 802nd, a hero that brought privilege, honor and respect to the men and women of the 802nd who struggled and toiled so hard at that wasteland outpost. If there could be only one vital lesson of survival in the desert for the 802nd, it might be this: a Caterpillar D7 bulldozer is a good thing to have. It's better still when other units lust after it. A D7 dozer is an amazing piece of technology, a tribute to man's ingenuity and his triumph over nature. Tracing its history back to the 1940s, the D7 has a long and honored combat service record with all the services.

"My dozer driver was busy in Tallil clearing and grading sites for other units to use for living and operational areas," recalled the 802nd commander. "We have a dozer to clear and grade field ASPs, but it is nice to have that kind of capability when other units need help. A company [such as the 802nd] definitely needs something to barter with in the field to help make life easier. We were a popular unit at Tallil because we had

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<sup>64</sup> Email, Captain Tom Williams to Dr. Kathryn Roe Coker, subject: TOW, 8 Feb 07. This is an anti-tank missile. It can be shoulder launched by infantrymen or fired from vehicles like the Bradley.



the dozer and the rough terrain forklifts. We did lots of favors.”<sup>65</sup> Those favors paid off handsomely. Instead of the prepackaged, freeze-dried MRE rations, it wasn’t long before the 802nd Soldiers were eating fresh cooked meals, compliments of the 2220th Transportation Company, a National Guard unit from Flagstaff, Arizona, which happened to have a trailer-mounted field kitchen. A little dozer and forklift work guaranteed there was always an open invitation for the 802nd to sit at their tables for real, hot food. Soon, a 48-inch screen television adorned the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) tent, a gift from a grateful Patriot missile battery that needed forklifts to load missiles onto trucks. Indeed, the D7 and forklifts brought many creature comforts that would not otherwise be quick in coming to that hostile environment. And it brought them in the finest tradition of military service: old-fashioned horse-trading on the Soldier’s market.

## **Retrograde Operations at Arifjan**

Meanwhile, back at Camp Arifjan, mission work was progressing at breakneck speed for the 2nd Ammo Support and Headquarters Platoons, and it was not easy by any means. Duty in Kuwait carried with it a new set of problems never before faced by these Georgia Soldiers, a new set of challenges and solutions they could never have suspected back in Gainesville. For one, the dreaded barracks became the hated barracks during the summer. Then-Lieutenant Williams explained:

Zone 1, the zone meant for living space was far from complete when we arrived. I believe we moved in a couple years ahead of when the Army originally planned to occupy those barracks. Because of this there were lots of problems with the mechanical systems. We did have air conditioning, but our summer in the barracks was brutal. The system rarely worked well and when it did, it could not keep up against the heat. We did have office

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<sup>65</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: D7 Dozer, 30 Oct 06.

equipment, computers and printers as part of our MTOE [modified table of organization and equipment],<sup>66</sup> but they were nearly worthless in the heat and sand. We commandeered a supply closet in the barracks to use as an orderly room. It was large enough for a desk, a table and a few chairs. It wasn't much, but we were finally able to begin running the admin part of the company." Eventually, things got better. "Sometime in the late fall," Williams continued, "we were able to get office space in the 3rd Army/CENTCOM [Central Command] headquarters building. By that time, we'd done enough favors for people on post that we were able to snag some decent office space. We even got internet access in that office."<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, internet access was not a luxury, but a necessity; never was it truer than for the 802d carpenter team responsible for constructing bracing and blocking. Because of the delicate and precise nature of shipping and handling munitions, a system of building high-quality and structurally sound bracing to keep munitions stable during transport and storage was required. Mediocre strength and quality of blocking and bracing is never an option and for that reason, strict quality control and specification drawings for each type of munitions is an absolute necessity. "We could be in trouble if we could not find any blocking and bracing drawings," said Lieutenant Williams. "Not having consistent internet access made it difficult sometimes to find the correct drawings. Sometimes the Quality Assurance staff would have drawings, sometimes they wouldn't. [The carpenters] would have to improvise and if the inspector did not like the configuration, the [team] would have to reload the container."<sup>68</sup> The 321st Ordnance Battalion constructed an internet café in their barracks which the 802nd Soldiers could use at any time. Late in the deployment, internet

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<sup>66</sup>Modified Table of Organization and Equipment, the blueprint by which units are authorized personnel, vehicles and equipment.

<sup>67</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Retrograde Operations at Camp Arifjan, 25 Jul 06.

<sup>68</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Internet Access at Camp Arifjan, 18 Oct 06.

access was installed at the operations offices located in the ASP, where 802nd could also gain access.

The Headquarters Platoon Maintenance Section was charged with operating a consolidated Motor Pool, integrating mechanics and equipment from six ammunition platoons from different units also working the theater storage area and the Arifjan ammunition supply point. This support consisted of maintaining and servicing 135 pieces of rolling stock and additional vehicles and equipment drawn from pre-positioned war stocks. Despite being organized around two medium lift platoons, the 802nd provided training to seventeen soldiers from the 802nd, 163rd and 261st Ordnance Companies on the operation of the KALMAR Rough Terrain Container Handler (RTCH), a piece of equipment normally organic to heavy lift platoons. The eight-hour block of instruction provided these soldiers with their learner permits and allowed them to begin thirty-two hours of on-the-job training to receive their operator's license. The RTCH was the critical piece of equipment that drove the success of the Class V mission at Camp Arifjan.

The Supply Section not only supported the 802nd's own headquarters and two ammunition platoons, it also satisfied the logistical needs of four ammunition platoons detached from their parent companies, the Arifjan Ammunition Supply Point Operations Office and the Department of the Army QASAS (quality assurance specialists, ammunition surveillance) teams that oversaw the theater Class V retrograde. The Headquarters Platoon Fire-Rescue Section supported the garrison command by providing fire and emergency support to Soldiers and property in Zone 1, the airfield and outlying camps. The Fire-Rescue Section also worked at the Kuwait Naval Base, washing contaminants off containers prior to loading aboard ammunition ships. The 802nd's 2nd Platoon, also at the Kuwait Naval Base, loaded over 5,400 ammunition containers onto the cargo ships *Chippewa Belle*, *MV Carter*, *USNS Shugart*, *MV Titus* and *MV Bobo*. In addition to packaging rockets and munitions and loading onto specialized pallets called "crops" for shipment, 2nd Platoon Soldiers assisted with the creation of the Class V Theater Stockage Objective by inventorying, storing and warehousing ammunition in the Arifjan ASP. In

all, just in the opening months of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 802nd Ordnance Company assisted in the receipt, distribution, inventory, inspection and shipment of over 75,000 tons of ammunition valued at almost five *billion* dollars.<sup>69</sup> When asked if these numbers were determined by counting each round of ammunition or by weighing it in lots, Captain Williams replied, “We absolutely counted individual rounds, and how many rounds we processed each day was reported to the Commanding General, by [type] and [number of] rounds.”<sup>70</sup> In May, 2003, the 38th Ordnance Group was nearing the end of its tour and began preparing for redeployment by transferring its attached units to other commands. On 1 June, after three full months with the 38th, the 802nd was transferred to the operational control of the 321st Ordnance Battalion. Two days later, 1st Platoon completed its mission in Tallil and came back to the fold at Arifjan.

Throughout the summer of 2003, the company mission continued to focus on munitions retrograde and the loading and shipment of MLRS (Multiple Launch Rocket System), ATACMS (Army Tactical Mission System) and Patriot missiles. As the month of August approached, the men and women of the 802nd knew they would not be bothered by the intense heat and sand much longer. Knowing the orders that sent them to Kuwait did not allow their deployment to exceed 179 days, the date of their scheduled departure was drawing near, and everyone was anxious about going home to family and loved ones. Everything progressed well: vehicles were washed and readied and equipment repacking had begun in earnest; Soldiers had their baggage and personal effects already inspected by military police customs agents. All that was left was for them to be notified of a departure date and take the unit’s vehicles and equipment to port for shipment home. Everyone was giddy with anticipation of receiving movement orders. But by the end of the month, no movement orders had yet arrived. The 38th Ordnance Group and the 60th Ordnance Company both redeployed early; the fighting was over; there were plenty of other units to take over the mission from the 802nd. “Everyone

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<sup>69</sup>*Unit History Report*, page 7.

<sup>70</sup>Email, Williams to Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: Processing Rounds of Ammunition, 18 Oct 06.

expected to redeploy,” Captain Williams recalled, “and our families expected us to redeploy.”<sup>71</sup> Still, the days went by with no news and many were reminded of the long wait at Hunter Army Airfield.

By this time, word was circulating that the Army’s deployment policy had changed and all units would be extended to twelve months BOG (“boots on ground”) - or time in theater. Everyone in the 802nd hoped that the new policy did not apply to them, and that hope was kept alive by repeated assurances from battalion headquarters.

“We still had a glimmer of hope that [the command would] consider us excess and unneeded and send us home. That was certainly pretty naïve,” said Williams. “If anybody was under any illusion about redeployment, it was because units were being sent home every day.” On 12 September, the truth was finally revealed: the deployment extension to 12 months was a reality.<sup>72</sup>

The news was devastating, and in an instant, morale dropped like a lead weight. Williams described that moment. “We had our usual formation and I called everyone in a circle around me, and I announced that we were staying in theater for twelve months. I gave them all the information I had and tried to answer their questions as best I could, letting the Soldiers who wanted to vent, do so. They were in shock and most felt betrayed by the Army. After being told for two months we would be going home soon, it was tough news to accept. After formation, most Soldiers drifted off to find a way to contact home to let [family and friends] know about the news. For most of us, the shock lasted several days.” There was genuine concern that this development may be too great a burden for some, especially for those who were newly married, or had situations at home that required their presence. The company leadership was briefed on the symptoms of depression and how to identify Soldiers at risk of suicide. That Lieutenant Williams had the foresight to address the issue of depression and the possibility of suicide is indicative of the tremendous impact the extension had upon his Soldiers. “Most of us, after the initial shock, took the news in stride, especially the older Soldiers who had prior

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<sup>71</sup>Email, Williams to Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: Expected Redeployment, 6 Nov 06.

<sup>72</sup>Autobiographical sketch, Sergeant First Class John L. Taylor, subject: Deployment extension, no date.

active duty service and weren't under any illusions about how the Army works. At least, they did a better job of hiding their discontent. The younger Soldiers had the most difficulty. It certainly placed a lot of stress on the families and the relationships between spouses.”<sup>73</sup> But as one door closed, another opened and morale improved quickly when Soldiers were granted R&R – rest and relaxation – leave.

“The R&R leave policy alleviated some of our stress. I laid out a leave schedule and asked the Soldiers if there was a specific event they wanted to attend at home and tried my best to schedule them for that. Surprisingly, we were not overwhelmed with requests to be home at Thanksgiving or Christmas. The senior leadership was good about not taking leave to make sure there were enough slots for the junior enlisted to get home.”<sup>74</sup>

By fall, the company mission had changed as the conditions of the war changed. Focus shifted to ammunition maintenance to reduce the shortage of training and combat operation items. Now, both ammo platoons were working at Arifjan, and the production numbers quickly became impressively high. The 802nd provided the theater with critical ammunition stocks (5.56 mm, 7.62 mm, .50 caliber and mortar rounds), which saved millions of dollars in new ammunition production and transportation costs to theater. The 802nd reconditioned over 15 million rounds of ammunition from over 50 different munitions types that were put directly back into the hands of front line Soldiers. As Operation Iraqi Freedom II units began to arrive in theater, the 802nd assisted in pulling and issuing combat basic loads for the 2nd Infantry Division's Stryker Brigade; a brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division; 1st Infantry Division; 25th Infantry Division; 1st Cavalry Division; and various non-divisional units.

In addition to responsibilities in the ammunition supply point and theater storage area, the 802nd also provided support for the security of the Camp Arifjan base cluster. 802nd Soldiers provided security at the

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<sup>73</sup> Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Deployment Extension, 6 Nov 06.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

ASP, night roving patrols in the TSA, checkpoint security around Camp Arifjan and supervised TCNs when they came on base to deliver supplies.

As good as things were in Arifjan compared to other places throughout the theater, some things, such as high outdoor temperatures, simply could not be avoided. It had been a long, hot summer and the danger of casualties from heat exposure was just as real and far more probable at this stage of the war than casualties from combat. Dry desert heat can, at first, feel soothing and desirable but very quickly the lack of humidity takes its toll on the body through dehydration, heat stroke and death. Nearly all of the 802nd's mission work was performed outdoors, which meant that frequent water breaks and shaded rest areas were essential for the prevention of heat injuries. The heat was relentless, with temperatures frequently reaching 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Even at night, temperatures were routinely more than 100 degrees. Lieutenant Williams was proud of the fact that his Soldiers were in good hands. "Overall, we did a good job of keeping the Soldiers hydrated," he said. "By early summer, we were able to be consistently supplied with ice and water. We picked up bags of ice each morning and delivered ice and water to each worksite. We also staged coolers, even large field kitchen coolers, at each worksite so Soldiers would have cold water throughout the day and night. Each vehicle had a small cooler as well."<sup>75</sup>

The 802nd was fortunate that it suffered no heat injuries. But there were other injuries or conditions that took the place of heat casualties. Within the first couple months in Kuwait, Specialist Michael Wilson was sent to the US for medical treatment of an old shoulder injury that was aggravated in Kuwait. Specialist Dan Brown suffered a broken collar bone and was sent home for treatment. After recovery, he had to fight the Army bureaucracy to rejoin his unit. In June, 2003, Specialist Anthony Herlong suffered broken bones when a load of ammunition fell from a pallet onto his foot. He was sent back to the United States for treatment. Specialist Getina McCoy was medically evacuated and spent nearly two years in treatment at Fort Gordon for an unspecified internal condition. In September, just after the tour extension policy was implemented, a female

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<sup>75</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Heat conditions, 25 Jul 06.

Soldier announced to the commander that she was pregnant; in accordance with Army regulations, she was sent home immediately. At about that same time, another female Soldier went home on R&R and did not return, in spite of demands by the 321st Ordnance Battalion commander to the Fort Stewart Mobilization Team to send her back to Kuwait.<sup>76</sup>

As summer turned to fall, temperatures began to drop, and by December, the first rain in more than eight months fell on Arifjan. It was an event in which to rejoice, and several Soldiers relished a good soaking.

Evil, it is said by some, is nothing more than too much of a good thing. That was certainly true at Arifjan, at least for a little while as the rain came hard and fast with no where to go. There was no drainage in the desert and the rain came down faster than it could be absorbed. The result was flooding. The dichotomy of this strange land was never more apparent than in the deluge that quickly inundated the stacks of ammunition containers, and motor pool. As quickly as it came, the rain stopped and eventually the water was absorbed by the parched, thirsty earth. The rainfall was far from uniform, and while people at Arifjan fretted to dispose of the abundance of water, others were dying of thirst just over the horizon.

By December, the active fighting in Iraq was long over. Strict wartime policies were relaxed, and soon, Soldiers wearing civilian clothing began to appear in greater numbers as Camp Arifjan took on the air of a stateside garrison. The holidays were approaching, and there was some concern of celebrating Christmas in the Islamic nation of Kuwait. Nonetheless, the tradition of exchanging gifts and gathering for fellowship took place in the makeshift motor pool. A Christmas dinner, resembling a company picnic more than a holiday feast, was held there too. While it was not much of a substitute for those whose thoughts and hearts turned to home, family and loved ones, the knowledge that their time to redeploy would soon be at hand provided some solace.

In-country recreation improved rapidly as construction at Camp Arifjan continued and the end of the 802nd's mission drew nearer. The MWR

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<sup>76</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Injuries and other personnel conditions, 12 Oct 06.



office arranged for guided tours of the local areas, highlighting many Biblical sites. Continuing a long and honored tradition, the USO sponsored visits and entertainment by celebrities who came to Kuwait in support of the troops. Action film stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger (later governor of the state of California); R. Lee Ermy (*Full Metal Jacket*; The History Channel's *Mail Call*); Bruce Willis (*Die hard*; *Last Man Standing*; *The Sixth Sense*); and comedian Robin Williams (*The Fisher King*; *One Hour Photo*; TV's *Mork and Mindy*) to name but a few, graciously devoted their time and talent to our servicemen. Specialist Mark Glass spoke with R. Lee Ermy, whose camera crew was on hand to film the event for use in an episode for his television show, *Mail Call*. Glass remembers all the celebrities who came to Arifjan and Tallil as, "true gentlemen and great supporters of Soldiers; they really boosted our morale."<sup>77</sup>

There were at least two Soldiers under Lieutenant Williams' command whose morale needed boosting in January, 2004. The 802nd was very close to finishing its mission and nearly ready to begin processing for redeployment. The first Soldier, a specialist, was reduced in rank to private first class for "mouthing off to his noncommissioned officers [NCOs]." The second Soldier was a sergeant with an interesting reputation who, for no discernable reason, decided to run over some portable latrines with his Humvee.

"It was probably boredom," said Williams. "We were well past the extension and getting ready to be released from the mission. We had to send two, 2-man teams to the TSA [theater storage area] each night to perform roving security. The teams would drive around and keep watch on the security berms and back up the guard towers. I am sure it was mind-numbingly boring. The [sergeant] that was driving was one of our problem Soldiers. On one day he could be the model E-5, but the next he could be a complete basket case. Sergeant First Class Taylor, his platoon sergeant, was fed up and was giving him details like this guard duty.

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<sup>77</sup>Telephone interview, Specialist Mark Glass with Mr. Dennis Hatcher, subject: In country recreation, 7 Nov 06.

“I don’t think I ever received a good reason why he decided to run over not just one, but *two* Porta-Potties. I also don’t know why he thought nobody would notice. One of the [latrines] was at the guard tower, which had guards in it who witnessed the whole thing. The [latrines] were completely destroyed. [He] probably ran over them several times.” The bored sergeant was reduced to specialist and was required to pay the contractor for two new Porta-Potties. The Humvee suffered unspecified damages, enough to deadline the vehicle, but fortunately for the mechanics that had to repair it, the Porta-Potties appeared to have been brand new and unused.

For disciplinary problems like this and others, there was the Article 15. Allowed under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (hence the name, under which the process is governed), it is a tool the commander has at his disposal to administer punishment to soldiers for non-criminal and minor disciplinary offenses. Usually, the commander is authorized to reduce a Soldier in rank, set fines and order performance of extra duty. In a war zone, sometimes these punishments are moot and symbolic rather than punitive. Because Soldiers were already working twelve hours or more per day, seven days per week, extra duty was a joke to most of them and was not worth the administrative effort it took to supervise and enforce the punishment.<sup>78</sup>

Men were not the only ones who got into trouble. At least one fist fight was known to have occurred among the female Soldiers. Most of the trouble among the women disappeared when the pregnant Soldier redeployed and another did not return from R& R (Rest and Recreation). “Combined with their leaving and everyone calming down and getting used to deployed life, [it] made the last few months easy.”<sup>79</sup>

The last few months may have been easy in some respects, but in most respects, the fast-paced wartime operations of the early months slowed into a dull, monotonous routine. Soldiers began referring to duty at Arifjan as “Groundhog Day,”<sup>80</sup> the Bill Murray movie whose character awakens

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<sup>78</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Disciplinary concerns, 25 Jul 06.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Autobiographical sketch, Taylor, subject: Deployment extension, no date.

to relive the same day with the same events, over and over, with little variance. Thankfully, that did not last long for as the New Year progressed toward the middle of January, salvation for these tired, worn and homesick Soldiers at last appeared on the horizon.

## **Mission Complete**

The 450th Ordnance Company from Aiken, South Carolina, the very same unit that supplied twenty-three Soldiers to fill shortages in the 802nd back in Gainesville a year earlier, arrived in Kuwait to take over the mission. It was now at Camp Arifjan to relieve its sister unit, allowing the 802d to return home at last. Ironically, the 450th came with a handful of 802nd Soldiers assigned to fill shortages. Most of those Soldiers were assigned to the 802nd after it had departed the United States then promptly reassigned to the 450th to fill vacancies created by transfers to the 802nd in December 2002.

If the excitement and urgency of getting ready to deploy in Gainesville a year before had been a blur, it was but a snail's race compared to the speed and motivation that gripped the 802nd now. The last half of January was a whirlwind of activity as the two units prepared for the mission handoff. As is standard practice throughout the Army, a series of "right seat" orientation rides took place, where the incoming and outgoing leaders drive or fly in and around the local area of operations to become familiar with terrain and location of principal mission sites. One advantage for the 802nd was they would not have to pack and ship their vehicles and equipment as they had the year before. Since the two units were organized around identical MTOEs, the 450th kept its own equipment in the United States and took control and full responsibility for the 802nd's equipment instead. At the time the transfer to the 450th was completed, the 802nd had a 95 percent fully mission capable rating for its vehicles and equipment, an enviable achievement in peacetime and even more remarkable during wartime.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Transfer to the 450th Ordnance Company, 8 Nov 06. "Because the 450th was mobilizing with an identical MTOE [modified table of organization and equipment] as ours, the decision was made (at what level I don't know)

The biggest hurdle to overcome during this changeover was the command inventory. These are always stressful under the best of conditions. Performed under the watchful eye of the 321st Ordnance Battalion, this inventory was especially trying. The 802nd's supply sergeant was relatively new and had never before conducted such an inventory. Personality clashes and differences of opinion were inevitable, but eventually the inventory was successfully completed. At long last, on 31 January 2004, the 802nd was officially relieved of its mission and free to leave the theater, free to begin the long and joyous journey home.

For the 802nd, the start of February brought redeployment briefings, medical reviews and clearing post at Arifjan and Camp Doha. Several seaborne shipping containers for personal baggage and equipment not being left behind for the 450th's use, were packed, inspected and cleared for customs before being loaded aboard ship. By this time, the unit was waiting its turn to be called forward to Camp Wolf and a flight home. The call came on 10 February when the unit was ordered to report to Camp Wolf on the evening of 13 February. There was more out-processing to do at Camp Wolf but that didn't take long.

That night, just as at Hunter Airfield the year before, the unit was in quarantine as they waited to board, ironically an Omni Air International DC-10, just as they had done a year earlier in Georgia. At 0220 hours on the morning of 14 February 2004, the Freedom Bird with ninety-eight men and women of the 802nd and others aboard from the 143rd Transportation Command lifted off the runway at Kuwait International Airport. The desert dust had not yet fallen from the plane's spinning wheels before a cheer rose from the throats of the tired but happy Soldiers. Some did not cheer; they were lost in thought, remembering all that transpired since coming to this hostile land. Many wondered if the camaraderie forged by adversity throughout the preceding year would last after they got back home to Gainesville. Still others, like Specialist Jonathan Jones, were

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to make our equipment Stay Behind Equipment. The 450th left all their vehicles and equipment in the states and fell in on ours in Theater. When the 450th redeployed, all of our original vehicles and equipment were returned to Fort Stewart for inventory and rebuild."

thinking of wives or husbands, family and friends. Jones had married just before deployment and he looked forward to seeing his new wife, whom he now imagined was anxiously waiting for him in Gainesville, as anxiously as he was to see her. He had done a good job in Kuwait and had been promoted; something for which his wife could be proud, something he could tell his future children. For many, the strain of being apart from loved ones was unbearable, yet somehow, they had borne that burden. The aircraft turned northward and to the West. In just a few more hours, everyone aboard the streaking sky machine would be whole once more.

It was early morning when the giant bird touched down at Frankfurt Germany's Rhein-Main Airport, to refuel before heading westward over the Atlantic Ocean. The troopers were allowed to deplane into the military air terminal, with the admonition from the senior military officer, a colonel from the 143rd, that no one would consume alcohol.<sup>82</sup> After about two hours, the anxious Soldiers reboarded the plane around 0830 hours and took their seats for the final leg of their long flight. In about nine hours, they would be reunited with the place from which they left a year ago: Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia.

## **Coming Home**

The westward flight was entirely during the hours of daylight as the big jet tried to keep ahead of the sun. Few of the Soldiers were able to catch some sleep; despite the exhausting preparations of the last few days, most were still wide awake with anxiety, too excited to sleep. Jet lag did not affect them much, since flying in the same direction as the earth's rotation did not upset their natural, circadian rhythm as it did when flying eastward. The cabin became subdued and quiet. Soon, the only sound was the muffled rush of the jet's engines. If anyone looked out the portholes, only the occasional far off speck of reflection could be seen; a ship upon the endless expanse of dark blue ocean below. Somewhere beyond that emptiness was a whole new world from that which they left.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

By the time they approached United States airspace southwestward from Nova Scotia and southward through New England, it was daylight, dawn having overtaken them somewhere over the north Atlantic. Everyone was stirring, awakened by the natural sense possessed by travelers that they were almost home. Very few had actually slept, but at least they rested. Somewhere over the Carolinas, the pilot notified his passengers they were approaching Savannah and preparation for landing was at hand. Everyone was alert now; the cabin was filled with excited chatter despite the fatigue of the past twenty-four hours. In the morning grayness, through the rain streaked windows, nothing was visible through the cloud cover that engulfed them. The plane did not make an approach to Savannah; instead it continued on a path that would take them a short distance around the city toward Hunter Army Airfield. The descent was obvious now, and the vibrating rumble of the lowering wheels was felt in the cabin floorboards. The engine sounds changed frequently, slowing at first, then speeding up again as the pilot adjusted the power needed to keep them in the air while slowing for landing. A grayness brighter than the surrounding grayness marked the level of the late morning sun as the plane broke through the clouds. The pilot turned downwind and aligned his aircraft with the runway. Every set of eyes were staring out the portholes, searching for something familiar, something recognizable. They could see cars. At first the buildings in the distance passed by in slow motion, but now, as the plane descended closer to the earth it seemed to speed up; the buildings passed more quickly now, almost a blur. Hearts were pounding with anticipation. The chatter was constant, just barely subdued, waiting for the climax that would, in just seconds from now, overtake them all; waiting for the gentle bump and shake as the plane's wheels grabbed the runway, signaling their safe return to their native soil. What a contrast from where they had come. Here it was rainy and green in spite of the winter; so different from the dry and dusty sand that stretched as far as the eye could see and well beyond; so different from the blistering heat and sweltering nights of Arifjan.

The runway was visible now, passing below at 200 miles per hour just feet above the surface. It seemed to be taking forever to touch down, and

then, it happened. The engines suddenly stopped their shrieking, a sound replaced by a whisper so gentle as to be nearly silent. The huge DC-10 seemed to float just inches from the black top, suspended on the backs of invisible angels who then gently set the behemoth upon the earth. There was a short jolt; then a settling of the nose; and then the heavy realization that the massive machine was once more under the command of gravity. The engines screamed to life again, only now the pilot reversed their thrust to slow the plane quickly. Simultaneously, a roaring cheer erupted from the throats of every man and woman inside the cabin, accompanied by applause and shouts of joy and laughter. After a few moments, the cheers subsided and were replaced by excited chatter and the rustling sounds of bags pulled from under seats as they prepared their meager belongings. The plane taxied to the too familiar terminal, and in that space of time, everyone in the 802nd reflected on the irony that today was a repeat of a year ago: just as they had departed, so had they arrived, in a rain storm, cold and wet. It was 1130 hours on Saturday, February 14, 2004--Valentine's Day.

The 802nd knew what to do. They debarked along with the 143rd via the mobile stairway attached to the back of a pick-up truck and set against the aircraft door. They stayed around the plane's cargo hold to unload their baggage and weapons, and once they had their baggage, trudged their way to the terminal where they boarded buses to Fort Stewart. At Fort Stewart, they were taken directly to the post gymnasium where family and friends had gathered to welcome them. After a short ceremony lasting approximately two minutes, the Soldiers were released into the waiting arms of wives and husbands, girlfriends and boyfriends, sons and daughters.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Email, Williams to Hatcher, subject: Welcome home, 5 Dec 06. "After [the elaborate departure ceremony from Gainesville] I was very leery of the welcome home ceremony. The ceremony at Fort Stewart went very well. Soldiers from the 143rd TRANSCOM and the 802nd were marched into the gymnasium for a mass formation. There was a Colonel or General Officer that led the ceremony and all he did was acknowledge the families and said, "Welcome home," and released the Soldiers to their families. We were all so completely worn out and tired of the deployment. Everyone just wanted to get home with the least amount of trouble."

The reunion was short as well, for the following day, Sunday, began the first of five days filled with medical screenings and briefing on subjects ranging from veteran's rights and entitlements, relationship rebuilding, to suicide prevention, to name but a few. "[There was] no real time with families," Captain Williams recalled. "We were all zombies that Sunday morning."<sup>84</sup> The 802nd was housed at the same National Guard camp as before, but this time they were barracked at the farthest corner of the camp, the farthest distance from the post exchange and hospital. Unlike their last stay at the camp, this time it was nearly deserted by comparison. It was a challenge for Williams and the first sergeant to maintain some semblance of order. Many Soldiers were enjoying massive amounts of beer, something they had not tasted for a long time. The attitude of many was that nothing could faze them now. But there was a sword Williams was able to hold above his Soldiers' heads that seemed to provide a modicum of discipline, and that was the sobering fact they could be held at Fort Stewart to make up any missed briefings.

"Everyone was scared to death about staying at Fort Stewart any longer than necessary," remembered the commander. "I never had any problems with missed formations or missing any briefings."<sup>85</sup> Some family members and spouses stayed the entire time with their Soldier at Stewart, while some returned to Gainesville ahead of them to prepare a proper homecoming for that Friday when they would be released to return to home station in Gainesville.

Friday came at last, and on that morning, everyone in the 802nd was released to return to their home station at Gainesville. Three chartered buses were patiently waiting for them while the Soldiers, again, loaded their bags for the final trip. But there were barracks to sign over to the demobilization team and clearing Fort Stewart. Captain Williams didn't pay much mind to the Hall County sheriff's deputies who showed up and said they were there to escort the buses back to Gainesville. "I didn't give them much thought," Captain Williams wrote, "except that I thought it was unnecessary. I was more focused on getting everyone out of the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



barracks. If the deputies wanted to escort us back, I certainly wasn't going to stop them. It should have been a clue that something big was planned.”<sup>86</sup>

Whatever was planned, Captain Williams and his company had no idea what it was, they were just happy to aboard those buses and headed for home at last. By the time they neared Atlanta, their suspicions began to rise.

“The ride was uneventful until we got to the Interstate 75/675 split in Clayton County. There we picked up some motorcycle police escorts. A little farther up the perimeter we picked up additional Georgia State Patrol escorts. Rolling up the perimeter and onto Interstate 85, we probably had four escort cars in front and another four behind us. At this point most of us were probably a little surprised and curious about why we needed all that to get us to Gainesville.”<sup>87</sup> Certainly by now there were enough clues that something big was in the making for these hometown heroes. If there was any doubt in anyone's mind, it was erased when they saw people standing on overpasses and waving flags and holding banners welcoming their Citizen Soldiers back from war. “I remember feeling a little embarrassed that people were taking off work just to welcome us home.”

“We exited at exit 22 and that was when it really got crazy. There were people all along the roads with signs and flags welcoming us home. I was shocked.

“From there, the crowds just grew as we got closer to downtown. By the time we got to downtown, the sidewalks on both sides were full of people, all of them waving and cheering. There must have been thousands of people out to welcome us home. At the Mountain Center, the Hall County Fire Department had two ladder trucks out with their ladders extended and a huge American flag hanging down for us to drive under.”<sup>88</sup> Specialist Jonathan Jones looked out the bus window at all the people and thought about his wife, and how he would soon see her. Maybe she'll be

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

waving a flag too; maybe she'll be at the Mountain Center and he'll see her in the huge crowd.

The buses pulled up to the Mountain Center where the sheriff's color guard greeted them, as did many families. The 802nd got off, smiling and somewhat shocked by the magnitude of their homecoming and by how many of Gainesville's turned out to welcome their own. The Soldiers filed into the building to a standing ovation. "The Welcome Home ceremony was perfect. It was not too long...Brigadier General Carrie Nero, [Commanding General] of 3rd Medical Command was there and gave a short speech. The mayor of Gainesville spoke as did the president of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter. It really was fantastic what the people of Gainesville did to welcome us home. It was a wonderful way to cap off a very tough deployment. I think the ceremony may have changed some of the Soldiers' attitudes about what they went through."<sup>89</sup> The citizens of Gainesville were proud of their men and women in uniform and let the world know it.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

## **Lessons Learned**

Captain Williams prepared an after action report in which he discussed a number of issues and lessons learned. Among them was the time spent at the mobilization station. As noted previously, the unit spent some two months at the mobilization station after being validated to deploy in three weeks. Training was limited due to the inability to use the unit's equipment. Deployment was delayed. All this led to morale problems. He recommended better coordination be made to plan a unit's activation, training at the mobilization station and the deployment date.

Another issue concerned the twelve month boots on the ground policy. With the delay at the mobilization station it was certain that the unit would exceed the twelve months. The delay in notification of the extension proved a hardship for the Soldiers and their families as plans were uncertain. "“It made it very difficult,” wrote Williams, “for dependants to get a military installation to renew their ID cards and plan for any lapse in medical coverage. Several of our soldiers had concerns about how their civilian employers would treat them if they could not provide orders showing that they were still on active duty.” Williams hoped “this was a one time problem corrected after the OIF 1 rotation and the implementation of 18-month mobilization orders for reserve units.”

Promotion policies needed attention. Once mobilized the unit was informed that “there would be no promotions to the NCO ranks” and that there would be no NCO promotions boards in theater for Army Reserve Soldiers. “For this and other reasons,” Williams commented, “we were not permitted to take our 201 files with us.” Once in theater the command sergeant major of the 38th Ordnance Group decided to hold a promotion board. Without the 201 files the Soldiers were unable to assemble complete promotion packets and the high operational tempo left little time to “prepare for a board.” The operational tempo did subside and Soldiers had access to the internet and AKO [Army Knowledge Online]. But “they remained handicapped in producing the documents required by later promotion boards.” Williams recommended that Soldiers “be allowed to

take their 201 files into theater with them to assist with all manner of personnel and administrative issues that arise during a unit's one-year deployment." He hoped that "promotion policies . . . [had] been amended to deal more equitably with deployed soldiers."

Using contractors to fill the roles of Soldiers was an issue. At first the Soldiers saw the arrival of the contractors as a means to redeploy. The contractors did not diminish the unit's "workload" in the theater storage area and in Arifjan's ammunition supply point. This workload prevented the unit from being "pulled into Iraq to fulfill force protection missions." In most cases when contractors assumed unit missions the unit was "sent north for base defense and convoy support." "While every soldier," Williams opined, "is a rifleman and should be able to handle these missions and the use of contractors frees up soldiers to fill these roles, the use of contractors takes soldiers out of their MOS's [military occupational specialties]. This degrades their MOS technical skills and can cause a negative effect on morale and retention. Most young soldiers will think twice about reenlisting in a maintenance, ammunition or quartermaster MOS when they know that they will likely not work in their MOS again if deployed." Williams hoped the Department of the Army and the US Army Reserve Command were addressing this issue "as it will become tougher to retain younger soldiers beyond their initial enlistment if all they have to look forward to is gun truck duty."

Another issue concerned the modular ammunition platoon configuration and supply personnel. The 802nd is a modular ammunition company. According to the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), the supply sergeant and supply clerk are "located in the company's headquarters platoon." While the 802nd was at Arifjan there were "parts of five ammunition companies stationed there." The "only unit deployed as a full company" was the 802nd. The unit had the job of "providing supply support to other platoons," but the platoons did not have "trained supply personnel." As a result, units "had difficulty negotiate[ing] the supply network located at the theater support hub...an environment that is not friendly to platoon and company level units and operations." Williams recommended that platoons be staffed with a

supply clerk “probably” at the E-5 level. “This,” he wrote, “allows NCO support for the Supply Sergeant at the company level and gives the Platoon Leader/Platoon Sergeant a soldier with some experience and rank to handle supply issues while deployed.”

Supply support for the theater class V mission was challenging. The Soldier, an E-6, tasked with this mission was inexperienced having never been a company supply sergeant. Operational funds had to be redirected for this mission. Williams advised that the company supply sergeant was at too low a level to support the theater ammunition mission and that it should be “run from a higher level.” The ammunition supply point needed its own supply self service supply center (SSSC) and Department of Defense activity address code (DODAAC) account.<sup>90</sup> This would “keep company/platoon supply matters and the ASP [ammunition supply point] operations supply matters separate. Also, since ammunition units would rotate in and out of Arifjan, it would eliminate any supply problems with transfer of Ammunition Supply Point responsibility between units.”<sup>91</sup>

There was also a problem with maintenance personnel in support of the modular ammunition platoon. The MTOE assigned four mechanics to a modular ammunition platoon giving each platoon “the internal capacity to help keep their vehicles and equipment operational.” A platoon needed a trained Soldier to perform duties such as “tracking vehicles and equipment,” “keeping up with maintenance reporting requirements, ordering and receiving parts and fluids and keeping tabs on deadline[ed] [inoperable] vehicles in higher level maintenance shops.” This would prevent taking Soldiers “away from ammunition mission work.” Williams recommended that the MTOE include a position for a Unit Level Logistics System (ULLS) clerk in the platoon with the rank of an E-5.

Ammunition company operations needed improvement. Save for supply the 163rd and 261st Ordnance Platoons operated independently from the 802nd. The 261st was in charge of the ammunition supply point but had less experience than the 802nd. “This amounted to a company

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<sup>90</sup> Memorandum, Captain Tom Williams for Office of the Historian, USARC, subject: OIF 1 Deployment After Action Review, 1 Feb 07.

<sup>91</sup> Email, Captain Tom Williams to Dr. Kathryn Coker, subject: Lessons learned, 23 Mar 07.

level organization taking direction from a subordinate platoon.” The arrival of the 450th Ordnance Company, which eventually took charge of operating the Arifjan ammunition supply point, fixed this problem. This occurred after the 802nd left.

In Williams’ opinion weapons in an ammunition modular platoon configuration posed yet another problem. He did not think ammunition companies and platoons were “equipped with sufficient heavy weapons.” This limited the firepower needed on convoys in the event of enemy attack. It also hampered base defense. He suggested equipping the headquarters and ammunition platoons “with at least two M-240 heavy machine guns each” and that thought “be given to equipping the platoons with a Mk-19 40 mm grenade launcher.”

There were problems with demobilization. Receiving a veteran’s benefits briefing the day after the unit’s arrival at home station was not affective. “...[A]fter a year in theater, most of us were not in a frame of mind to focus on all this information. . . .There was not a break between arrival and the beginning of our demobilization to rest and prepare for this process.”<sup>92</sup> Williams suggested that break occur before demobilization out processing. He also recommended follow up briefings six months after the redeployment and then again after a year. This would help solve problems that occurred later and not addressed in the out processing.<sup>93</sup>

One of those problems likely to occur months after the out processing concerned the mental health of Soldiers. Mental health screening out processing was too rushed. Williams recommended mental health screenings ninety days, six months, and one year after demobilization. “While at [the] mobilization station,” he wrote, “most soldiers, especially young soldiers, are not fully aware of what kind of environment and stress they will face in rebuilding their relationships with family, friends, employers and coworkers.” He noted the suicide of one Soldier four

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<sup>92</sup> Memorandum, Williams for Office of the Historian, USARC, subject: OIF 1 Deployment After Action Review, 1 Feb 07.

<sup>93</sup> Major Odell Washington, Autobiographical Sketch, subject: no date. Lessons Learned., no date.

months after their return. “It’s possible this could have been stopped had more medical support and screening follow[ed] demobilization.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Memorandum, Williams for Office of the Historian, USARC, subject: OIF 1 Deployment After Action Review, 1 Feb 07.

## **From A Soldier's Perspective**

“We were a close group during that deployment.”

“The only thing I found that took me through was to go to church and join the choir.”

“Getting on that bus was hard for some. Family members stood by weeping as their loved one turned soldier boarded the bus carrying a weapon in one hand and some personal gear in the other.”

“For every task that was to be done the 802nd had to do them. We were stretched thin and very tired.”

“I felt so proud to be a part of this, it was rough but it was worth the sacrifice to go to defend the freedom of others so they can lead a life like ours.”

“I had mixed feelings when I received my mobilizations orders I did not want to leave my wife for a year but then I wanted one last hoorah before my military career ended.”

“The ammunition operation was askew from the start; luckily we were not in charge.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Autobiographical Sketches, 802nd Ordnance Company, subject: Personal Experience, no dates.



# Photographs



The men and women of the 802nd cleaned, tested, inventoried and packed their equipment. Reserve Center at Gainesville Georgia, December 2002.



An emotional farewell ceremony was held at the Georgia Mountains Center in Gainesville on 4 January 2003.



With typical GI resourcefulness, several Soldiers commandeered an unused mess hall and turned it into a computer/video café.



Soldiers loaded their baggage in the freezing rain into the bellies of the buses that would take them to the air terminal. This time it was real.



The 802nd busied themselves by clearing out of their barracks, drawing weapons and stacking baggage. Once inside the terminal, that was where they stayed, quarantined and cut off from all outside contact.



Once again, the 802nd found itself anxiously waiting out the long, chilly night. Just when they were finally ready to step aboard the plane, the flight was delayed yet again, for several hours.



Camp Wolf, the in-processing site located in the dry patch of ground between the runways, away from the airport terminal.





At Camp Wolf, Kuwait, many napped on the dusty wooden floor, while others walked around and explored their new surroundings.



By mid-afternoon, the unit received its assignment orders and was taken by bus that evening to their new headquarters, the 38th Ordnance Group, located approximately 45 minutes away at Camp Arifjan.



The 802nd shared the warehouse with other Army Reserve and National Guard units on cots laid side by side, crammed together with little room to move about.



Originally designed to accommodate 2,000-3,000 Soldiers, by April that number swelled to more than 23,000. Camp Arifjan, 2 March 2003.



Zone 2 is the industrial hub, home of warehouses, maintenance and storage facilities, and other life support activities.



Alternative dining choices were available as well in Zone 2: Burger King, Subway Sandwiches, Baskin Robbins Ice Cream, a Chinese fast food restaurant, and more, March 2003.



In those early days of the Iraqi campaign, Camp Arifjan was a far cry from what it would quickly become in the months following, October 2003.





At Convoy Service Center Navastar, located at the Kuwait-Iraq border, the party made the mandatory stop before crossing into Iraq. L to R, CW4 Earl Hokanson, SSG Anthony Collins, SFC Howard Blalock, 9 April 2003.



The route to Tallil would be along the main supply route, code named MSR Tampa, once they crossed from Kuwait into Iraq.



Action film stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger; R. Lee Ermy above w/Specialist Mark Glass at Tallil); Bruce Willis; and comedian Robin Williams graciously devoted their time and talent to our servicemen.



Latrines required routine maintenance in the form of waste burning, one of the most unpleasant jobs there could ever be, but everyone had to do it. SPC Benjamin Massey, Tallil Air Base, Iraq.



Showers were made possible through good old-GI-ingenuity: a barrel full of water, hand pumped through a hose to a makeshift shower head (a plastic Gatorade bottle punched with holes) draped over a makeshift plywood-and-canvas shower stall. Tallil, 2003.



If there could be only one vital lesson of survival in the desert for the 802nd it might be this: a Caterpillar D7 bulldozer (far right) is a good thing to have. Tallil, 2003



The Headquarters Platoon Maintenance Section was charged with operating a consolidated motor pool.



Support consisted of maintaining and servicing 135 pieces of rolling stock and additional vehicles and equipment drawn from pre-positioned war stocks. SGT Christopher Williams, SPC Mark Glass, Arifjan, 2003.





The heat was relentless, with temperatures frequently reaching 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Even at night, temperatures routinely were over 100 degrees. Photo taken by Sergeant Michelle Johnson at 7:30 in the evening.



The Fire-Rescue Section also worked at the Kuwait Naval Base, washing contaminants off containers prior to loading aboard ammunition ships.



“The RTCH was the critical piece of equipment that drove the success of the Class V mission at Camp Arifjan.”—Captain Williams



As part of the retrograde, the 802nd inspected and cleaned Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and ATACMS pods for shipment to the Continental United States, Pacific Command, and European Command.



The 802nd reconditioned over 15 million rounds of ammunition from over 50 different munitions types that were put directly back into the hands of front line Soldiers. Arifjan, summer 2003.



By December, the first rain in more than eight months fell on Arifjan. It was an event in which to rejoice, and several Soldiers relished a good soaking. SGT Christopher Williams, Arifjan, December 2003.





There was no drainage in the desert and the rain came down faster than it could be absorbed. The result was flooding that quickly inundated the stacks of ammunition containers and motor pool.



The tradition of exchanging gifts and gathering for fellowship took place in the makeshift Motor Pool. A Christmas dinner, resembling a company picnic more than a holiday feast, was held there too.



“One of the latrines was at the guard tower, which had guards in it who witnessed the whole thing. The latrines were completely destroyed.”—Captain Williams.



Personal baggage and equipment not being left behind were packed, inspected and cleared for customs before being loaded aboard ship. By this time, the unit was waiting its turn to be called forward to Camp Wolf and a flight home.



At Fort Stewart, after a short ceremony lasting approximately two minutes, Soldiers were released into the waiting arms of wives, and husbands, sons and daughters.  
SGT John Nixon holds his daughter.



“The Gainesville sidewalks on both sides were full of people, all of them waving and cheering. The Hall County Fire Department had two trucks with their ladders extended and a huge American flag hanging down for us to drive under.”— Captain Williams.



“I think the ceremony may have changed some of the Soldiers’ attitudes about what they went through.” -- Captain Williams.





The citizens of Gainesville were proud of their men and women in uniform and let the world know it.



Jonathan Jones (left) had done a good job in Kuwait and had been promoted, something for which his wife could be proud.