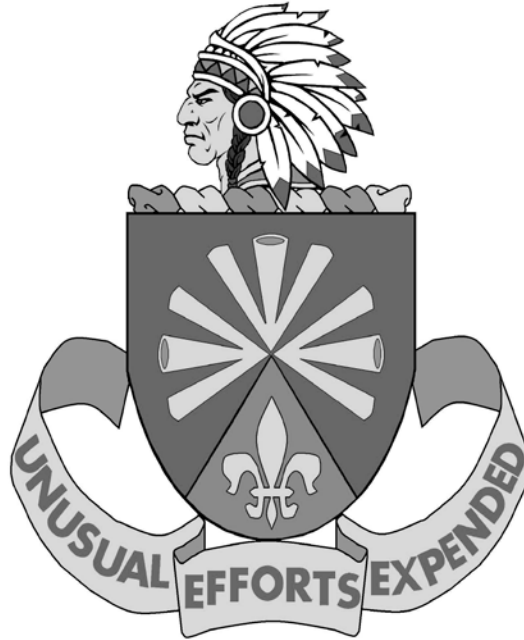


**One Hundred and Fifty-Eighth  
Field Artillery**

**“Global War  
on  
Terrorism”**

Volume No. 6

**John T. Jenson**



For the organizational archives of the  
**158th Field Artillery Battalion**

This volume made possible by private donations from: Thomas C. Acker Jr., Cody Alldredge, Jimmy Avance, Justin Blount, Donald Brewer, Nicholas Case, Cody Dupler, Robert Hedges, Grant Hudson, Misty Jenny, Ryan King, Gregory Lankford, Christopher Malone, Jack McComas, Trenton Richards and David Slezcicky.

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## PREFACE

I have decided to capture as much of the 158th Field Artillery's history as possible, so this is the sixth volume that is based upon source materials that are available and archived. Just from the mere act of time passing, facts can be open to interpretation and indeed they can be viewed differently by different people. For this reason I have compiled U. S. Library of Congress PCN 2018957292 volumes:

Volume No. 1	"Centennial Review"
Volume No. 2	"Battle Campaigns and Honors"
Volume No. 3	"World War II"
Volume No. 4	"Korean War"
Volume No. 5	"Persian Gulf War"
Volume No. 6	"Global War on Terrorism"
Volume No. 7	"Cold War"
Volume No. 8	"Unit Photos and Official Rosters"
Volume No. 9	"Official Journal" 1920 to 1945
Volume No. 10	"Official Journal" 1946 to 1970
Volume No. 11	"Official Journal" 1971 to 1995
Volume No. 12	"Official Journal" 1996 to Present

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## GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

On the morning of 11 September 2001, nineteen men hijacked four jet airliners. The hijackers (members of al-Qaeda's Hamburg cell) intentionally crashed two of the airliners into the New York City Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, crashed another airliner into the U.S. Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C. and the fourth airliner; whose target was the U.S. Capitol White House; crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania when the passengers overwhelmed the hijackers. None of the flights had any survivors and in total there were 2,977 victims in these attacks.

On 13 September 2001, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invoked Article 5 which authorizes each member country to consider an armed attack against one member country to be an armed attack against all member countries and eventually organized the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) consisting of 36 NATO nations, 9 partnered nations and 2 non-aligned countries.

On 14 September 2001, President George W. Bush signed Executive Order 13223 which was the authorization for use of military force against the terrorist attacks:

### **Executive Order 13223**

#### **Ordering the Ready Reserve of the Armed Forces To Active Duty and Delegating Certain Authorities to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Transportation**

*By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and in furtherance of the proclamation of September 14, 2001, Declaration of National Emergency by Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks, which declared a national emergency by reason of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, New York, New York, and the Pentagon, and the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on the United States, I hereby order as follows:*

*Section 1. To provide additional authority to the Department of Defense and the Department of Transportation to respond to the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on the United States, the authority under title 10, United States Code, to order any unit, and any member of the Ready Reserve not assigned to a unit organized to serve as a unit, in the Ready Reserve to active duty for not more than 24 consecutive months, is invoked and made available, according to its terms, to the Secretary concerned, subject in the case of the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, to the direction of the Secretary of Defense. The term "Secretary*

*concerned” is defined in section 101(a)(9) of title 10, United States Code, to mean the Secretary of the Army with respect to the Army; the Secretary of the Navy with respect to the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard when it is operating as a service in the Navy; the Secretary of the Air Force with respect to the Air Force; and the Secretary of Transportation with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy.*

*Section 2. To allow for the orderly administration of personnel within the armed forces, the following authorities vested in the President are hereby invoked to the full extent provided by the terms thereof: section 527 of title 10, United States Code, to suspend the operation of sections 523, 525, and 526 of that title, regarding officer and warrant officer strength and distribution; and sections 123, 123a, and 12006 of title 10, United States Code, to suspend certain laws relating to promotion, involuntary retirement, and separation of commissioned officers; end strength limitations; and Reserve component officer strength limitations.*

*Section 3. To allow for the orderly administration of personnel within the armed forces, the authorities vested in the President by sections 331, 359, and 367 of title 14, United States Code, relating to the authority to order to active duty certain officers and enlisted members of the Coast Guard and to detain enlisted members, are invoked to the full extent provided by the terms thereof.*

*Section 4. The Secretary of Defense is hereby designated and empowered, without the approval, ratification, or other action by the President, to exercise the authority vested in the President by sections 123, 123a, 527, and 12006 of title 10, United States Code, as invoked by sections 2 and 3 of this order.*

*Signed: GEORGE W. BUSH. 14 September 2001.*

On 20 September 2001, in a speech to Congress, President George W. Bush says: “We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail,” as he announces a “war on terror”, which has now been termed the “Global War on Terrorism” (GWOT).

Since the GWOT started there have been eight major operations and due to this unprecedented frequency of deployments there has been an increased demand on the use of reserve forces unparalleled in the history of the U.S. military.

These rotating units have served in/and or now serving in the following operations:

1. Airport Security Operations (ASO), from 27 September 2001 through 31 May 2002.
2. Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), from 14 September 2001 Present
3. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), 7 October 2001 through 31 December 2014.
4. Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), 19 March 2003 through 31 August 2010.
5. Operation New Dawn (OND), 1 September 2010 through 31 December 2011.
6. Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), 15 June 2014 to Present.
7. Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS), 1 January 2015 to Present.
8. Operation Pacific Eagle - Philippines (OPE-P), 5 October 2017 to Present.

Operation OIF actually started the day after the Persian Gulf War ended when a realized strategy was the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. The US Army was transforming into “Force XXI” a digital battle command with the hypothesis that if friendly forces could digitally see each other and the enemy than they could operate at a higher tempo making themselves more lethal. They had also completed operations in Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda and Bosnia and finally in 1997 the first “Force XXI” model (4th Infantry Division) was certified as the first fully digitized unit. After the Persian Gulf War the US Army had maintained a continuous troop and equipment presence in Kuwait. On 16 March 2003 President Bush issued an ultimatum with a 48-hour deadline, it stated: “**Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict.**” On 19 March 2003 OIF was launched by a Tomahawk Missile strike onto Dora Farms and the 3rd Infantry Division spearheading the V Corps push from Kuwait into Iraq.

Eventually one-third of Oklahoma's Army National Guard would be activated, to support Operations OEF and ONE, OEF included the anti-terrorism military operations that would occur outside the U.S., while ONE would be the multi-agency operations inside the U.S. borders. These mobilizations would be the largest call-up of Oklahoma Army National Guardsmen since the Korean War. The demand for soldiers to support OEF and ONE would eventually exceed the supply under the Army's normal deployment policies, so the Army used different actions to increase supply. OIF did not officially start until 19 March 2003, however the Army was able to mobilize units under the pretenses of OEF and then later reassign them to OIF, as was the mobilization of the 45th Field Artillery Brigade.



1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS)

Officers of 1/158 FA (MLRS) pose with 45th FA BDE Commander COL Ricky Adams (seated center).

The Headquarters, Headquarters Battery (HHB) 45th Field Artillery Brigade commanded by Colonel Ricky G. Adams, along with the 1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Allen J. Bentley and the 1st Battalion 147th Field Artillery (MLRS) of the South Dakota Army National Guard commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kerry Loudenslager would support OIF by providing lethal firepower to the second wave of maneuver forces of Central Command (CENTCOM) as they maneuver inland to capture Baghdad.

The 1/158th FA (MLRS) was scheduled to load ships on 9 April 2003 at the port of Beaumont, Texas. That day came and went and the news that coalition forces had seized Baghdad effectively stood down the 1/158th FA (MLRS). Demobilization of the battalion started 12 May 2003 and ran onto 27 May 2003 where the units returned back to its armories. This history of the 1/158th FA (MLRS) and the 2nd Detachment of the 1120th Maintenance Company, during OIF 2003 details the structure of the units and outlines of the challenges and triumphs that the soldiers faced during this mobilization.

The 1/158th FA (MLRS) (3x6) comprises of 372 soldiers, in three firing batteries of 6 Self Propelled Loader Launchers (SPLL) providing a total of 18 Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) rocket systems. The Detachment 2, 1120th Maintenance consists of 25 soldiers who provide direct support maintenance to the battalion.



Allen J. Bentley

The 1/158th FA (MLRS), while located primarily in Southwest Oklahoma, draws its members from across Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas. Headquartered in Lawton, Oklahoma, along with the Headquarters, Headquarters Service (HHS) Battery, known as the “Dragons,” the battalion has 5 other armories. “A” Battery, known as the “Gators,” is located in Walters, Oklahoma. “B” Battery, known as the “Buzzards,” is located in Duncan and Marlow, Oklahoma. “C” Battery, known as the

“Coyotes,” is located in Chickasha and Anadarko, Oklahoma. Detachment 2/1120th Maintenance shares an armory with HHS in Lawton. From the mud of Italy and Germany, through the forbidding frost of the Korean Chorwon Valley, to the extreme temperatures of Iraq, the 1/158th FA (MLRS) has a distinguished history of combat and epitomizes the ideal of Cincinnatus, the Citizen Soldier. The battalion is part of the 45th Field Artillery Brigade, Oklahoma Army National Guard, with the wartime mission of reinforcing the 1st Cavalry Division. During the Post “911”, the battalion conducted a total of four training exercises in 2002 and 2003 to hone the core competency of Command, Control, and its capability to deliver its lethal rocket firepower.

## **2003 MOBILIZATION AND REFRAD**

On the morning of 15 February 2003 the 1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery (MLRS) received alert notification to prepare to mobilized at its armories on 15 March 2003 and report to mobilization station 18 March 2003 for deployment to Iraq. On 8 March 2003 by order of Major General Myles L. Deering, Adjutant General, Oklahoma Army and Air National Guard Orders 057-067 dated 8 March 2003 was given to the soldiers of the 1/158th FA (MLRS) in facsimile order form below:

-----  
**DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE**  
**OKLAHOMA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD**  
**3501 MILITARY CIRCLE**  
**OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 13111-4398**

8 March 2003

HHS 1 BN 158 FA MLRS (YHOTO-210) 600 NW CACHE ROAD LAWTON OK 73507

You are ordered to active duty as a member of your Reserve Component Unit for the period indicated unless sooner released or unless extended. Proceed from your current location in sufficient time to report by the date specified. You enter active duty upon reporting to unit home station.

REPORT TO HOME STATION: 15 March 2003 HHS I Bn 158 FA 3x6 Corps, 5A (WYHOTO), 701 Kenny Dr, Lawton, OK 73504

REPORT TO MOB STATION: 18 March 2003 Fort Sill, Oklahoma

Period of active duty: Not to exceed 365 days

Purpose : Operation ENDURING FREEDOM

Mobilization Category Code : G

FOR ARMY USE

Auth: 10 UNITED STATES CODE 12302/HQDA MSG 010051Z MAR 03/DAMO-ODOM/: ORDTYP/MOBORD/HQDA no. 331-03 & PERMANENT ORDER 60-62, HQ 5A, dtd 01 MAR 03

Acct class:

Enl pay/alw: 2132010.0000 01-1100 2W2C00 1198/1199/1250 VFRE F3203 5570 S99999

Enl tvl/pd: 2132020.0000 01-1100 135198 21T1/21T2/22NL/2578 VFRE F3203 5570 S99999

Enl pay/alw: 2142010.0000 01-1100 2W2C00 1198/1199/1250 VFRE F3203 5570 S99999

Enl tvl/pd: 2142020.0000 01.1100 135198 21T1/21T2/22NL/2578 VFRE F3203 5570 S99999

FOR THE ADUTANT GENERAL: James L. Greenfield.

-----  
Of particular concern was the absence of Det 2/1120th Maint in this call-up. This unit’s parent HQ was mobilized for ONE, and due to their recent reorganization from the 1045th Ordnance Detachment to Detachment 2, 1120th Maintenance Company, they were somehow overlooked during the call-up and this concern was sent to the higher element for addressing. The 1/158th FA (MLRS) mobilized at its armories on 15 March 2003 and all soldiers assigned to the battalion reported for duty at 0700 hours. The sense of purpose and of resolve contributed to the high morale throughout the battalion.

Major Metcalfe directed the work of the Advance Party in accordance with FORSCOM Regulation 500-3-3 Reserve Component Unit Commanders Handbook (RCUCH), preparing and issuing unit orders to all members of the unit. Once all the soldiers reported to armories they all received briefings on the mission, Force Protection, and operational security.

The Adjutant and his team ensured the personnel readiness through coordination with State authorities for Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) at the State HQ in Oklahoma City. The battalion reported to State HQ to undergo SRP operations on 16-17 March 2003. Soldiers received inoculations for Anthrax and other diseases, medical and dental fitness checks. From this final filter, 1/158th FA (MLRS) released one hundred five soldiers to the Rear Detachment, and received eighty seven soldiers from different OKARNG units to fill the gaps. 1/158th FA (MLRS) integrated these Guardsmen into the ranks quickly and efficiently. Now the 1/158th FA (MLRS) consisted of soldiers from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, Texas, Florida, Arizona, and Pennsylvania.

Major Metcalfe led the Advance Party onto the Mobilization Station, Fort Sill, at 1000 hours, March 17, 2003. The party conducted the initial contact and coordination with members of the 45th Field Artillery Brigade, the Oklahoma STARC, and Fort Sill's Department of Plans, Mobilization and Training (DPTM). The outcome from this meeting was the identification of points of contact, billets and motor pool assignment, and the initial process of ordering all classes of supply. The 1/158th FA (MLRS) reported to Fort Sill on 18 March 2003. Batteries occupied the barracks, Building 2471, and Motor Pool without incident. Staff and commanders occupied the eastern half of the second floor of Building 3416. The command and staff of the 1/147th FA (MLRS) occupied the other half of the floor. The 1/158th FA (MLRS) battalion headquarters, battalion staff and battery commanders were as follows:

Battalion Commander	LTC	Allen	J.	Bentley	
Battalion Executive Officer	MAJ	Paul	A.	Metcalfe	
Battalion Operations Officer	MAJ	Gregory	L.	Lankford	
Adjutant (S-1)	CPT	Jay	D.	Croft	
Intelligence Officer	CPT	Bradley	D.	Rittenhouse	
Assistant Operations Officer	CPT	Freddie	G.	Crowson	
Logistics Officer	CPT	Doye	D.	Jernigan	
Signal Officer	1LT	Eddie	G.	Collins	
Maintenance Officer	CPT	Craig	M.	Robinson	
Fire Direction Officer	CPT	Marc	R.	Smith	
Chaplain	CPT	Jeffery	T.	Van Ness	
Maintenance Technician	WO1	John	H.	Kuehny	
Property Book Officer	WO1	Gary	E.	England	
Targeting Technician Officer	WO1	Robert	L.	Downen	Jr.
Physician Assistant	1LT	Westley	A.	Carter	
Liaison Officer:	CPT	James	D.	Osborne	Jr.
Liaison Officer	1LT	Jeremy	R.	Whitling	
Command Sergeant Major	CSM	John	T.	Jenson	
HHS Battery Commander	1LT	Christopher	S.	Reser	
HHS First Sergeant	1SG	Fred	W.	Baker	III
"A" Battery Commander	CPT	Jason	A.	Henry	
"A" Battery First Sergeant	1SG	Edward	C.	Lynde	
"B" Battery Commander	CPT	Thomas	J.	Gibson	
"B" Battery First Sergeant	1SG	Kenneth	L.	Reese	
"C" Battery Commander	CPT	Johnnie	D.	Moss	
"C" Battery First Sergeant	1SG	William	C.	Blasengame	
Detachment 2 Commander	SFC	Merle	B.	Fishgrab	

In order to deploy into the CENTCOM Theater of Operations the battalion had four mission essential tasks to complete. First was the successful completion of an Army External Evaluation (AEE), followed by Medical Readiness, then theater specific training ending with a load out all vehicles and equipment on rail for sea shipment.

Headquarters, 75th Training Support Division had the mission and were the liaison component from the Mobilization Station to U.S. Forces Command (FORSCOM) and ultimately CENTCOM. They were instrumental in providing current doctrine and guidance culminating in deployment into theater. Prior to departure to the field for the AEE, 75th Training Support hosted the battalion staff to a second round of training on the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) which is the Army's planning methodology to understand the situation, develop a course of action and produce an operation plan. The battalion staff had extensive training on this since they had just completed a more practical version in 2002 during a Field Training Exercise (FTX). This time the training was conducted in the sterile environment of a classroom.



Soldiers in 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery call in a dry fire mission from a Fire Direction Center as part of a communications exercise Wednesday on Fort Sill's West Range. Pictured are, back, Pfc. Jared Foss, Marlow; front, Sgt. John Blumhorst, Lawton; and right, Sgt. 1st Class David Andrews, Duncan.

The battalion finally moved out to the field to complete its AEE from 25 March to 2 April 2003. This evaluation allows the unit to demonstrate its competence on its core functions of command, control, and



delivery of lethal effects. The battalion was attacked by soldiers of Opposing Force, and also encountered and reacted to Civilians and Press on the Battlefield. Other hurdles included simulated Chemical attacks. The soldiers of the 1-158 FA (MLRS) met each challenge with bravado, easily completing the task above a standard set by more experienced Regular Army soldiers. During this AEE, Det 2/1120th Maint received its Alert and Mobilization orders. Det 2/1120th Maint was commanded by Sergeant First Class Merle B. Fishgrab and soon his soldiers joined the battalion in the field on March 27, 2003. Their presence lifted the spirits of the soldiers in the battalion. It is always good to see your direct support mechanics in the field with you during a important deployment requirement. The culminating event for the battalion came early the morning of 2 April 2003, as the battalion fired one hundred sixty-two M-28 Reduced Range Practice Rockets (RRPR), including six "volley-fire" missions that sent between twenty-four to thirty-six rockets down range. Mount Scott, known as the highest peak in Southwest Oklahoma, was crowded with civilian and military spectators alike watching the fireworks from the RRPR impacting during these stunning missions. The forward observers, veterans of the fire support arena and used to seeing rounds impact, were amazed at the awe-inspiring display of firepower demonstrated with such casual ease. These missions were the first such in the history of any unit of any component in the Continental United States.

Medical readiness was a daily occurrence at the Mobilization Station; this was due to the medical facilities and doctors available on Fort Sill. Immunizations were completed in a matter of hours although Anthrax and Smallpox inoculations required follow up examinations. Medical physicals along with Panographic Film (PANOREX), cardiovascular screening and a current HIV test completed the medical readiness portion.

Dynamics of war change in every battle so deploying units are battle proofed at the Mobilization Station in these dynamics and inculcated with the warrior ethos. The ground forces component of CENTCOM; Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC); mandated theater specific tasks ranging from individual to collective tasks and from stability and support focused operations through conventional combat missions. These were all completed during the field exercise along with individual weapons qualification and all deployment requirements, the 1-158 FA (MLRS) was validated for deployment and now they sat locked and loaded ready to shoot.



Throughout the AEE, the staff of the 1/158th FA (MLRS) kept its eye on the next task, the load out of all vehicles and equipment to transshipment into the theater. Close coordination with the Post Unit Movement Office (UMO) and the Logistics Operations Center (LOC) operated by Fort Sill paid dividends when the battalion returned from their RRPR live-fire. With blocking, bracing, packing and crating materiel on hand, and helpful Subject Matter Experts from the Post UMO at the ready, the soldiers of the 1/158th FA (MLRS) set to work on 3 April 2003. They cleaned all of their vehicles, sending vehicles broken in the AEE to the Department of Logistics (DOL) Maintenance Repair Shop, while the rest loaded up.

7 thru 8 April 2003 saw the 1-158 FA (MLRS) and Det 2/1120th Maint undergoing the dreaded Equipment Validation Team (EVT) program. All vehicles, Protective Masks and organizational Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) equipment, weapons and Night Vision Devices were inspected by Fort Sill's EVT. Those items that mechanically failed the inspection were job-ordered to the DOL Maintenance Repair Shop. Unfortunately, the replacement parts were on back-order, in some cases equipment sat idle for up to a month after the EVT while the supply system caught up. This delay came in large part from the intransigence of authorities to believe that Operator level Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services identified mechanical shortcomings; or that the maintenance management team from the battalion accurately reported systemic shortfalls deriving from budgetary constraints.

On 8 April 2003, composite Official Roster of the First Battalion (MLRS) 158th Field Artillery and Stations of Organization:

**Composite Roster of Headquarters, Headquarters Service Battery, First Battalion 158th Field Artillery (MLRS)  
Home Stationed at Lawton, Oklahoma \***

LTC Allen J. Bentley	SGT John S. Andrews	SPC Walter B. Musselman Jr.
MAJ Gregory L. Lankford	SGT John H. Blumhorst Jr.	SPC Kenneth E. Nagel
MAJ Paul A. Metcalfe	SGT Douglas E. Bueoy	SPC Jesse D. Neugebauer
CPT Jay D. Croft	SGT Kenneth A. Chesbrough Jr.	SPC Anthony J. Patrick
CPT Freddie G. Crowson	SGT Douglas W. Collins	SPC David L. Ramsey
CPT Doye D. Jernigan	SGT Kenry A. Dinwiddie	SPC Jamie D. Rhoads
CPT James D. Osborne	SGT Raymond D. Durham	SPC Robert A. Schrock
CPT Christopher S. Reser	SGT Gilberto Garza Jr.	SPC Charles F. Souhrada Jr.
CPT Bradley D. Rittenhouse	SGT Jim X. Griego	SPC John S. Starnes III
CPT Craig M. Robinson	SGT Roberto Herrera	SPC Daniel S. Stentz
CPT Marc R. Smith	SGT Robert L. Ingwerson	SPC Kevin N. Streeter
1LT Westley A. Carter	SGT John B. Miller III	SPC Christopher A. Terwilligar
1LT Edward G. Collins	SGT Vincent L. Moscatello	PFC Michael A. Aguilar
1LT Jeramy R. Whitting	SGT Michael J. Mullica	PFC Mitchell L. Brooks
2LT Norman W. Black	SGT Adolfo F. Munoz Jr.	PFC Kenneth J. Crites
2LT Arlington N. Tasi	SGT Willie C. Northington	PFC Jared R. Foss
2LT Shawn R. Vergott	SGT Bryan M. Nye	PFC Christopher R. Himes
WO1 Robert L. Downen Jr.	SGT Hershell F. Pollock	PFC Jason L. Houston
WO1 Gary E. England	SGT Jacob R. Prater	PFC Bradley S. Lambirth
WO1 John H. Kuehny	SGT Stephen P. Willrein	PFC Kevin A. McGrew
CHP Jeffery T. VanNess	SGT Gregg F. Soppet	PFC Edmund G. O'Neal
CSM John T. Jenson	SGT Kelly L. Steinmeyer	PFC Jason R. Reynolds
1SG Fred W. Baker III	SGT Wallace J. Stroup	PFC Jared A. Seigler
MSG Gustavo A. Gonzalez	SGT Darrell D. Taylor	PFC Joshua B. Smith
MSG Tony F. Riggs	SGT Michael F. Tenequer	PFC Ronnie Vaughn
MSG Wayne E. Wilson	SGT Robert M. Thomas	PVT Brandon G. Beaver
SFC David M. Andrews	SGT Anthony Townes	PVT Evan D. Beck
SFC Andy L. Callihan	SGT Jeffery S. Wilson	PVT James W. Blalock II
SFC Pedro Cortez Jr.	SPC Jonathan S. Anderson	PVT Diamond A. Broadway
SFC Roger J. Crabtree	SPC Jeremy M. Beard	PVT Kerry L. Brown
SFC Jack D. Powers	SPC Keith R. Berry	PVT Shawn R. Earhart
SFC Richard A. Riggins	SPC Christopher S. Bussell	PVT Billie E. England II
SFC Gerard A. Wall	SPC Oscar Castro	PVT Aaron M. Gray
SSG Jason W. Bingham	SPC Robert K. Coble	PVT Eric J. Hitchcock
SSG Terry D. Davis	SPC Eric T. Colon	PVT Emmanuel M. Hutchinson
SSG John Fitzgerald	SPC Stacey A. Cornelious	PVT Gary F. Hynson
SSG Christopher L. Gay	SPC Gary B. Crumbley Jr.	PVT Donald H. Jones Jr.
SSG Michael D. Grannan	SPC Michael J. Davis	PVT David D. Levere Jr.
SSG Curtis Holman Jr.	SPC Terry J. Davis	PVT Mark E. McFarland Jr.
SSG Karl W. Keough	SPC Bradley A. Edwards	PVT Truman P. Navarro
SSG Matthew D. Lima	SPC Richard M. Folsom Jr.	PVT Christopher A. Pettit
SSG Lucien J. Matte	SPC Landon K. Hardin	PVT William C. Rice
SSG Jeremy M. Rae	SPC Christopher H. Heckathorne	PVT Randy L. Rickert
SSG Jose E. Saldana	SPC Charles H. JeanPierre	PVT Donnie O. Robinson
SSG Tracy T. Taylor	SPC Ryan D. Jernigan	PVT Clifton E. Sapcut
SSG Darron P. Weeks	SPC Juan A. Juarez	

**Composite Roster of Battery "A", First Battalion 158th Field Artillery (MLRS)  
Home Stationed at Walters, Oklahoma \***

CPT Jason A. Henry	SSG Gilbert M. Castro	SGT Lonnie D. Climber
1LT Christopher S. Cook	SSG Gregory D. Davis	SGT Daryn A. Coleman
1LT Steven C. Dare	SSG Michael J. Graham	SGT Richard L. Dobbins
1LT Charles L. Neely	SSG Terry L. Hellickson	SGT Felix M. Fisher
1LT Kent A. Ray	SSG Kevin D. Hodge	SGT Raymond E. Fix
2LT Mark A. Fitzgerald	SSG Kurt L. Jarvis	SGT Nicholas R. Green
1SG Edward C. Lynde	SSG Donald J. Mills	SGT Thomas E. Hillier
SFC Erasmo Barron	SSG John P. Mull	SGT William M. Johnson
SFC Marvin Grant	SSG John M. Weekley	SGT James C. Johnston
SFC Kevin Henry	SGT Edward D. Bayones	SGT Edgardo J. Ortiz-Perez
SFC William M. Scott III	SGT Jeremy J. Beckett	SGT Michael R. Schmidt
SFC Thomas G. Tate	SGT Michael D. Bone	SGT Dennis O. Stewart
SFC George L. Twyman	SGT Jeffery N. Burluson	SGT Stephen D. Wilkerson
SSG Errol B. Caldwell	SGT Andrew L. Champagne	SPC Joseph D. Bajza

SPC Joshua S. Calfy  
SPC Joshua C. Cargill  
SPC Robert W. File  
SPC Andre C. Ford  
SPC Donovan J. Frasure  
SPC Brian K. Hekia  
SPC David M. Herrera II  
SPC Houston K. Hood  
SPC Kenneth W. Horne Jr.  
SPC Bradley E. Mifflin  
SPC Ronald D. Molina  
SPC Nicholas C. Reed  
SPC Allen W. Richey  
SPC Ryan G. Rickert  
SPC Joseph F. Savell

SPC Scotty L. Shelton  
SPC Benjamin S. Sibley  
SPC John P. Sklaney III  
SPC Thomas D. Smith  
SPC Kevin A. Spicer  
SPC Troy L. Todd  
SPC Thomas J. Wheeler  
SPC William D. Whittington  
PFC Jason L. Bellar  
PFC Benjamin T. Bressman  
PFC Justin J. Burrows  
PFC Barry R. Dirickson  
PFC Tito Griffith Jr.  
PFC Frederick T. Hughes  
PFC Sean D. Murray

PFC MacNeil D. Passi  
PFC Blackmon J. Prince  
PFC Nathan L. Purdue  
PFC Fredrick K. St. John  
PVT Matthew A. Adamson  
PVT Kevin R. Dornan  
PVT Dustin J. Edwards  
PVT Chad A. Leonhardt  
PVT Thomas J. Painter  
PVT Raul Perez  
PVT Aaron L. Roland  
PVT Joshua A. Webb

**Composite Roster of Battery "B", First Battalion 158th Field Artillery (MLRS)  
Home Stationed at Duncan, Oklahoma \***

CPT Thomas J. Gibson Jr.  
1LT Paul M. Simonich  
2LT William E. Ponder  
2LT Kevin J. Shutt  
1SG Kenneth L. Reese  
SFC Ira P. Burden Jr.  
SFC Randall Robert Dedert  
SFC Michael A. Hardsaw  
SFC Jimmy L. Venable  
SFC Emmanuel D. Williams  
SSG Darin B. Carman  
SSG Larry J. Harper  
SSG Earl S. Johnson  
SSG John M. Kaiser  
SSG David S. Kemp  
SSG James K. Morris  
SSG Daniel O. Pukek  
SSG James M. Stone  
SSG Rodney P. Velarde  
SGT Nathaniel D. Barnes  
SGT Damon A. Boyd  
SGT Donald B. Brewer  
SGT Grant A. Brown  
SGT Bobby Carter  
SGT Don E. Chisum Jr.  
SGT Mark E. Cowan  
SGT James F. Edwards  
SGT Harold E. Hall  
SGT David L. Heilman  
SGT Robert C. Johnson  
SGT Todd M. Johnson

SGT Jamey D. Lindsey  
SGT Robert C. Muir  
SGT Robert L. Newman  
SGT Robert D. Petty  
SGT William J. Straily  
SPC James Y. Baldwin  
SPC Kristopher K. Bickerstaff  
SPC David A. Bowen  
SPC Stephen M. Brosh  
SPC Justin C. Cliburn  
SPC Nathaniel E. Cordes  
SPC Christopher L. Crenwelge  
SPC Randal E. Davenport  
SPC Luke D. Davis  
SPC Gordon T. Dunham  
SPC Justin B. Finch  
SPC Steven A. Fitzgerald  
SPC Matthew E. Gray  
SPC Lance C. Harper  
SPC Earle G. Hudson  
SPC Zachary J. Jessen  
SPC Matthew G. Leal  
SPC Joshua D. Lynn  
SPC William J. Martin III  
SPC David J. Mason  
SPC Nolan R. Mogg  
SPC Lyndal C. Morgan  
SPC Christopher k. Moss  
SPC James D. Peacock III  
SPC Jeremiah M. Phillips Jr.  
SPC Daniel H. Pickett

SPC Benjamin A. Porterfield  
SPC William P. Reid Jr.  
SPC Jacob A. Smith  
SPC Thomas M. Tanner II  
SPC Bradley W. Tennant  
SPC Ian H. Wilsher  
SPC Heath A. Woods  
PFC Montrionne E. Allen  
PFC Michael C. Barham  
PFC Phillip W. Bertsch  
PFC George A. Crawford  
PFC Joshua D. Davis  
PFC Adam F. Duffy  
PFC Kevin A. File  
PFC Aaron J. Helton  
PFC Christopher A. Newman  
PFC Wesley M. Parra  
PFC Justin C. Riddles  
PFC Adam J. Schuster  
PFC Gilbert R. Wolford IV  
PVT Derek W. Baldwin  
PVT Kasey R. Bickerstaff  
PVT Dewey K. Briscoe  
PVT Billy S. Cooper  
PVT Jon P. Gomez  
PVT Burt A. Knapp  
PVT Joshua A. Ramirez  
PVT Anthony C. Sides  
PVT Vecent L. Vigus

**Composite Roster of Battery "C", First Battalion 158th Field Artillery (MLRS)  
Home Stationed at Anadarko, Oklahoma \***

CPT Johnnie D. Moss  
1LT Corbie N. Grimes II  
1LT Aaron K. Hinkle  
2LT Chin U. Kim  
2LT Kenny D. Toms  
1SG William C. Blasengame  
SFC Vernon R. DeFoor  
SFC Marty L. Hendricks  
SFC Ralph L. Pennington Jr.  
SFC Norman L. Winn  
SFC Glenn J. Zink II  
SSG George C. Baker  
SSG Mark R. Braley  
SSG Jackie R. Bruesch  
SSG Scott T. Buehre  
SSG Brent L. Dobry  
SSG Lance H. Grant  
SSG James N. Heston

SSG Billy S. Jones  
SSG Erik E. Kruger  
SSG Dean Q. Lawson  
SSG Rodney A. Pedersen  
SSG Vincente H. Pierre  
SSG Ben Murrell Scott Jr.  
SSG David A. Slezickey Jr.  
SSG Carlton S. Speller  
SSG Gregory J. Stowe  
SSG Wade Williams  
SGT Ivan J. Bradford  
SGT Brent T. Davis  
SGT David M. Farrow  
SGT Samuel D. Flaming  
SGT Wesley V. Freeman  
SGT Larry W. Nix  
SGT Roderick L. Poolaw  
SGT Carl H. Pyle Jr.

SGT Kyle A. Samuels  
SGT Joseph P. Shipley  
SGT Richard J. Sholar  
SGT Paul A. Tate Jr.  
SGT Robert C. Walker  
SGT Kenneth E. Wall  
SGT Jeremy J. Woolver  
SGT Jonathan D. Zerger  
SPC Jeremy J. Austin  
SPC Jeremiah C. Brenner  
SPC James B. Blake  
SPC Matthew R. Caldwell Jr.  
SPC Obie B. Clements  
SPC Douglas J. Cowart  
SPC Cody W. Cranfill  
SPC Jeffery M. Delaney  
SPC Scott S. Dixon  
SPC Neil F. Dolder

SPC Dustin R. Hames  
 SPC Billy J. Holley  
 SPC Arry D. Johnson  
 SPC Eric S. Lasseter  
 SPC Matthew P. Lewis  
 SPC Robert P. Lutonsky  
 SPC Michael S. McGee  
 SPC Randy J. McKay  
 SPC Danny McKillip  
 SPC Brandon B. McNamar  
 SPC Robert T. Mitchell  
 SPC William T. Noland  
 SPC Dale L. Owen  
 SPC James C. Prince III  
 SPC Russell D. Pruitt

SPC Matthew A. Pulis  
 SPC Kevin D. Pyle  
 SPC Daniel E. Reynolds  
 SPC Travis L. Rucker  
 SPC Jimmy S. Sams  
 SPC Matthew A. Schoolfield  
 SPC Steven K. Stanley  
 SPC Frederic J. Tabert  
 SPC Curtis A. Vasquez  
 SPC Billy J. Weathers II  
 SPC Lance M. Zerger  
 PFC Christopher B. Alexander  
 PFC Jason M. Anderson  
 PFC Eric W. Harlan  
 PFC Larry W. James

PFC Joseph C. Killman  
 PFC Ryan M. King  
 PFC Charles B. Pinnell  
 PFC Jose A. Ramos  
 PFC Lee C. Schrocktainpeah  
 PVT Randy W. Allen  
 PVT Zackary E. Brake  
 PVT Christopher M. Durham  
 PVT Devin M. East  
 PVT Clint A. Hunter  
 PVT Clifton R. McVay  
 PVT Eric D. Sikes  
 PVT Jeffery V. Vandorn

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 From inside the barracks on Fort Sill, the 1/158th FA (MLRS) watched as Operation Iraqi Freedom started and as each day started at the mobilization station there was a greater sense of urgency of completing all the required tasks to get into the theater.

The soldiers had worked long and laborious hours ensuring that all supplies were distributed and vehicles were loaded and throughout the load out period. The seriousness of the impending deployment was the impetus for the battalion's momentum in completing each and every step of the load out process.



RANDY STOTLER/STAFF  
 National Guard soldiers in the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery trained recently on Fort Sill's west range in anticipation of deploying for action in Operation Enduring Freedom. With the end of major hostilities in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the soldiers in the unit are scheduled to be demobilized by the end of this month.

# 1st-158th to stand down

## Soldiers were ready for war

Two units of the Oklahoma Army National Guard mobilized for Operation Enduring Freedom will be returning to their home stations later this month, according to a press release issued Tuesday by the Oklahoma National Guard.

The Headquarters, Headquarters Battery of the 45th Field Artillery Brigade, headquartered in Enid, and the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery, headquartered in Lawton, will leave Fort Sill in mid-May where the units

were completing mobilization processing.

The South Dakota National Guard announced on its Web site April 28 that the 1st of the 158th's sister battalion, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery of Salem, Mitchell and Yankton, S.D., received orders to demobilize May 21. The two battalions were paired up at Fort Sill in March to make a complete brigade and did field training together.

SEE GUARD, 3A

The morale and esprit-de-corps was extremely high, the soldiers rejoiced in their realization that their country had called them and wanted them to serve and the soldiers walked around with buttons bursting of pride as they showed solidarity in this new Post 911 call up. The Battle to Bagdad was a daily event featured on every television channel in the U.S. and the nation watched the tempo of the CENTCOM Coalition forces as they battled the Iraqi forces.

The 1/158th FA (MLRS) had 9 April 2003 penciled in on the training schedule: "load ships at the port of Beaumont, Texas." That day came and went while the battalion awaited its repair parts to arrive and the warning order to move out. The scuttlebutt was that the sandstorm of biblical proportions that hit the Iraqi theater on 25-27 March 2003, had bottlenecked the floating fleets at Diego Garcia as well as the ports in Texas.

Another week came and went and still there were no orders to move out to the Ports of Beaumont. On 14 April 2003 the 3rd Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Divisions had seized Baghdad and Tikrit; effectively ending the regime of Saddam Hussein and the Baathist Party. The 1/158th FA (MLRS) was placed on "hold" and it was up to CENTCOM and FORSCOM to make a decision on whether to deploy the battalion into theater or reassign to a Homeland Defense mission, or demobilize. Soldiers were then forced to begin the agonizing process of continuing in the mobilization process of deployment in spite of rumors otherwise. Although the battalion was officially validated to deploy into theater, on 21 April

2003 the confirmation of the units worst fear arrived, the 1/158th FA (MLRS) would demobilize and the date was set for 27 May 2003. Within hours of the word coming down, soldiers began the process of clearing out of their billets and Motor Pool. Soldiers brought in from across the OKARNG and other states were processed for return. Det 2/1120th Maint would remain on active duty to support returning III Corps Artillery units until the 19th Maintenance Battalion was fully back to work.

The 1/158th FA (MLRS) returned to its armories on 12 May 2003, where soldiers were engaged in inventories, unloading and stowing equipment and cleaning the armories. Staff handled the myriad missions of legally and correctly demobilizing the battalion, with the added futility of State Area Command pulling equipment from Det 2/1120th Maint and personnel and equipment from the battalion. Regardless of the new-found status as a state resource pool, the 1/158th FA (MLRS) remained ready to serve the Nation and the State of Oklahoma with all the skill, knowledge, and vigor as befits the modern Cincinnatus.

By order of Major General Michael D. Maples, Commander Headquarters, US Army Field Artillery Center and Fort Sill, REFRAD Orders 136-0753 dated 16 May 2003 was distributed to every soldier in the 1/158th FA (MLRS) in facsimile order form below:

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, US ARMY FIELD ARTILLERY CENTER AND FORT SILL  
FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA 73503-5100**

ORDERS 136 - 0753

16 May 2003

010 158 FA HHS MLRS (WYHOTO) FT SILL OK

You are reassigned to the U.S. Army transition point shown for transition processing. After processing, you are released from active duty not by reason of physical disability and assigned as indicated on the date immediately following release from active duty. Any temporary appointments held are terminated on your effective date of release from active duty. If you are delayed in reporting to the transition point, you still must report to the transition point as soon as possible or as authorized to receive a new effective date of release from active duty.

Assigned to for transition processing: US ARMY TRANSITION CENTER (WOVG1A) FORT SILL OK 73503-5100

Reporting date to transition point: 27 May 2003

Date of release from active duty unless changed/rescinded: 27 May 2003

Attached to: US ARMY TRANSITION POINT, FORT SILL, OK 73503

Assigned to: HHS 1 BN 158 FA MLRS, LAWTON, OK 73507

Terminal date of Reserve obligation: Not applicable

Additional instructions: a. Transition Assistance Management Program :

(1) Soldier is not entitled to separation pay IAW 10 USC 1174.

(2) Expiration medical: 030927

(3) Expiration post exchange/commissary: 030527

(4) For information on benefits and services see the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) office, Army Community Services (ACS) office and/or your military personnel office.

FOR THE COMMANDER: PEGGY A. BAILEY, Adjutant General.

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## **SECURITY FORCE (SECFOR) MOBILIZATION AND DEPLOYMENT**



On 14 December 2003, soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division captured Saddam Hussein without a fight. Well before the establishment of a new Iraqi government in 2005, the symmetry starts to change on the battle field. First it starts with insurgency, civil war and sectarian violence and the primarily target is the American led Multi-National Force.

A door is opened for the terrorist organization “al-Qaeda” to enter Iraq and start a war of attrition. It begins when four U.S. contractors are killed, burned, and hung from a bridge in Fallujah, and fueled with prisoner abuse inside the U.S. ran Abu Ghraib prison and retaliated with the beheading of U.S. businessman Nicholas Berg. “Al-Qaeda” begins a car-bomb offensive and the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) is used against the occupying forces. The guiding principles of Force Protection vary from operation to operation and soon any and every convoy becomes vulnerable to attack, and convoys are the logistical lifelines to every soldier. In 2005 the III Corps Support

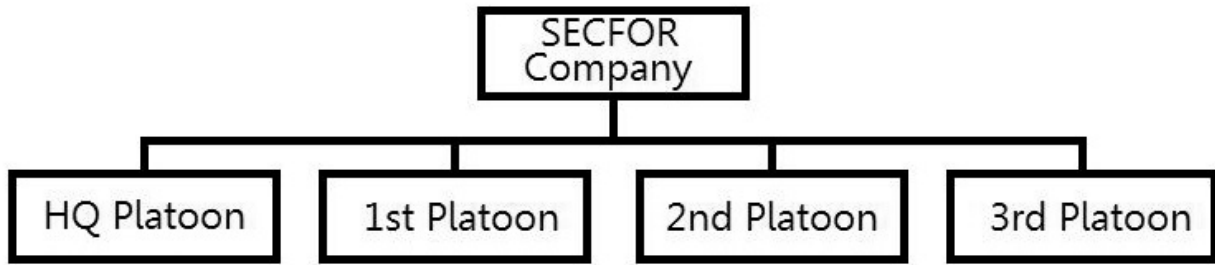
Command, conducted over 37,000 convoys throughout the theater with exposure to 1,400 enemy engagements along the supply routes. They had four options regarding convoy security. They could resource security internally, task external organizations, use host nation security forces, or they could use private security companies. On a battlefield with no “front” or “rear” it soon required some form of a security force to protect convoys “outside the wire”.

On 3 June 2005 the 1/158th FA (MLRS) battalion received alert orders notifying them of an impending 18 month mobilization and deployment as a Security Force (SECFOR) Company. In this uncertain time of Iraqi sectarian war, bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, torture and insurgency the mission would not be a traditional field artillery one but one that would reflect the current needs of the ever changing battlefield. And with this mission and the heightened security posture on all roads in Iraq, it dictated that new Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) be learned.

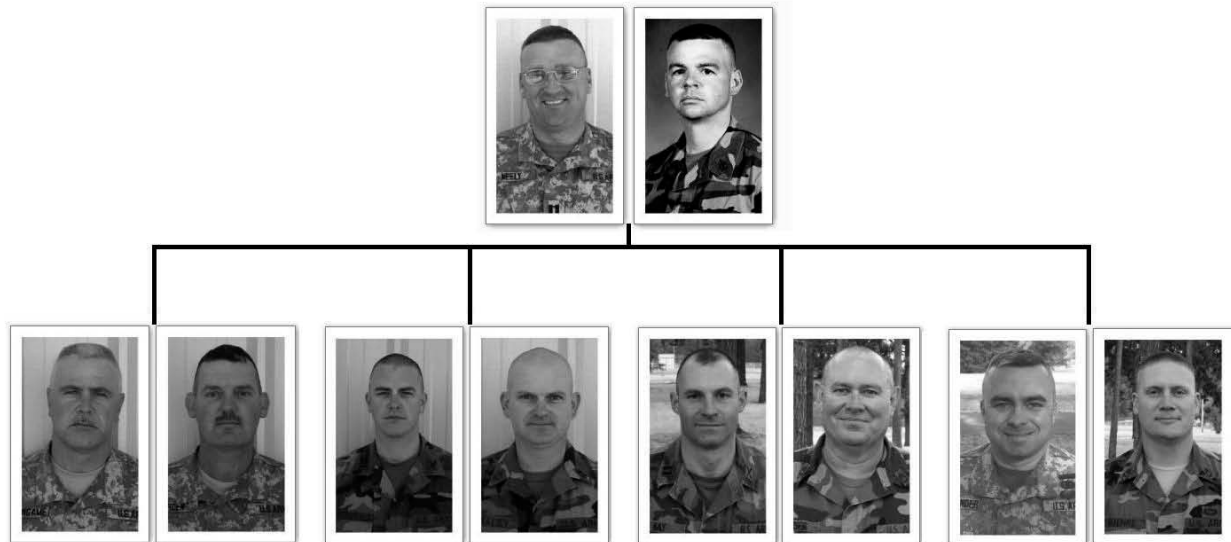


The organization of the 1/158th SECFOR Company (WYHOT2) Derivative Unit Identification Code (DUIC) would be very basic, and the Deployment Manning Document (DMD) called for a 152 man company with four platoons, a HQ platoon and with three security force platoons. The HQ would consist of a command team, operations, supply, communications and maintenance sections with the security platoons consisting of four squads, each squad served as a security element. The platoon leaders capable of operating independently as the situation dictated. This change of mission resulted in the battalion altering its training area from Fort Sill to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, in order to concentrate on security patrols, security escorts, and close quarter combat training. The mission required 152 men providing a “security force” so the training centered around squads running three-gun truck missions primarily but with the flexibility to patrol and secure Iraqi highways. Soldiers trained in full “battle-rattle” including body armor and Kevlar helmets and full weaponry, adding 35 (plus) pounds of additional weight. Soldiers trained on the M4 carbine, 9mm pistol, M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW), M240B machine gun and the M2HB 50 caliber machine gun as well as marksmanship, and Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT). This realistic training replicated the down range conditions that the men would be introduced to but more importantly it developed confident leaders and instilled the warrior ethos in the soldiers, giving them an early advantage in the deployment.





In August 2005, Captain Charles L. Neely and First Sergeant Jimmy L. Venable, both of Battery “B” were selected as the commander and first sergeant of the newly formed 1/158th SECFOR Company. The Headquarters Platoon would be commanded by First Sergeant William C. Blasengame and Sergeant First Class Ira P. Burden. The First, Second, and Third Platoons’ Platoon Leaders and Platoon Sergeants would be First Lieutenant Mark A. Fitzgerald and Sergeant First Class Mark R. Braley, Captain Kent A. Ray and Sergeant First Class John M. Kaiser, and First Lieutenant William E. Ponder and Sergeant First Class Scott T. Buehre, respectively.



On 5 September 2005, the 1/158th SECFOR boarded onto a plane and flew to Joint Base McCord-Lewis, Washington for theater specific training. They arrived at McCord Air Force Base and were billeted in the WWII-style barracks at North Fort Lewis. Here the soldiers spent three months training to be a Security Force Company. The 1/158th SECFOR practiced in many scenarios that included IED with casualties, IED without casualties, vehicle breakdown, door-to-door urban combat, escalation of force, and route closure. The training was battle-focused and realistic which allowed the security force to get the chance to react to IEDs and small-arms fire but more importantly it forged team building that would be needed to survive the demanding mission. When this training phase was completed the soldiers were given four-day passes and authorized to travel to Oklahoma for four days to see their families before deploying overseas.



When they returned, they'd have two weeks of final training at Yakima Training Center, Washington before flying across the Middle East. In November 2005 the 1/158th SECFOR traveled to the camp at the eastern side of the training center. Here the field training exercises used IED scenarios with situational training lanes with plenty of walk-through rehearsals of actions and reactions and rehearsals of fire commands. The training was invaluable when it came to building crew confidence. Training was conducted in the cold, desolate and snowy environment of the northwest and the only refuge there was a restaurant and bar called "The Oasis". On 24 November 2005, the men of the 1/158th SECFOR gathered and celebrated Thanksgiving Day together; on the following Monday Captain Neely received the following orders:

By order of Lieutenant General James M. Dubik, Commander Headquarters, I Corps and Fort Lewis, Permanent Orders 332-601 & 332-602 dated 28 November 2005 was distributed to the 1/158th SECFOR Company (WYHOT2) in facsimile order format below.

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**Headquarters, I Corps and Fort Lewis**  
**Fort Lewis, Washington 98433-5000**

PERMANENT ORDERS 332-601 & 602  
 158 FA BN 1 HHS FWD 2 5A (WYHOT2), FORT LEWIS, WA 98433-5000

28 November 2005

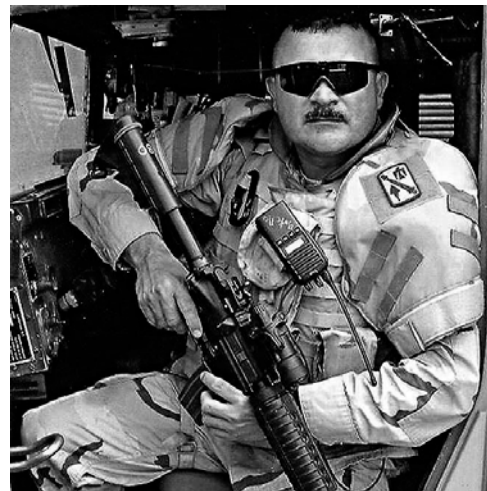
The following organization/unit action is directed.  
 Assigned to: US CENTCOM AOR (W4FGAA)  
 Action: Temporary Change of Station (TCS) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom  
 Number of days: 447  
 Will proceed date: 4 DECEMBER 2005  
 Authority: FORSCOM  
 Accounting Classification: 2162020.0000 01-1100 P135198 21 \*\*/22\*\*/25\*\* FAB158TB33202 VIRQ F9203 5570 S12120 (OIF)  
 Additional Instructions: CIC: 262013519812120  
 FOR THE COMMANDER: Signed: JOANNE C. CLARK, Chief, Soldier Readiness.





The soldiers returned back to their WWII-style barracks at North Fort Lewis on 1 December 2005 and started packing their duffels bags and cleaning the barracks. On 4 December 2005 the 1/158th SECFOR boarded aircraft at Joint Base McCord-Lewis, for their long flight, stopping in Maine, Ireland, and Hungary before touching down at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

They arrived at the Kuwait City Airport late at night where they were immediately placed on buses and shuttled off towards Camp Buehring (formerly Camp Udairi). At the camp reception, soldiers were briefed on infamous “General Order Number One”; a standing order issued 30 August 1990 by General Norman Schwarzkopf and restricted the behavior of troops to avoid insulting the host country. To the soldiers it meant no alcohol; no gambling; and no pornography. The area surrounding Camp Buehring, known as the Udairi Range Complex, is largely uninhabited, except for a few nomadic Bedouin tribes raising camels, goats, and sheep and nearby in the same range complex is Camp New York. The 1/158th SECFOR was staged in “tent city” where they would spend the next two weeks preparing for their security mission by acclimatizing and training.

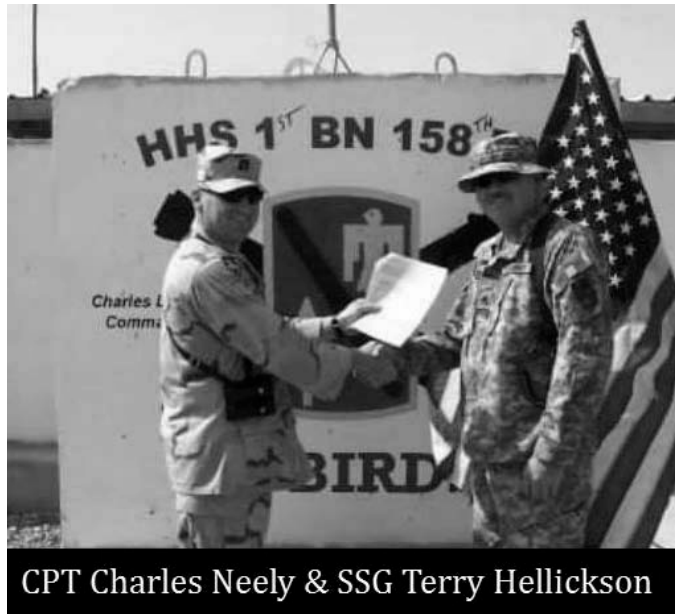


In late December 2005 the 1/158th SECFOR boarded a plane to Al-Bakr Air Base, called both Balad Air Base by the U.S. Air Force and Anaconda Logistics Support Area (LSA) by the U.S. Army, and later renamed Joint Base Balad. But the name it was synonymous with “LSA Bombaconda” by all branches of service. Anaconda, or Balad Air Base changed later to Joint Base Balad, which is approximately 40 miles north of Baghdad. Mortar rounds and rockets were fired into the base on a daily basis and the soldiers dubbed it the nickname “Mortarville”. After landing the 1/158th SECFOR filed off the aircraft and was ushered through a corridor of “T-walls” for a welcoming brief. Each soldier took a seat and hoped to stay awake and after the endless briefings, the soldiers moved to their temporary housing at “tent city” only to be welcomed that night with a barrage of incoming mortars. Eventually Containerized Housing Units (CHUs) became available and they moved into their new housing. They are attached to the 49th Military Police Brigade of the California ARNG with the mission of route security.

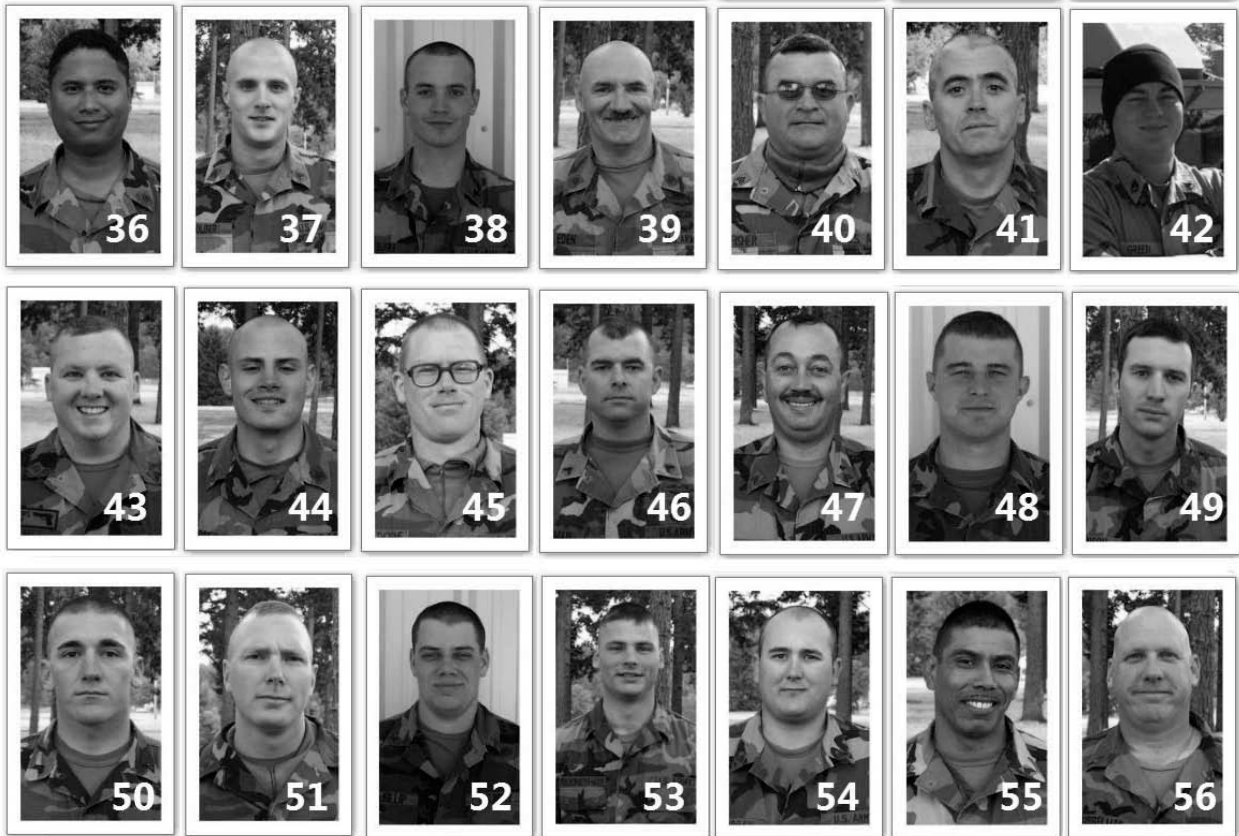


The 1/158th SECFOR replaced the 1st Battalion 623rd Field Artillery of the Kentucky ARNG; who had already lost 2 soldiers; and whose mission was to patrol and secure Highway One; the main north-south highway; designated as Main Supply Route (MSR) Tampa. MSR Tampa which started in Kuwait through

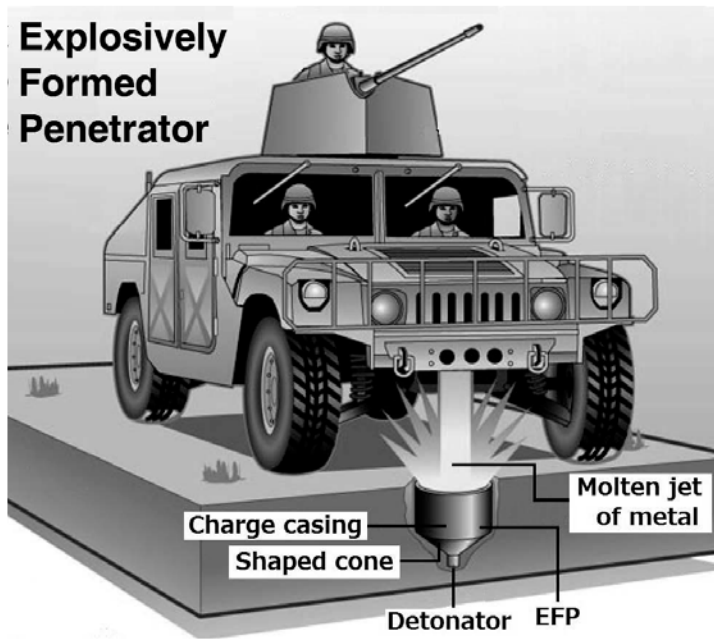
Baghdad ending in Mosul was a hot spot for insurgency activity and had a history of numerous fatalities. In this era of civil war in Iraq there were no battle lines and no rules. Along this road the 1/158th SECFOR was in the crossfire of violence that resulted in assassinations, kidnappings, “death squads”, torture and bombings. The odds were against them and it was perilous duty but they racked up a myriad of missions, performing numerous combat missions during their rotation such as Logistics Convoys and Tactical Convoy Security and Quick Reaction Force (QRF). All the miles were “hard” miles but the “hardest miles” were the security escort missions. These were considered high-visibility operations due to the nature of safety and security for the occupants that were being escorted. Many times these missions required that the tactical situations dictated driving against the flow of traffic, crossing into oncoming traffic, and or driving over medians to prevent civilian traffic from intermingling with the convoy. But what really made them obvious were the imaginary bubbles around the vehicles and any civilian vehicle entering that bubble could and would be considered a hostile threat. Along with the high visibility convoys there was an increased awareness and realization that maybe some of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's men were hiding behind car wrecks, watching through the cross hairs of an AK-47 or “range timing” the convoy.



CPT Charles Neely & SSG Terry Hellickson



On a typical day the 1/158th SECFOR would head out on some of the most notorious stretches of highways in Iraq, that were labeled as IED “hotspots” and even the most seasoned troops were second thinking about active deterrence measures as they mentally drove the routes. Highways were nothing more than sun baked asphalt, littered with garbage, potholes, dead animal carcasses, dried blood, broken down cars, building debris and mysterious piles of stones and trash bags all the classic indicators of an IED minefield. The current Rules of Engagement (ROE) prohibited personnel from pointing weapons at Iraqi civilians in order to build trust with the populace but every convoy was being observed for any signs of weakness or collecting intelligence to be passed on to the insurgents. Understanding asymmetrical warfare regarding no front or rear battle lines, the 1/158th SECFOR soon became experts in detecting and preventing substantial risks along these highways. Just forcing military vehicles through traffic was not enough, the unit had required every convoy member, regardless of military occupation, to recognize a threat situation and then react immediately and appropriately. One of the most dangerous spots along the highway was Check Point 59A, between Balad and Baghdad and easily identified by its two thick groves of date palm trees which provided cover and concealment for the insurgents. It was known for routine IED strikes and ambushes but by adopting and implementing the convoy TTPs for CP 59A the security force soon “owned” the roads.



The 1/158th SECFOR received its fair share of IED hits as well as seeing the introduction of “Soleimani’s Legacy”, the Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFPs) onto the Iraqi battlefield. One of the deadliest forms of IED, the EFP which was smuggled in from Iran, was able to target and destroy vehicles with a powerful blast that originated from a concave cylindrical shaped charge that once detonated turns the disc into a high velocity slug capable of penetrating most armored vehicles. EFPs were first used by Lebanese Hizballah against the Israelis, and offer significant advantages over any IED. The EFPs required careful milling of a concave copper plate that once detonated will turn into a super-sonic directionally fired molten slug that can go through the hull of a tank. It was only the size of a coffee can but once initiated it could reach speeds of Mach Six or 2,000

meters per second. It was often hidden in a piece of styrofoam and painted to look like concrete block or a rock. The only telltale indicator was colloquially termed the “Eye of Allah” and it was the aiming system which was a small passive infrared lens cover peeking out of the foam. A new system was introduced to counter the EFP called the “Passive Infrared Defeat System” which used heat to prematurely detonate any hidden IEDs while the vehicle were a safe distance away from the blast, it was known simply as “Rhino” because of it’s 10 feet extended arm, it looked like the horn of a rhinoceros. The insurgent’s countermeasure for this was to have the EFP detonate ten feet from detection source but the Rhino system had an adjustable arm extension countering this.





Iraqi insurgents became very clever along the highways and used a wide variety of initiating systems to trigger IED detonations. These triggers are often called “command” or “remote” but in Iraq most IEDs are detonated through human interaction by placing a receiver on the IED and then triggering the detonation with electronic impulses over a wire circuit or via a wireless signal. Common examples of these are cell phones, pagers, cordless telephones, automatic garage-door openers, car alarms, wireless doorbells, and remote-controlled toys. “Remote” triggers are trip wires, tilt rods, and pressure plates that activate the triggering mechanism. But the 1/158th SECFOR was able to counter these with technology that used the Humvee’s own power supply; a radio-frequency jammer called the “Acorn” and after a few upgrades the “Warlock” system was being used in the warzone.



## CAMP ECHO, DIWANIYAH, IRAQ 2009

Kneeling : SFC Mark Braley – Danish Army CPT Tomas Christensen  
 SGT Christopher Bussell, SSG Earl Johnson, SPC Zachary Jessen, SPC George Crawford, SGT Jesse Neugebauer,  
 SPC William Martin, SGT Lance Harper, SPC Aaron Helton, SGT Roberto Herrera, SSG William Straily, SPC Joshua Lynn.

The 1/158th SECFOR patrolled the highways where foreign fighters lurked and an average patrol took them north to Mosul then west to Tal Afar turning around going back through Mosul and now east to Irbil turning around going back to Mosul and then south to Baghdad and then turning around going back north to Balad, spending the nights in different FOBs along the route. Like all FOBs they offered

American comforts like Popeye's Chicken and Burger King fast-food trailers, laundry and recreation centers and internet cafes however needless to say the hazards of the route outweighed the comforts along the route.



2006 turns into the "Year of the Police" with special emphasis on using Police Transition Teams (PTTs) to empower the Interior Ministry's capability this changes the mission of the 1/158th SECFOR and they are now attached to the 89th Military Police Brigade from Fort Hood, Texas who arrived in August 2006 and its primary responsibility was the Iraqi Police training mission. They immediately transition from Balad to the Victory Base complex at Baghdad and move into Camp Liberty and will remain headquartered here until they depart for home. Here they must detach elements to Camp Delta, Camp Echo and Camp Rustamiyah in their support of 89th MP Brigade PTT operations.

Camp Delta is approximately 100 miles south of Baghdad near Al Kut on the left bank of the Tigris River and less than 25 miles from the Iranian border. Camp Delta was primarily manned by multi-national forces, Polish, Kazakhstan, El Salvadorian, Georgian, Lithuanian, and British. This was the home of the Center South Academy who was responsible for day to day operations and where the Coalition forces trained Iraqi soldiers and police and American police officers mentored Iraqi Police. Camp Echo is south and near Diwaniyah, a dirt-poor city of half a million, and capital city of rural Qadisiya Province. At one time it had a functioning tire factory that made tires for most of Iraq. Here the Polish army along with Ukrainians, Romanians, Lithuanians and Mongolian troops had the daunting task of training candidates into a robust force now termed the "Iraqi National Police". The small American contingent was limited to military advisers to the Iraqi division and the 89th MP Brigade MPs that worked with the Iraqi police. Camp Rustamiyah is located six miles southeast of Sadr City in Baghdad. It is situated between a waste incineration facility and a sewage treatment plant, and is noted by all visitors for its unpleasant air quality and smell was nicknamed "Camp Rusty". Eventually this was turned over back to the Iraqi army and under NATO direction it was re-opened as the Iraqi Military Academy. At these camps the 1/158th SECFOR carried out its missions under the auspices of the 89th MP Brigade until their relief unit arrives in theater.



SSG Nickolas Green next to Up-Armored HUMVEE





In November 2006, the 142nd Infantry Regiment of the Texas Army National Guard replaced the 1/158th SECFOR and conducted a Relief In Place-Transfer of Authority (RIP-TOA). The RIP is sometimes called the “left seat-right seat” and is the formal train up of the new unit so there will be a seamless transition on the day that the new unit assumes command. The TOA is the paper work bureaucracy required and the finality is normally a formal ceremony symbolizing the transfer of authority. Once this occurs there was nothing left to do but prepare for the journey to home station and the first stop on the journey home is Camp Virginia, Kuwait where they spent Thanksgiving Day 2006. They had conducted over 1,400 combat missions and had logged in over 125,000 “hard” miles on Iraq’s most dangerous road; which was a magnet for bullets, rockets, mortars, IEDs, and suicide; without a fatality and the next day they left Kuwait and flew into Fort Sill, Oklahoma to a rousing welcome home ceremony.





**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**Headquarters, First United States Army**  
**4705 N. Wheeler Drive**  
**Forest Park, Georgia 30297-5000**

PERMANENT ORDERS: 5A-05-210-020 (A1)

15 September 2006

The following order is amended as indicated.

So much of PERMANENT ORDERS 5A-05-210-020, Headquarters, First United States Army, Forest Park, Georgia 30297-5000 dated 11/10/2005.

Pertaining to the mobilization of: 0158 FA BN 01 HHS FWD 2 (WYHOT2), FT SILL, OK.

As reads:

Period: 545 DAYS, UIC: WYHOT2, Standard Name of Line Unit: 0158 FA BN 01 HHS FWD 2, PAX: 23/129, Effective Date (Home Station, Ft Sill, OK): 08/29/2005, Effective Date (MOB Station, Ft Lewis, WA): 09/01/2005. Clarifying Instructions: Operation OIF, Unit will demobilize at Ft Sill, OK.

**Authority:** HQDA MSG 030125ZJun05/DAMO-ODM/: ORDTYP/AMENDORD/AMEND 868-05 AND FIRST/FIFTH Army FOR THE COMMANDER: Signed: HERBERT V. FLORA, JR. Chief, Mobilization Division.

Caddo County's daily newspaper ... informing the community since 1901. Volume 106 Number 89 8 Pages

# THE Anadarko Daily News

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**50 cents Single Copy Price** **Monday, November 27, 2006**

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**Several Anadarko Guards return**

## About 150 soldiers returned to Fort Sill from Iraq duty

LAWTON, Okla. (AP) — Just as family and friends welcomed about 150 soldiers back home from Iraq on Sunday, another 50 or so prepared to leave for the Middle Eastern country.

Members of the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery worked various security missions during their deployment overseas for the past year.

Spc. Ulysses Henderson cradled his eight-month-old son, Jaedyn, whom he hadn't seen since the boy was six-weeks-old. Henderson said his son was his main source of inspiration.

"All I could think about was, 'Do whatever it takes to get back,'" said Henderson, a Lawton police officer who worked at a tactical operations center. "I saw a lot of the carnage, after-the-fact. These guys sacrificed so much."

About 50 friends and relatives wore yellow T-shirts with Sgt. Stephen Brosh's name printed on the back. Brosh's mother, Pam Brosh of Marlow, who broke into tears.

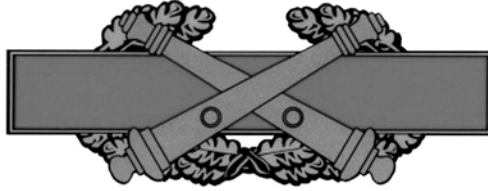
"I think that tells you what the past year has been like for her," Brosh's father, Shay, said. "I'm just so proud. They encountered a lot of dangers. ... We're just overwhelmed to see him."

As for the departing soldiers, they are being deployed at Fort Dix, N.J., with the 245th Engineer Company, said Oklahoma Army National Guard spokesman Col. Pat Scully.

They will join more than 600 Oklahoma Army and Air National Guardsmen who already are overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"This is, without question, the busiest period for the Oklahoma Army and Air National Guard since the Korean War," Scully said. "The thing we're very proud of is not once have we had a guardman or airman say they wouldn't serve. Everyone who has been called to duty in Oklahoma has answered that call."

SFC MARK BRALEY of Norman was welcomed home Sunday by his four-year-old son, Mason, as members of the Oklahoma National Guard returned to American soil from Operation Iraqi Freedom. Mason is the great-grandson of Pat and Walter Williams of Anadarko. Braley's wife, Adrienne, and their daughter, two-year-old Olivia, were right behind Mason to welcome their soldier. (Photo by SFC David Slezickcy)



## 2005 Security Force "SECFOR" Company \*

1 = SFC Vernon R. Defoor	49 = SGT William M. Johnson	97 = SPC Aaron J. Helton
2 = SFC Michael A. Hardsaw	50 = SGT Robert P. Lutonsky	98 = SPC Ulysses C. Henderson
3 = SFC Tracy T. Taylor	51 = SGT Randy J. McKay	99 = SPC David M. Herrera II
4 = SFC Emmanuel D. Williams	52 = SGT Danny McKillip	100 = SPC Tommy J. Holley
5 = SSG Erasmo Barron	53 = SGT Samuel L. Mooneyham	101 = SPC Jason L. Houston
6 = SSG Brant A. Brown	54 = SGT Lyndal C. Morgan	102 = SPC Earle G. Hudson
7 = SSG Jackie R. Bruesch	55 = SGT Adolfo F. Munoz	103 = SPC Zachary J. Jessen
8 = SSG Douglas E. Bueoy	56 = SGT Walter B. Musselman	104 = SPC Joseph C. Killman
9 = SSG Darin B. Carman	57 = SGT Jesse D. Neugebauer	105 = SPC Ryan M. King
10 = SSG Gregory D. Davis	58 = SGT Robert L. Newman	106 = SPC Matthew G. Leal
11 = SSG Terry D. Davis	59 = SGT Larry W. Nix	107 = SPC David D. Levere
12 = SSG Lance H. Grant	60 = SGT Bryan M. Nye	108 = SPC Joshua D. Lynn
13 = SSG Larry J. Harper	61 = SGT Wesley M. Parra	109 = SPC William J. Martin III
14 = SSG Brian K. Hekia	62 = SGT James D. Peacock	110 = SPC Jimmy W. Mitchell
15 = SSG Terry L. Hellickson	63 = SGT Kevin D. Pyle	111 = SPC Robert T. Mitchell
16 = SSG Kevin D. Hodge	64 = SGT Michael R. Schmidt	112 = SPC Sean D. Murray
17 = SSG Earl S. Johnson	65 = SGT Matthew A. Schoolfield	113 = SPC Christopher A. Newman
18 = SSG David S. Kemp	66 = SGT James D. Shepard	114 = SPC Raul Perez
19 = SSG Matthew D. Lima	67 = SGT Richard J. Sholar	115 = SPC Christopher M. Pollard
20 = SSG Kerry D. Pemberton	68 = SGT Michael F. Tenequer	116 = SPC Nathan L. Purdue
21 = SSG Vincente H. Pierre	69 = SGT Gordon R. Underwood	117 = SPC Nicholas C. Reed
22 = SSG Michael T. Stephens	70 = SGT Curtis A. Vasquez	118 = SPC Michael J. Reynolds
23 = SSG William J. Straily	71 = SGT John M. Weekley	119 = SPC Donald W. Roe
24 = SSG Darrell D. Taylor	72 = SGT Stephen D. Wilkerson	120 = SPC Adam J. Schuster
25 = SGT Joseph D. Bajza	73 = SGT Randy F. Woodman	121 = SPC John G. Shaw
26 = SGT James Y. Baldwin	74 = SGT Brendan K. Woolworth	122 = SPC Eric D. Sikes
27 = SGT Donald B. Brewer	75 = SPC Christopher S. Adamson	123 = SPC John P. Sklaney
28 = SGT Stephen M. Brosh	76 = SPC Matthew A. Adamson	124 = SPC Daniel R. Smith
29 = SGT James B. Brown	77 = SPC Preston M. Allen	125 = SPC Justin D. Smith
30 = SGT Christopher S. Bussell	78 = SPC Jason L. Bellar	126 = SPC Michael S. Smith
31 = SGT Matthew R. Caldwell	79 = SPC David A. Bowen	127 = SPC Kevin A. Spicer
32 = SGT Vernon R. Chambers	80 = SPC Zackary E. Brake	128 = SPC Steven K. Stanley
33 = SGT Obie B. Clements	81 = SPC Dewey K. Briscoe	129 = SPC Kevin N. Streeter
34 = SGT Brent T. Davis	82 = SPC Justin C. Cliburn	130 = SPC Jeffery V. Vandorn
35 = SGT Terry J. Davis	83 = SPC Aaron D. Cobb	131 = SPC Vencent L. Vigus
36 = SGT Kenry A. Dinwiddie	84 = SPC Richard K. Coleman	132 = SPC Jay P. Wick
37 = SGT Neil F. Dolder	85 = SPC Nickoles E. Collins	>< = SPC Joshua L. Wilcutt
38 = SGT Adam F. Duffy	86 = SPC Billy S. Cooper	133 = SPC Justin E. Wilkerson
39 = SGT Randy G. Eden	87 = SPC Nathaniel E. Cordes	134 = SPC Lance M. Zerger
40 = SGT Felix M. Fisher	88 = SPC George A. Crawford	135 = PFC Derek W. Baldwin
41 = SGT Wesley V. Freeman	89 = SPC Kenneth J. Crites	136 = PFC Steven C. Fike
42 = SGT Nicholas R. Green	90 = SPC Joshua D. Davis	137 = PFC Jon P. Gomez
43 = SGT Dustin R. Hames	91 = SPC Kevin R. Dornan	138 = PFC Eric J. Hitchcock
44 = SGT Lance C. Harper	92 = SPC Christopher M. Durham	139 = PFC Jedediah W. May
45 = SGT Christopher H. Heckathorne	93 = SPC Shawn R. Earhart	140 = PVT Jonathan A. Ditch
46 = SGT Thomas W. Herman	94 = SPC Billie J. England	141 = PVT Joseph B. Story
47 = SGT Roberto Herrera	95 = SPC Justin B. Finch	>> No Photo Available
48 = SGT Thomas E. Hillier	96 = SPC Aaron M. Gray	

## HURRICANE KATRINA DISASTER

While the 1/158th SECFOR Company was preparing for their deployment and at 0610 hours 29 August 2005, Hurricane Katrina rolled ashore near Buras, Louisiana with winds in excess of 125 MPH and breaching three of the levees that protected the city of New Orleans. Within hours the city was flooded and as Katrina passed through the Gulf coast region it left a trail of death and destruction. Many were unaware



that the National Response Plan had already been initiated and the U. S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) had established Joint Task Force Katrina at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, to provide military support should this disaster turn into a catastrophe. Although President Bush declared a state of emergency 48 hours prior to touchdown and NORTHCOM took proactive steps, Hurricane Katrina took 1,833 lives, cause an estimated 81 billion dollars worth of damage and forced nearly 1.2 million residents of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida to evacuate the Gulf coast.

On 26 August 2005, Governor Kathleen Blanco declared a state of emergency for Louisiana which authorized the State Adjutant General, Major General Bennett C. Landreneau, to call up 2,000 LAARNG soldiers onto state active duty. He also established Task Force (TF) Pelican to serve as the command and control headquarters for all troops serving in the state throughout the crisis. Initially, five functional task forces were organized under TF Pelican but as more soldiers arrived the task organization changed. It now consisted of six functional TF's known as Task Force Santa Fe, Castle, Griffin, Defender, Eagle and Belle Chasse, each with its own sub unit TF's. TF Santa Fe was commanded by Major General James R. Mason of the 35th Infantry Division, KSARNG and consisted of Task Force Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, Terrebonne, Tangipahoa, St. Tammany, Lafourche, Plaquemines and Washington. The core of TF Orleans came from two brigades, the 45th Infantry Brigade from OKARNG and the 41st Infantry Brigade from ORARNG.

## **OPERATION "JUMP START"**

At 0100 hours on 21 April 2006, a couple hundred men, women and children lined up for a "banzai attack", where they would amass and line up on the south side of the border fence that separated Mexico from Arizona. On command they would suddenly charge and penetrate the gaps and holes in the fence. The U.S. Border Patrol stood ready to apprehend all the illegal intruders however after the melee ended about half of them avoided capture and had penetrated into the American desert and faded into the night. This tactic was soon a common occurrence on the Southwest border.

In May of 2006, President Bush requested 6,000 National Guard troops to slow the tide of illegal immigration across America's southern border named "Operation Jump Start". The intent was to use guardsmen to assist and support the Border Patrol with administrative, observational, intelligence gathering capacities, and civil engineering projects, to act as the eyes and ears for the understaffed Border Patrol which would free up agents to support the field units, while additional agents were trained up. With guardsmen manning the binoculars, cameras and sensors, Border Patrol agents are free to track and capture those who enter the country illegally.

Many of the guardsmen served in two-member "Entry Identification Teams" which were located in rugged outposts, south of Deming, New Mexico. Strategically placed are "skyboxes", which is a camouflaged 25-square-foot room, which raises the guardsmen 30 feet above the ground for a better view. Here they scan the landscape with binoculars and monitor cameras that cover areas outside the binoculars' reach. On these outposts the days vary, on many days there isn't a lot of action and the daytime boredom is due, in part, to the soldiers' presence. Busloads of migrants head west on the dirt road on the Mexican side looking for a safer place to cross, but some immigrants attempt the crossing despite the National Guard presence. Many try to exploit the night by using the cover of darkness to conceal their movements but all it does is make the night shift busier than the day shift.

Border Patrol officials say about 95 percent of those crossing the border illegally are economic immigrants seeking work and a better life for their families. Every day there's transient traffic arriving on the border; these "turistas" linger around until they meet up with their "coyote" smugglers who are playing a cat-and-mouse game with the Border patrol by looking for an unmonitored entry route into the United States.

In August 2006, thirty-eight guardsmen from 1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery (MLRS) deployed to Deming, New Mexico to help in the effort to improve security along the Mexican and U.S. border. For their participation in "Operation Jump Start" and for aiding the Department of Homeland Security by enforcement of border security from 16 May 2006 to 16 July 2008 the soldiers were awarded the Armed Forces Service Medal.

## TRANSFORMATION

### CHARACTERISTICS

**LENGTH:** 16.5 FEET  
**WIDTH:** 7 FEET  
**HEIGHT:** 7.5 FEET  
**WEIGHT:** 18 TONS  
**SPEED:** 58 MPH  
**RANGE:** 300 MILES  
**CREW:** 3



### ARMAMENT

**TYPE:** 6 EACH 227MM ROCKETS  
**RANGE:** 45 KILOMETERS  
**GMLRS:** 300 KILOMETERS

load and unload the system. The FCS includes video, keyboard control, a gigabyte of program storage, Global Positioning System (GPS) and allows fire missions to be carried out in automatic or manual mode. The FCS aims the launcher in 16 seconds, then prompts the crew to arm and fire a preselected number of rounds or select a pre-programmed multiple mission sequence. HIMARS is capable of firing the entire MLRS family of munitions, including reduced or extended range rockets. The rocket system carries a single six-pack of MLRS rockets, or one Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) missile. The Extended-Range MLRS rocket (ER-MLRS) range is more than 45km and the new extended range Guided MLRS (GMLRS) has 70km range. The long-range ATACMS can deliver assorted sub-munitions from ranges of 165km to 300km.

Beginning in 2007 the new Army transformation changed the 45th Field Artillery Brigade (FAB) to the 45th Fires Brigade (FiB) and the 1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery (MLRS) being its organic shooter began its conversion from a MLRS to a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) battalion. They were equipped with nine of the modified M140 5-ton tactical vehicle trucks from the original one hundred and fourteen vehicles built at the factory. The HIMARS is the newest member of the MLRS family but on a wheeled chassis. It is intended to engage and defeat artillery, air-defense concentrations, trucks, and lightly armored vehicles. The HIMARS launches its rockets and moves away from the area at a high speed before enemy forces can locate the launch site.

The rocket system is operated by a crew of three: the driver, gunner and section chief but with the computer based Fire Control System (FCS) a single soldier can

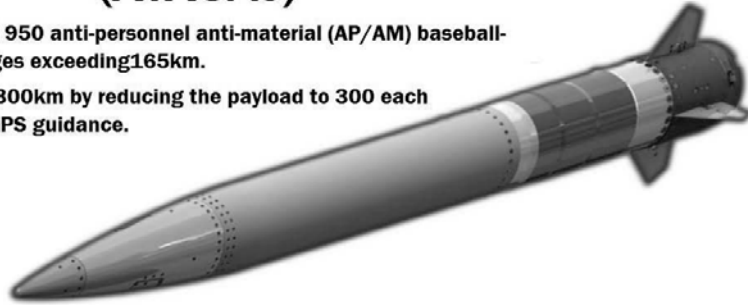
### M26 Rocket

- \* Extended Range MLRS rocket (ER-MLRS) improves the basic M26 range of 32km to 45km.
- \* Extension of the HIMARS rocket motor, results in payload reduction to 518 each M85 grenades, but better effectiveness in dispersion.
- \* Extended Range Guided Rocket GMLRS, with a range of 70km.



## Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS)

- \* Block I ATACMS missile delivers 950 anti-personnel anti-material (AP/AM) baseball-sized M74 submunitions to ranges exceeding 165km.
- \* Block IA missile range exceeds 300km by reducing the payload to 300 each (AP/AM) bomblets and adding GPS guidance.



All of this firepower is carried by the army's Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles (FMTV) a 6x6 all-wheel drive 5ton truck. The vehicle weighs approximately 24,000lbs and is transportable on the C-130 aircraft, to areas that were once inaccessible to heavier rocket launchers, allowing the system to evolve into a force projection asset of the Rapid Force Projection Initiative (RFPI).

On 25 April 2007, with the assistance of the 58th Airlift Squadron from Altus Air Force Base, Battery "C" 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) tested the air mobility capability of the system. Two C-17 "Globemaster's" landed at Henry Post Army Air Field, Fort Sill, Oklahoma and within 30 minutes, three of the launchers and two High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) were loaded, where they then took off and flew into Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, unloaded and conducted an 18 rocket live-fire mission.

## ALEXANDER HAMILTON AWARD 2007

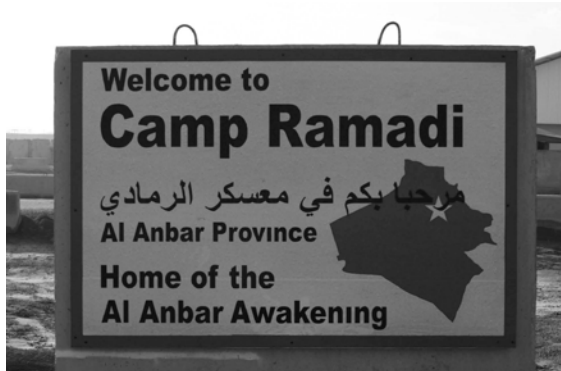


Another milestone of this transformation was that Battery "C", 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) was selected as the "Alexander Hamilton Best Army National Guard Battery" for 2007. The award is named for Alexander Hamilton, a Revolutionary War Artilleryman and American statesman and it annually recognizes a high-performing Army National Guard battery based on specific criteria. The battery was commanded by Captain Donald A. Anderson and its NCO leader was First Sergeant Dennis R. Cooper.

## OPERATION "IRAQI FREEDOM"

On 10 February 2007, General David H. Petraeus was made commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I), overseeing all forces in Iraq, and he outlined the new "Surge" strategy. The new primary goal of military operations in Iraq was: "to create stability and security to protect the Iraqi people" and consider the Iraqi government as the country's new center of gravity. What occurred next was the positioning of

new troops, over 20,000, in and around Baghdad. Then on June 15, 2007, Operation “Phantom Thunder” began, which was the offensive against Al Qaeda, Sunni and Shi’a extremists and all other insurgent strongholds. By late 2007, there was significant reduction in violence and casualties as the “Surge” began to wind down. The most significant development, termed the “Anbar Awakening”, was when Sheikh Abdul Sattar Ahu Risha of the Albu Risha tribe and 40 other sheikhs forged an alliance with U.S. forces to expel al-Qaeda fighters out of Iraq. The Awakening helped establish the conditions that would eventually allow the hand-over of the Al Anbar Province back to the Iraqis. The U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was approved by the Iraqi government on 4 December 2008 and it established that U.S. forces would withdraw from Iraqi cities by 30 June 2009, and that all U.S. forces would be completely out of Iraq by 31 December 2011 or sooner. As the “surge troops” started to withdraw there was a scramble to fill the voids that would secure the remaining forces.



A few years earlier the US State Department had introduced the PRTs into Iraq to speed up stabilization operations as local governments developed the ability to self govern especially after decades of centralized control under the Baathist regime. Their purpose of all PRTs was to provide expert advice and assistance to the local civil governments as they transitioned over to self-governance. This idea was borrowed from Afghanistan, where PRTs, who were military-staffed, were used extensively. However in Iraq, the PRTs would be mainly staffed by approximately 800 bilingual and bicultural civilians and they would be partnered with a BCT for transportation and their force protection assets. The

balance of responsibilities for civil and military units varied by location in Iraq, as was the arrangements.

Beginning in 2006, the Army had integrated the Rotational Force Pool of Deploying (RFPD) units to meet the 12-month mobilization deployment policies. Prior to the Notification of Sourcing (NOS) units focus training on mission essential task lists but after NOS occurs the unit focuses on the combatant command requirements. As normal troop deployments were planned for rotation in support of OIF security duties, 18,000 troops including the 45th Fires Brigade, 56th Brigade Combat Team, 36th Infantry Division, 29th Brigade Combat Team and the 81st Brigade Combat Team were alerted for their deployments. The 45th Fires Brigade consisted of the Headquarters and two battalions, the 1st Battalion (HIMARS) 158th Field Artillery and the 1st Battalion 271st Brigade Support Battalion. The brigade consists of a Headquarters unit based in Enid, Oklahoma, the 1st Battalion (HIMARS) 158th Field Artillery with units in Lawton, Walters, Duncan, Marlow, Chickasha and Anadarko, Oklahoma and the 1st Battalion 271st Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) with units in Altus, Hobart, Clinton, Elk City and Weatherford, Oklahoma.

The 45th FiB's mission would be to support the Area Support Group (ASG)-Kuwait at Camp Arifjan with base camp life support operations, force protection, and Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSOI) into the Iraqi theater gateway. The 45th Fires Brigade was also tasked to provide a combat arms battalion to fill a “Request for Forces” (RFF) No. 828 from the II Marine Expeditionary Force (FORWARD), commanded by Major General Richard T. Tryon, in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq. The manning requirement for the RFF No. 828 was 425 total personnel (325 for the mission and 100 support personnel) who would report directly to the II MEF Fwd and serve three functions:

1. Provide a company sized security element for base defense of Camp Ramadi and Command and Control (C2) of the camp's Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC).
2. Provide a company sized security element to conduct Personal Security Details (PSD) for Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).
3. Provide a 40 man security detail for the Marine Provincial Police Training Team (PPTT) operating from the Provincial Government Center (PGC) in the heart of Ramadi.

The mobilization was capped at 12 months under the new RFPD guidance which included a 2 month post-mobilization training period and 10 months “boots on the ground” in Iraq for the actual mission.



The 45th Fires Brigade consisted of the Headquarters and two battalions, the 1st Battalion (HIMARS) 158th Field Artillery and the 1st Battalion 271st Brigade Support Battalion. The brigade tasked organized with the 45th FiB at the ASG mission at Camp Arifjan, the 271st BSB was stationed at Camp Buehring, Kuwait conducting base camp operations and life support operations there and the 1-158th FA (HIMARS), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Gregory L. Lankford and senior enlisted Command Sergeant Major Jimmy L. Venable, would fulfill the RFF No. 828 mission at Camp Ramadi.

The 1-158th FA task organized needed to “plus up” to 425 personnel which included 100 personnel from the 120th Forward Support Company (FSC), the third line company of the 271st BSB. The 120th FSC was commanded by Captain Justin Blount of Lubbock, Texas and First Sergeant Mark L. Rackley of Chandler, Oklahoma and would be the forward maintenance company to the battalion and also provide the 40 pax security detail for the Marine PPTT. The intent was to have HHB, Battery “B”, Battery “C”, and the 120th FSC deploy forward into the MNFW’s Area of Operations (AO). Battery “A” would stay at home station as the Rear Detachment for command and control over the “non-deployables” and any new recruits entering into the battalion from the Recruit Sustainment Program

(RSP). Battery “B” would serve as the PSD for the PRT’s and Battery “C” would perform the base defense mission. Every Soldier was needed to mobilize with very few exceptions, and once in theater any remaining personnel would fill in on battalion staff or any of the three mission sets. The role of the 1-158th FA during “Operation Iraqi Freedom” would be to conduct security operations, convoy security forces, and combat patrols to maintain combat capability of forces, provide a secure AO with responsive Quick Reaction Forces (QRF), and provide continuous operational security and force protection at Ramadi, Iraq In Support Of (ISO) Multi-National Force West (MNFW)-Iraq.

Upon receipt of the NOS, the first order of business was a complete reconfiguration of the battalion and a “scrub” and refocusing of the Unit’s Training Plan (UTP). The first order of business was to move the newly fielded HIMARS rocket launchers; that the battalion received during its HIMARS transformation in 2007; into long-term storage. Nine M142’s were cleaned, inspected and driven into hermetically sealed warehouses on Fort Sill to wait until the battalion returned and they could once more be used in a traditional artillery role. Normally units would prepare for overseas movement by preparing their equipment for deployment, however in this case the unit would “fall-in” on their vehicles already in use in the theater. This was the first of many vital actions that were taken to speed up the transition and assure the unit’s new mission capability. The battalion commander then ordered the shift from the unit’s artillery mission to the force-protection mission. The shift included 1st US Army and CENTCOM’s 253 mandatory theater individual tasks. The battalion’s training strategy was to use the 10 months prior to mobilization (Pre-Mob) to complete all of the required Individual Level training. This time included both standard weekend drills as well as a 30 day Pre-Mobilization Training (PMT) period at Camp Gruber. Once at the mobilization station the unit would have only 2 months to meet the deployment and unit validation criteria. To preclude that training was not repeated, close coordination and verification with 1st Army was established within the UTP and the 30 day PMT to allow the battalion to “move through” the mobilization site with little or no SNAFU’s.

The battalion’s Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) is doctrinally functional as a HIMARS operational field unit but in its new role a modification to the TOE was authorized. The MTOE is an authorization document that allows adaptation to the new mission capabilities, organization, personnel, and equipment to “go to war”. The battalion commander was given the option on how to equip the battalion and he chose the “Convoy Security” configuration, meaning that all soldiers would dual carry a M9 pistol and the M4 rifle. The commanders reasoning for this decision was to give his soldiers the additional firepower for defending Camp Ramadi should they need it. This was the first logistical challenge that the battalion’s S4 (Supply) would encounter because the current TOE meant that the unit possessed only a handful of M4 rifles and M9 pistols. Rearming the force was a significant undertaking,

but the S4 shop quickly submitted the requests for the rifles, pistols and crew-served weapons that would be required for the mission. Likewise, body armor, pistol holsters, lanyards, magazines and cleaning kits had to be ordered as well. During this period the unit received new optics for both rifles and machineguns which had not been previously used by the troops. In particular, Close Combat Optics (CCOs) designed for targets at 300 meters (red dot aiming devices) and the Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight (ACOG) would add a new layer of complexity to the unit's weapons training. The ACOGs provide power magnification levels of 4×32mm objective lens (4×32), with specially designed ballistic compensating reticles that are fiber optic and tritium phosphor illuminated with Picatinny rails, flip caps, and waterproof.

Because of the new manning requirements every available soldier from the battalion was plugged into a slot of the matrix for the reconfigured HHB, Battery "B", and Battery "C". The 271st BSB managed the manning for the 100 slots in the 120th FSC. Captain Chin U. Kim, the battalion S1 (Personnel) was brought onto active duty early to help manage the arduous process of filling vacant slots and ensuring the deployability of everyone based on their medical and dental readiness. This was an ongoing battle that continued right up to the departure for Iraq. Fill requests for any vacant slots were pushed to the brigade S1 who would fill from other units within the brigade or would request fills from the State Headquarters and any positions the state could not fill were sent to the National Guard Bureau. This was an ongoing battle that continued right up to the departure date for Iraq.

### **Staffing Request for Forces 828**

LTC Gregory Lankford	Commander	1LT Johnny Hart	DMD (+) Staff Officer
CSM Jimmy Venable	Battalion CSM	1LT Chad Headrick	PGC Detach Commander
MAJ Paul Harris	XO	CPT Robert McLeod	Commander Btry "B"
MAJ Jerald Gilbert	S3	1SG Emanuel Williams	First Sergeant
SGM Gary Nix	Operations SGM	1LT Aaron Hinkle	Btry "B" XO
MAJ Wade Murry	DMD (+) Staff Officer	1LT Anthony Clark	Platoon Leader Btry "B"
CPT William Ponder	Battle Captain	1LT Chad Richardson	Platoon Leader Btry "B"
CPT David Stewart	Battle Captain	1LT Paul Jackson	Platoon Leader Btry "B"
CPT Mark Todd	Battle Captain	CPT Donald Anderson	Commander Btry "C"
CPT Charles Betts	HHB Commander	1SG Dennis Cooper	First Sergeant
1SG Dennis Moody	First Sergeant	1LT James Smith	Btry "C" XO
CPT David Peyok	S1	1LT James Seibert	Platoon Leader Btry "C"
1LT Dax Thomas	S2	1LT James Shepard	Platoon Leader Btry "C"
CW2 Robert Downen	DMD (+) S2	1LT David Clinton	Platoon Leader Btry "C"
CW2 James Gormley	DMD (+) S2	CPT Justin Blount	Commander 120th FSC
CPT Kenny Toms	S4	1SG Mark Rackley	First Sergeant
CPT Chin Kim	S6	1LT Francisco Vasquez	XO 120th FSC
CPT Westley Carter	PA	CW3 John Kuehny	Maintenance Officer
CPT William Elkins	Chaplain	CW2 Howard Ross	Maintenance Officer
CW3 Gary England	PBO		

Individual level training began as soon as the mandatory theater tasks were determined. Every soldier in the battalion, regardless of their current deployability status was trained these individual tasks. This proved to be extremely challenging, but the detailed, individual level tracking was over-watched by the battalion S3 (Operations) section along with the unrelenting drive of the battery leadership. The 1-158th FA used all drills prior to the Camp Gruber PMT to focus on all of the individual tasks outside of the realm of weapons, Combat Lifesaver (CLS) and IED training. Well-led, well-equipped, and well-trained soldiers turned out to be the decisive key that kept the battalion on schedule in completing these tasks. A special three day "train the trainer" course, held at the Walters, Oklahoma Police Firing Range and conducted by the Fort Benning, Georgia Small Arms Instructors Group was completed before the PMT. This small time period greatly increased the unit's proficiency and employment of the M4s and M249 SAWs for close quarters combat in an urban setting.

The 30 day PMT event at Camp Gruber was designed to address the individual level tasks that could not be easily addressed at home station including weapons training, CLS and IED training. By this time, the

personnel on the DMD were finalized, but additional fillers would arrive and they had to be rapidly trained-up in order reach the established norms. It was determined that non-deployable soldiers would attend the PMT since their status could change making them potential “back fillers” should the need arise.



**RFF No. 828 Camp Ramadi, Iraq 2009**

Kneeling: 1SG Dennis Moody, 1LT Francisco Vasquez, CPT Kenny Toms, SGM Gary Nix, CW3 Gary England, CPT Robert McLeod.

Standing: CPT Charles Betts, SFC Micky Grannan, SFC Tracy Taylor, CPT William Elkins, 1SG Emanuel Williams, 1SG Mark Rackley, CPT Justin Blount, MAJ Paul Harris,

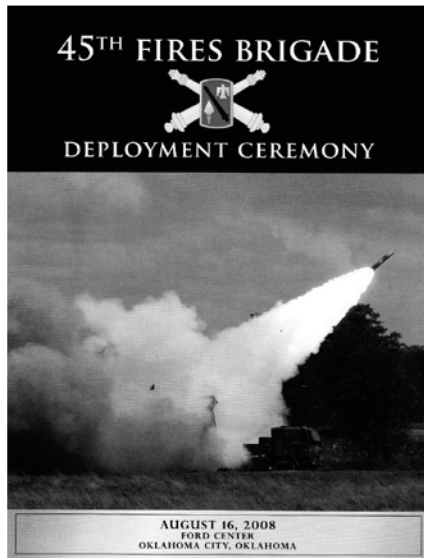
CPT David Peyok, LTC Gregory Lankord, CSM Jimmy Venable, MAJ Jerald Gilbert, 1LT Aaron Hinkle, 1LT Dax Thomas, CPT Donald Anderson, 1SG Dennis Cooper,

CPT Chin Kim, MAJ Wade Murry, SFC James Heston.

The first training emphasis was on weapons since this would be the first time any of the soldiers had used CCOs and ACOGs and would also be the first time many of them had to qualify with a pistol. Prior to starting rifle Preliminary Marksman Instruction (PMI) an agreement was leveraged with 1st US Army personnel who had prior experience with the CCOs and ACOGs to conduct a “train the trainer” course with the battalion. Traditionally “zeroing” on rifles was always done with iron sights and now every rifle had a optics mounted on it, so a significant amount of time was spent on the rifle ranges. The soldiers adapted quickly and learned to use the optics to their advantage while qualifying. Very thorough PMI was conducted with every soldier on the M9 since most had never qualified with a pistol and many had never fired one at all. All soldiers successfully qualified with their sidearm even though there was limited number of lanes on the pistol range which sometimes bottlenecked but determination prevailed with 100% sidearm qualification. Qualifications with crew-served weapons also took a considerable amount of time. Day and night qualification firing tables on the M2s, M240s and Mk19 grenade launchers, all with optics were completed by the assigned crews. Weapons ranges were running day and night for much of the PMT in order to train and qualify every soldier.

Another requirement was for every soldier was the Combat Lifesaver (CLS) certification. This was a new CENTCOM requirement that 100% of deploying personnel be certified as CLSs. In the past the requirement was for 10% of a unit’s personnel to be CLS certified and this was a significant hurdle because the certification is a 40-hour block of instruction requirement for a brigade size element. The five-day course consists of 40 hours of blended classroom and hands-on training given by certified combat medics. The CLS is a bridge between the self-aid and buddy-aid and is the advanced first aid training and medical training given to a trauma specialist. The course culminates with a written exam and a performance-tested hands-on intravenous infusion using the “battle-buddy” method for certification. The CLS training is a perishable skill and recertification every 12 months is required in order to retain the CLS certification.

In Iraq IEDs continued to be a significant threat against U.S. and Coalition Forces so Counter IED lane training was emphasized and conducted at the PMT. This was an introduction to the Collective Level Training that they would receive again at the Mobilization station. CIED training was verified and validated by the Adjutant General and the documentation of every individual training event that was conducted by the PMT was sent to the training brigade at Fort Hood, Texas and the plan for the 1-158th FA Post-PMT training was finalized.



On 14 August 2008, the 45th FiB was alerted and began its mobilization in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On 16 August 2008, there was a “send-off” conducted for the brigade at the Ford Center in Oklahoma City and once it was concluded 900 Guardsmen headed to Fort Hood, Texas for their mobilization training, arriving at North Fort Hood 22 August 2008. The battalion quickly occupied quarters and the headquarters administrative buildings. SRP “in-processing” began immediately and soldiers with medical or dental issues had to be shuttled to the Main Post for these appointments which proved to be a challenge since it was a 45 minute drive from North Fort to Main Post. The S1 shop was constantly working on these daily issues in order that the soldiers who were medically flagged were able to clear these issues and be deemed deployable.

Once at Fort Hood the Guardsmen conducted 65 days of mission-specific training and individual warrior task training. For its new force protection mission the battalion would be using the Army’s newest tactical vehicle, the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP). Unfortunately, there were no MRAPs to train with at Fort Hood; due to their IED survivability rate they were deemed mission essential so once they rolled off the manufacturer’s assembly line they were shipped straight to theater. The MRAP was an interim replacement for the HMMWV fleet. These new behemoths principal features included an armored V-hull undercarriage raised at least 14 inches above ground to deflect the blast of an IED or mine. It is typically crewed by a driver, vehicle commander, gunner, with four or more troops seated in the rear, capable of dismounting as needed. They have operating ranges in excess of 300 miles, in all terrain and all weather, can ford 36 inches of water, can negotiate a 60 percent slope, and have “run-flat” tires but because of its high center of gravity it is susceptible to rollovers. All of the PSD training was conducted with “up-armored humvee’s” which would prove to be very different than using the significantly larger CAT II MRAPs that the base defense personnel would actually operate once they had “boots on ground” in Camp Ramadi.

Unit Physical Training picked up where it was left after PMT. Conditioning soldiers to operate with a full load of body armor, weapons and gear was critical. The heat of central Texas in August isn’t quite as bad as it is in Iraq, but its close and it tested every member of the unit. Soldiers were issued flame resistant Army Combat Uniform (ACU) uniforms and completely new individual equipment, in particular the Interceptor Body Armor System (IBA). The IBA system consists of an Outer Tactical Vest (OTV) and two Small Arms Protective Insert (SAPI) ballistic plates with other accessories such throat, arm, and groin protectors, all with a total weight over 30 pounds. IBA does offer increased protection from 7.62mm armor-piercing ammunition. Soldiers would be expected to function in Iraqi heat with a new kit weighing in excess of 70 pounds and better equipped than any previous deployment.



Meanwhile mobilization started with Leader and Collective Level training and any uncompleted



Individual Level tasks had to be finished so the number of moving parts was increased exponentially. To further complicate the matter, a number of last minute fillers arrived Post-Mob that required their Individual Level training completed. The Collective Level training was a combination of tasks that every group had to perform such as CIED Lane Training and others that were designed specifically for each unit's mission. Battery "B" had a two week PSD training block with a civilian company named Black Swan. These contractors were former Special Operations Forces operatives that provided very in-depth training for VIP protection from convoy operations to inner and outer security for leader engagements. Battery "C" started their training for base defense and the operation of Entry Control Points (ECPs).

Once the unit got well into the training, the daily routine settled and the brigade leadership organized a meeting with the 81st Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT), WAARNG at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, whose brigade headquarters would also be at Camp Ramadi serving as the "Camp Mayors Cell". The 1-158th FA would fall directly under the 81st HBCT and it was mission essential that the battalion work very closely with them; especially in defense of the camp. The battalion commander and sergeant major along with Colonel Glen Moore, Command Sergeant Major Tony Riggs and Major Robert Sowards (the 45th FiB commander, senior enlisted and S3, respectively) flew to Wisconsin to meet with Colonel Ronald Kapral commander and Command Sergeant Major Robert Sweeney the senior enlisted and the 81st HBCT staff. It was a very successful meeting and it was clear from the start that there was going to be a cohesive relationship at Camp Ramadi.



A Pre-Deployment Site Survey (PDSS) was authorized for a team from the 1-158th FA to visit the current unit that they would be replacing in Ramadi, the 1-125 INF MIARNG. The intent was to see first-hand what the unit was doing and how they were doing it so the training for their replacement unit could prepare them as thoroughly as possible. The timing of the PDSS was pushed to the right to the point where the 10 man team would return with minimal training time left. Preparations were made and the 10 man team flew to Ali Al Salem Kuwait, but found it difficult to find a flight into Iraq. They were required to have ammunition for their weapons before going into Iraq, but there was no ammunition to draw.



**Base Defense Operations Center**

They had to pick through ammunition from an amnesty box to find enough undamaged rounds to partially fill one magazine for each member. 48 hours passed before the team boarded a flight into Iraq where the 1-125 INF picked up the team at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq and transported them to Camp Ramadi in the new Category II MRAPs. The PDSS team only had 24 hours on the ground to conduct their site survey, but detailed notes and pictures were taken and the trip proved to be very valuable. The team had less of an issue coming back until they attempted to check in the weapons case that held the 10 M4s and 10 M9s at the Philadelphia airport. The case was too heavy for check-in, CW3 Gary England;

battalion Property Book Officer (PBO) took a taxi to the nearest Home Depot to buy a heavy-duty tote box and some padlocks so some of the weapons could be removed from the larger case to get it under the maximum allowable weight. Needless to say, moving weapons from one case to the other was quite a scene at the airport check-in counter. The battalion began their culminating training event not long after the PDSS returned. Many of the lessons learned from the trip were applied to replicate the conditions on the ground as closely as possible.



**1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery  
Headquarters Building Camp Ramadi**

The mobilization station's culminating training event crammed two years' worth of Significant Activities (SIGACTs) into a four day exercise. Every soldier will fight as he is trained and every Army trains based upon lessons learned, so a bulk of the exercise was developed to test theater specific threats and conditioned the soldiers to be ready for just about anything. The Army Universal Task List (AUTL) is a comprehensive but not all-inclusive listing of Army tasks and this exercise tested and validated many of these tasks. It was a long, hot, and strenuous exercise but immediately following the final training event, the unit was deemed ready for deployment.

The RFF No. 828 received its "check mark" and was deemed validated for deployment and started packing everything for its movement to Iraq. Every piece of equipment was inventoried and loaded and the soldiers waited to depart to Iraq. It didn't take long.

The battalion was then loaded on commercial aircraft and flew into Kuwait City, arriving there on 2 November 2008, where they were immediately transported to Camp Behring, Kuwait for additional training and final onward movement into Iraq. Rifle and pistol ranges were conducted to ensure that all personal weapons functioned correctly. MRAP training was scheduled and conducted. Unfortunately, Camp Behring's training MRAPs were not the same size and type that would be used in Ramadi, but they were closer than the HMMWVs used at Fort Hood. The battalion moved to Ali Al Salem, Kuwait for a few days before the main body boarded a C-17 Globemaster for Al Taqaddum Air Base (TQ), Iraq. Once they arrived at TQ, a large fleet of MRAPS and cargo trucks shuttled the battalion to the camp at Ramadi which is roughly a 45 minute drive westerly along Route 11.

On 16 November 2008, the first wave of soldiers from the 1-158th FA arrived in Camp Ramadi where they would soon replace the 1st Battalion of the 125th Infantry Michigan ARNG, of the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), who at that time were supporting the transition of security of the Iraqi people. The next two weeks would be what is called "left seat-right seat" training, as the incoming and outgoing units exchanged mission requirements in order to have a seamless and deliberate Relief in Place and Transfer of Authority (RIP/TOA) from Lieutenant Colonel Gregory Durkac 1-125 INF MIARNG. This is the most critical part in an operation since the outgoing unit and their combat operations will be assumed by the incoming unit and the need to maintain combat effectiveness is crucial. During this transition period a single rocket was fired into the camp one night, landing in the Class IV Yard which was approximately 300 meters in the vicinity of the new battalion commander and staff and leaving a poignant reminder that this was "for real" now. The 1-158th FA assumed control of their operations on 3 December 2008 by conducting autonomous camp security, security for Logistical Package (LOGPAC) or "supply runs", Personal Security Details (PSD) for the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), security of the Provincial Government Center (PGC), providing PSDs for the Provincial Police Training Team (P-PTT), and assume responsibility of the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC) and would spent the next nine months providing security and supporting these PRTs as they prepared the local government for "self-government".

With 1-158th FA battalion "colors" posted the transfer of authority is complete and the joint service and multi-national mission begins. The relieved unit starts its move home and the battalion is now able to move into their Containerized Housing Units (CHUs) and eat in a well-established Dining Facility (DFAC) operated by Mr. Kem Tolliver, a Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR) contractor. Camp Ramadi was still considered very austere to the larger FOBs in Iraq since there was a very small PX and minimal amenities. Trips to TQ, Al Asad and Baghdad were like going from a small, rural town to a large city. During the "left seat-right seat" the Thanksgiving holidays was approaching and the mayor's cell organized a flag football

tournament called the “Turkey Bowl”. Sixteen flag football teams from various organizations signed up for the event which ran from the 24th through 27th November 2008. Service members and civilians from across the camp came out for the games and rooted for their teams but after 20 scheduled games, the “Turkey Bowl” was whittled down to Headquarters Company Regimental Combat Team-1 (RCT-1) and the “T-Birds” of the 1-158th FA. The “T-Birds” formed a composite team from each battery and it is speculated that the Marine team was composed of their best players, handpicked ringers. At 1900 hours of Thanksgiving Day, they squared off under the lights of the portable light generators. After a dusty and sweaty grueling game, RCT-1 came out as victors, beating the “T-Birds” 32-18 taking home the official “Turkey Bowl” trophy and the bragging rights on that highly competitive night. Another noteworthy sports event that occurred shortly after the infamous “Turkey Bowl” was when the Ramadi Softball League season started. Army Staff Sergeant Derrick Grasty from 81st BCT MWR set up the league and organized all the games which consisted of 16 teams from a total of 12 units stationed on the camp. The tournament was narrowed down to 10 teams at double elimination competing for the trophy. The league had to postpone their games on hold for several weeks mid-season due to heavy rains turning the fields to mud however the championship game was finally played on 26 April 2009. Battery “C”, 1-158th FA played 81st Brigade Combat Team’s Team 2, in a very heated game, Battery “C”, 1-158th FA started the game behind but they rallied to win the game with a score of 14-2 and took home the trophy.



Once the battalion assumed authority it didn't take long for the unit to get into its battle rhythm. Besides the day to day base defense operations the battalion started averaging 5 to 7 PSD missions every day. To provide command and control there is a Tactical Operations Center (TOC) which provides situational awareness to the command group on all aspects of the security mission. This TOC is under the auspices of the S3 and runs three shifts twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week; Shift #1 (0700-1500), Shift #2 (1500-2300), and the graveyard Shift #3 (2300-0700). Each shift was staffed with a Battle Captain, Operations NCOIC, Radio Telephone Operators (RTOs), a Intell cell, S1, S4, S6 (Commo), Religious team and Medical team. These cells stay in contact with the QRF, the PSD, the BDOC and update the command group on all significant activities that effect the security mission.

**Command Group**

LTC Gregory Lankford, MAJ Paul Harris, and CSM Jimmy Veneable.

**Tactical Operations Center**

	<b><u>Shift #1</u></b>	<b><u>Shift #2</u></b>	<b><u>Shift #3</u></b>
<b>Battle Captain</b>	CPT Gary Stewart	CPT Mark Todd	CPT William Ponder
<b>Operations NCOIC</b>	SFC James Heston	SSG David Chasten	SFC Matthew Ellison
<b>S2 (Intelligence)</b>	CW2 Robert Downen	SSG Dusty Capshew	CW2 James Gormley
		SPC Lyndal Morgan	SPC Timothy Blair

**RTOs:** SGT Robert Shipley, SPC Scott Pepi, SPC Stacey Miller, SPC Paul Payne, PFC Gerald Negelien, PFC Bryan Turnbull, and PFC Justin South.

**S1 (Personnel):** CPT David Peyok, SFC Vincent Moscatello, SFC Jose Saldana, SSG Matthew Lima, SSG Jeffery Rooks, SGT Richard Sholar, SGT Michael Gildow, SPC Tyler Ferguson, SPC Steven Latre and SPC James De La O.

**S4 (Supply):** CPT Kenny Toms, CW3 Gary England, SFC Paul Burden, SGT Arry Johnson, and SSG Larry Harper.

**S6 (Commo):** CPT Chin Kim, SFC Tracy Taylor, SSG Sam Hunt, SGT Michael Cainion, and SPC Chris Malone.

**Chaplain Team:** CPT William Elkins and SPC Robert McFarland.

**PA & Medical Team:** CPT Westley Carter, SFC Mickey Grannan, SSG Christopher Gay, SGT Robert Coble and SGT Ryan Chambers.



**Trooper Gate Camp Ramadi**

Battery “C” provided the QRF as well as manning the ECPs and Camp Ramadi had two of them, “Ogden and Trooper” gates, and both gates allowed access into the camp. “Trooper Gate” was on the north side of the camp and was designed for both military and civilian traffic. All of the foreign nationals that worked on the camp entered and exited through this gate daily as well as all the civilian convoys. Unfortunately, the gate was built less than 100m off of a major highway and was very close to the village that was right outside the north wall. Iraqi civilians exiting the highway to go to the village would very frequently take the incorrect exit that put them right in front of the tower at the ECP. Due to security measures and screening devices and the incredibly short standoff distance, troops manning

the tower would have to immediately initiate escalation of force measures to prevent the civilians from advancing any closer to the gate. This started by firing a pen flare at the vehicle, then almost immediately followed by a warning shot, and then very quickly to a disabling shot on the vehicle. Although this was an inherited issue, the number of escalation of force incidents meant that a redesign to the entrance of the gate had to be implemented soon a clearly defined and marked entrance from highway was established. After this reconfiguration, only one escalation of force event occurred for the remainder of the tour when a civilian pickup truck trying to get to the gate somehow managed to bypass the barriers and drove straight toward the gate late one night. The driver ignored loudspeaker warnings to stop (given in Arabic and English), and he ignored a pen flare and a warning shot. Finally the vehicle was struck with a disabling shot from M4 small arms fire. It turned out to be an American contractor that had not been to the newly redesigned gate and had obviously missed all of the signs that clearly marked the new gate. Small arms fire at



**Ogden Gate Camp Ramadi**

“Ogden Gate” was not uncommon, and although it occurred it was never accurate and considered as harassment fire but it raised the “pucker factor”. Over the course of the tour, convoys would experience these random shots and even Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) shot at them, but no one was ever injured but it kept everybody on their toes.

One of the first greetings Battery “C” learned in Iraq wasn't Arabic but Swahili. "Jambo" is the word they hear as they go through a security check point to get into the PX or chow hall. Most of the guard towers and check points were manned by the “Ugandan” security forces contracted by the Dreshak Limited Company whom they recruited and trained and sent to Iraq. The Ugandans were Third Country Nationals (TCNs) along with Filipinos, Indians, Nepalese, Bangladeshis, Turkish and Peruvians working on the bases. Many of these contractors were veterans of the Ugandan army and about 25,000 Ugandan men and women have supported US-led operations in Iraq. The Ugandan defense ministry maintains that the mission in Iraq has improved the wealth of the people and boosted the country's foreign exchange reserves, since many of them sent money back home. For many of the Ugandans this was an once-in-a-lifetime job opportunity earning ten-fold per month working as a security guard in Iraq than their home country earning the equivalent of \$ 100 per month. The Ugandans took their job very seriously and were very responsive to the security mission.

There were many security measures for inside the camp however once “outside the wire” other measures were used. The most commonly used is called the Blue Force Tracker (BFT). Having the BFT inside your vehicle allows it to be tracked on a display screen and allows the operator to see other BFT and track their navigation on a display screen in real-time. Also mounted on the MRAPs were the Rhino Passive Infrared Defeat System (known simply as Rhino), a early detonation Counter-IED system. It was mounted to the front of a vehicle and used heat to prematurely detonate any hidden IEDs while the vehicle is at a safe distance away from the blast. Another measure was Electronic Counter Measure (ECM) jammers which would jam any transmitted radio frequency used to initiate an IED.



The battalion's first direct attack from the enemy came on 26 February 2009. A convoy of four MKRAPs led by SSG Billy Holly was escorting a PRT representative to a meeting at Camp Fallujah, when the second vehicle in the convoy drove over a pressure plate activated IED. The IED detonated an estimated 10 pounds of Homemade Explosive (HME) which blew one of the rear wheels completely off of the MRAP. The V-shaped hull of the MRAP performed exactly as designed and directed the blast away from the crew compartment. SSG Billy Holley quickly secured the site and the crew and passenger dismounted and loaded on the fourth MRAP. A contact team was dispatched to recover the damaged MRAP and upon

returning to the camp, Captain Westley Carter, the battalion Physicians Assistant, examined the occupants of the IED attack and it was determined none of the soldiers received any physical injuries. The 120th FSC had the MRAP operational, but there was a concern over the integrity of the hull being compromised so it was not used again for missions "outside of the wire". Another attack was conducted on the PSD convoy led by First Sergeant Emmanuel Williams who were escorting several senior Iraqi Police and senior PRT diplomats to Baghdad and attacked on their return trip. An array of EFPs cut through the lead vehicle like it was made of butter. The EFPs were aimed low and since most of the units in Baghdad were still using "Up-Armored HMMWVs" because of their smaller size, the MRAPs received relatively no explosive fragmentation damage because of their higher under-belly road clearance. The EFPs hit low on the MRAP way below the cab and crew compartment and everyone escaped without injury. The MRAP, however, was completely destroyed. One of the EFPs penetrated the fuel tank which burned the vehicle to the ground. The other trucks in the convoy reacted immediately shielding the damaged vehicle until all of the occupants could be safely recovered. All of the crew were rattled by the event and narrowly escaped a catastrophic event that day.

The battalion's first casualty to an enemy action occurred on 22 April 2009 during a routine PRT visit to the Ramadi Mayor's office. While the meeting was occurring, Corporal Adam Schuster was shot by a sniper while providing security outside of the building. A small caliber bullet, most likely fired from a two-story building 400m away, hit him in the cheek, entered his jaw and exited from his neck. Members of the outer security quickly dragged Corporal Schuster into nearby cover and a MRAP was quickly moved into a defense perimeter to provide additional cover as the wounded soldier was loaded. First aid was administered immediately as they rushed Corporal Schuster back to the Camp Ramadi. On the camp the QRF had already cleared a direct route to the "Shock /Trauma Center" where immediate care was given and he was MEDEVAC to Al Asad Air Base and ultimately Walter Reed Medical Hospital where he underwent reconstructive surgery and therapy. On 7 May 2009, Specialist Jonathan Heim was closing the doors to an MRAP after loading passengers into the rear when a 7.62mm round struck him in the back. The round missed his IBA vest, ricocheted off his shoulder blade and travelled down his arm just under the skin before it stopped right above his right elbow. He realized he'd been shot after walking back to his MRAP where he climbed aboard and the convoy rushed back to the camp. He was immediately treated and MEDEVAC to Al Asad Air Base and underwent surgery and was eventually returned back to duty. Corporal Adam Schuster and Specialist Jonathan Heim were awarded the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received in action.

The 81st HBCT assumed command of the Camp Ramadi and on 20 January 2009 a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed and was a tenant agreement of sorts because it outlines the areas that will be used by coalition forces through 2011. This MOA is a step toward handing complete responsibility and control back over to the Iraqis. Although the signing marks a big step for Iraqi self-governance it really doesn't change the normal day-to-day operations. Force protection measures did not change and camp security at the BDOC was just as critical as ever. A new Ramadi Access Control Policy was already in effect using the Biometric Automated Toolset System (BATS) that offered biometric data for consideration of

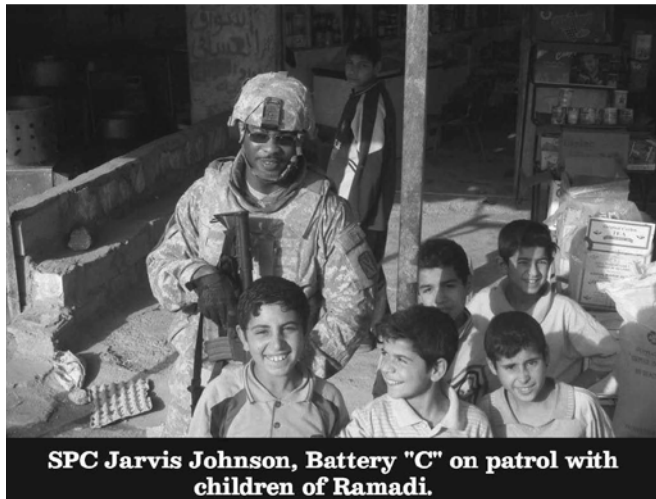
access onto the camp maintaining full accountability. Significant political changes were shifting more of the security mission's burden of responsibility over to the Iraqis and this impacted the camp and the security of operation of the battalion. "Ogden Gate" on the south side of the camp was designed and intended to be only for U.S. military traffic. The Iraqi Police Training Facility that bordered the camp on the northwest side had one accessible entrance and that was straight through "Ogden Gate". This allowed transport trucks full of armed Iraqis to be regularly shuttled across the U.S. portion of the camp on a daily basis. About mid-tour, an Iraqi army brigade occupied the open area between Camp Ramadi and the



**T-Bird Gate Camp Ramadi**

Glass Factory to the northwest. This area was behind "Ogden Gate" so now the Iraqi traffic passing through it to both of their locations far outnumbered U.S. vehicles. This posed a grave security threat for the gate guards since they did not have a reliable way to screen all traffic for potential threats. A request was made to the Mayor's Cell for the Iraqi army to control traffic at "Ogden Gate" and for the 1-158th FA soldiers to build and man a new gate behind "Ogden Gate" that would control traffic into Camp Ramadi proper. This would enable Iraqis to screen and control their own traffic to their facilities and it would restore control of traffic accessing the U.S. portion of Camp Ramadi. The Iraqi brigade agreed and the request

was approved. The 1-158th FA brought much more to the mission than just military muscle. In its ranks were police officers, electricians, plumbers, construction workers, farmers, welders and many other specialized skills which all contributed significantly to the success of the mission. National Guard units were indeed a "value added" to the nation building efforts being conducted in Iraq. Their value was apparent when they built the new gate and a new guard house. Once built it was named after the battalion's call sign, "T-Bird Gate" and once in operation it significantly improved traffic flow and restored positive access control.



**SPC Jarvis Johnson, Battery "C" on patrol with children of Ramadi.**

From 9 February 2009 through 15 August 2009 the 1-158th FA (HIMARS) supported the II Marine Expeditionary Force (FORWARD) commanded by Major General Richard T. Tryon, through a deliberate and methodical campaign termed "Operation FARDH AL QANON" they secured the Al Anbar Province, thus denying its use as an insurgent stronghold resulting in an unprecedented calm and reduction in attacks, from a weekly high of 458 to a low of 45. The II MEF Fwd executed a campaign that improved relations with the Sunni population and initiated an economic and social recovery plan that resulted in a rejuvenated Anbari government. During this period, the Iraqi Security Forces continued their transformation into an effective fighting

force, doubling the strength of the 1st and 7th Iraqi Army Divisions under the auspices of the Marine Corps Police Transition Teams who oversaw the expansion.

The II MEF Fwd Marines began scaling back on their operations and were turning over more of their AO to Iraqi control. The 2nd Battalion 23rd Marine Regiment was a U.S. Marine Reserve infantry battalion from California that replaced 2nd Battalion 9th Marine Regiment at Ramadi. The 2/23 Marine proved to be much easier to work with since a common ground as reserve component units was shared. The Marine battalion started developing a surplus of manpower as their mission requirements lessened and the PPTT security mission at the PGC was transferred over to Lieutenant Colonel Joe Cabell, battalion commander of the 2/23 Marines and the 120th FSC was relocated back onto Camp Ramadi and be re-tasked.

The SOFA that was agreed upon on 4 December 2008 radically changed how all operations would be run. In June 2009, the II MEF Fwd made a change to policy that U.S. long-haul convoys on routine runs could only travel at night. The intent was to lower the visual presence of U.S. forces in Iraq an “out of sight-out of mind” policy. This policy change impacted the routine daylight administrative and logistical runs to TQ and Al Asad AB and now most turned into overnight runs. This added to the burden of the logistics trains and now the frequency of them was being scrutinized in order to reduce the visual signature. U.S. forces agreed to withdraw from Iraqi cities by 30 June 2009 and the following day all U.S. activities outside the perimeter of the camp required at least a 24 hour notification to the local Iraqi police and all U.S. convoys now required an Iraqi escort to and from their destination. PSD missions were planned 24 hours in advance, but there was a very real concern about informing the Iraqis of the exact routes to and locations of the PRT meeting sites. Additionally, the Iraqis were not known for their reliability and promptness which could significantly delay or completely disrupt the battalion’s ability to perform their PSD mission. The escort duty was a significant burden to the Iraqi police based on the number of PRT engagements and long-haul convoys the battalion were executing daily. This issue continued in a very unpredictable manner until a local agreement was made that the Iraqi police would be informed of every mission 24 hours in advance and they could elect to escort them or not, but our teams would not wait for them past their scheduled departure time. This arrangement met the intent of the SOFA and was a workable solution for all parties.



To have created stability and security operations which protected the Iraqi people were such distinctive achievements, the officers, enlisted personnel and civilian employees of the II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) were awarded the Navy Unit Commendation (NUC) under the recommendation of the Secretary of the Navy; the Honorable Ray Mabus; Secretary of the Navy; on 1 February 2012. The men and women of the 1-158th FA (HIMARS) Request for Forces 828 were under the auspices of this command and were awarded the NUC. A copy of the award can be found under U. S. Army Human Resources Command Memorandum AHRC-PDP-A dated 10 June 2014 and signed by CW4 Elisa M. Robinson at (502) 613-9126, DSN 983-9126.

The advanced party from the 3rd Battalion (HIMARS) 157th Field Artillery Field Artillery COARNG arrived on Camp Ramadi in mid July 2009. As the battalion’s soldiers started to arrive arrangements were made to transport them and their equipment as well as temporary quarters. The battalion had conducted their own PDSS before many of the changes from the SOFA were instituted so the processes were different. However this didn’t change the “left seat-right seat” training which were carried out very smoothly. The 3-157 FA (HIMARS) was configured also exactly as the 1-158 FA, they used their, HHB, Battery “A” and Battery “B”, and the 188th FSC from their 115th Fib. The 3-157 FA is commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Al Morris and senior enlisted Command Sergeant Major Michael Koob. HHB, Battery “A”, Battery “B”, and 188th FSC are commanded by Captains Ashkan Angha, Dominic Tatti, David Wilcox and Beth Soelzer with First Sergeants Ed Schwaigert, Eric Weis, Rodolfo Reyes, and Joseph Bishop, respectively. As the RIP/TOA officially began the 1-158th FA began conducting inventories and packing equipment to prepare for their own movement. On an interesting historical note, the 3-157 FA carries the lineage of the 157th Infantry Regiment from the Colorado National Guard which served in the 45th Infantry Division during WWII. The 158th FA Bn was the direct support battalion for the 157th INF Reg during the war so this was the first time that both units had been together in a combat zone since 1945. This historic event was the center point of the TOA ceremony. On 31 July 2009 the 1-158th FA (HIMARS) cased its colors and transferred command of Camp Ramadi to 3-157 FA (HIMARS) COARNG.

The 3-157 FA transported the 1-158 FA soldiers to TQ for the flight back to Kuwait on 31 July 2009. After landing at Ali Al Salem the battalion was bused to Camp Virginia, Kuwait. Thankfully, the troops were housed in air-conditioned tents during their brief stay there because the high temps were right at 120 degrees during the day. The extreme, dry heat would instantly dry the eyes and suck the moisture out of the lungs of anyone the second that they stepped out of the tents. The extreme heat made leaving Kuwait



**SGT Earle Hudson  
after "Sand Storm"**

just that much better, and at 2400 hours 8 August 2009 they departed Kuwait. An Advanced Party was flown to Fort Hood to make preparations for the battalion's return. The main body arrived at Fort Hood and was put in temporary quarters as they conducted their out-processing. Arrangements were being made at each of the battery's home stations for a welcome home ceremony. There would be one in Lawton, Duncan and Anadarko for HHB/120th FSC, Battery "B" and Battery "C" respectively. After a week of out-processing, the troops loaded up on commercial buses for their home stations. The Soldiers were well received by their communities and were put on a pass immediately following their brief welcome home ceremonies.

Following the passes the soldiers of the 1-158 FA returned to their armories to conduct inventories with instructions to report to the U.S. Army transition point; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; for transition processing and upon completion they would be released from active duty. After a year-long deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 45th Fires Brigade returned to Enid, Oklahoma, the 1st Battalion 271st Brigade Support Battalion returned to Altus, Oklahoma and the 1st Battalion (HIMARS)

158th Field Artillery returned to Lawton, Oklahoma. On 12 August 2009 the battalion marched into Reinhart Gym on Fort Sill to a standing ovation. The introduction was given by Brigadier General Robbie Asher remarking "Despite repeated enemy attack, they never failed to safeguard the people they were assigned to protect". Over the course of the 10 month deployment on Camp Ramadi, the 1-158 FA (HIMARS) conducted over 3,000 missions. For their actions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom members of the battalion were awarded 2 Purple Heart Medals, 19 Bronze Star Medals, 28 Meritorious Service Medals, 2 Army Commendation Medals with Valor devices, 218 Army Commendation Medals, 70 Army Achievement Medals and 38 Combat Action Badges.

A milestone had been achieved by the Rear Detachment who was already preparing and training for the 2010 Annual Training (AT) which included a HIMARS battalion Live Fire Exercise to validate the battalion's proficiency after its transformation to this new system. Prior to its departure to the Mob Site the battalion commander had laid out an aggressive training plan for the Rear Detachment Commander, Captain Charles Neely and Battery "A". Because the Rear Detachment had grown in considerable size the plan was enhanced in order to accomplish this significant event. As new recruits joined the unit from the RSP and "seasoned" 13Ms and 13Ps pulled from the Oklahoma Regional Training Institute (RTI), a pool of training expertise was assembled into a "Cadre" group to expedite the training. Soon after the battalion completed its terminal leave and REFRAD and returned to its home armory it was reformed under a normal HIMARS configuration and individual crew level training started immediately. But now they had a Battery "A" cadre group with approximately 40 personnel and could man and shoot the launchers. With less than six months after reforming the battalion and with a cadre group that would be leveraged to get the rest of the battalion back up to speed in HIMARS operations the battalion moved to Fort Sill for their annual training in July 2010. Here they expended all 72 rockets used for crew certification and culminating 2010 AT in an 18 rocket "ripple-fire" thus validating their proficiency.



**Fort Sill, 2009**





**Quick Reaction Force Camp Ramadi-2009**

Top Row: SPC Hamilton, SGT Schaeffer, SPC Pennington, SGT Fike, SGT Ulrich, CPL Bellar, SPC Tate, SPC Hayes, SPC Wilson, SPC Simpson, SPC Carney, SSG Wilkerson, SGT Griffin.  
 Middle Row: SPC Martin, SPC Thronsbbery, SPC Baker, SPC Puente, SPC King, SSG Brown, SPC May, SPC Davis, SPC Waddel, SGT Adkins, SPC Harlan, SGT Mitchell, SGT Bray, SGT Holley, SPC Luinaquintero.  
 Bottom Row: 1LT Shepard, SSG Bruesch, SSG Kelly, CPL Johnson, CPL Perez, SPC Wasson, SPC Simpson, SPC Woodman, SFC Andrews, SPC Thompson, SGT Cox, SPC Newton, CPL Sikes, SSG Underwood, SPC Hefner, SGT Pope, SSG Rivera, SPC Coffey, SFC Slezickey.



**120th Forward Support Company  
Camp Ramadi 2009**

# Camp Ramadi

## Request for Forces No. 828

### Composite Roster of Officers and Enlisted members of the 1-158th FA and 120th FSC \*

LTC Gregory Lankford	SSG Yancy Baldwin	SGT James Bozarth
MAJ Jerald Gilbert	SSG Donald Bonner	SGT Jason Bray
MAJ Paul Harris	SSG Donald Brewer	SGT Gordon Brooks
MAJ Wade Murry	SSG James Brown	SGT Josh Brummet
CPT Donald Anderson	SSG Jackie Bruesch	SGT William Cain
CPT Charles Betts	SSG Christopher Bussell	SGT Michael Cainion
CPT Justin Blount	SSG Dusty Capshew	SGT Elloid Carrisalez
CPT Westley Carter	SSG Darin Carman	SGT Ryan Chambers
CPT William Elkins	SSG Ray Charles	SGT Michael Clark
CPT Chin Kim	SSG David Chasten	SGT Corey Coats
CPT Robert McLeod	SSG Robert Cook	SGT Robert Coble
CPT David Peyok	SSG John Fitzgerald	SGT Blake Collett
CPT William Ponder	SSG Branden Fry	SGT Fred Cox
CPT David Stewart	SSG Christopher Gay	SGT John Dillon
CPT Mark Todd	SSG Michael Graham	SGT Jonathan Ditch
CPT Kenny Toms	SSG Nicholas Green	SGT Billy England
1LT Anthony Clark	SSG Dwight Hansel	SGT Jason Farmer
1LT David Clinton	SSG Larry Harper	SGT Shawn Fields
1LT Johnny Hart	SSG Brian Hekia	SGT Stephen Fike
1LT Chad Headrick	SSG Roberto Herrera	SGT William Fry
1LT Aaron Hinkle	SSG Billy Holley	SGT Michael Gildow
1LT Paul Jackson	SSG Sammy Hunt	SGT Chad Gilley
1LT Chad Richardson	SSG Bennett Jackson	SGT Kyle Glasgow
1LT James Seibert	SSG William Johnson	SGT Chad Greenwood
1LT James Shepard	SSG Jeffrey Justice	SGT Vanice Griffin
1LT James Smith	SSG Steven Kelly	SGT Dustin Hames
1LT Dax Thomas	SSG Korey Kimble	SGT Leon Hawkins
1LT Francisco Vasquez	SSG Matthew Lima	SGT Christopher Heckathorne
CW3 Gary England	SSG Robert Lutonsky	SGT Aaron Helton
CW3 John Kuehny	SSG Phillip Miller	SGT James Hendrickson
CW2 Robert Dowen	SSG Samuel Mooneyham	SGT Tommy Holley
CW2 James Gormley	SSG Roland Morales	SGT Kyle Hood
CW2 Howard Ross	SSG Larry Nix	SGT Earle Hudson
CSM Jimmy Venable	SSG Dominic Pawlowski	SGT Zachary Jessen
SGM Gary Nix	SSG Kerry Pemberton	SGT Shawn Johnson
1SG Dennis Cooper	SSG Aaron Pleas	SGT Arry Johnson
1SG Dennis Moody	SSG Chris Posgrove	SGT Tanner Keasler
1SG Mark Rackley	SSG Eric Ray	SGT James Keese
1SG Emanuel Williams	SSG Joe Rivera	SGT Kasey Kerr
MSG James Heston	SSG Matthew Robertson	SGT Chris Koehler
SFC David Andrews	SSG Randy Roland	SGT Roland Kvarme
SFC Scott Buehr	SSG Jeffery Rooks	SGT Stanley Lindsey
SFC Paul Burden	SSG Steven Schoepach	SGT Christopher Malone
SFC Andy Callihan	SSG Paul Tate	SGT William Martin
SFC Randall Dedert	SSG Michael Tenequer	SGT Jose Mateo-Perez
SFC Matthew Ellison	SSG Paul Thompson	SGT John McClung
SFC Mickey Grannan	SSG Gordon Underwood	SGT Norman McCoy
SFC Lance Grant	SSG Aaron Warnke	SGT Danny McKillip
SFC Earl Johnson	SSG John Weekley	SGT Robert Mitchell
SFC Corey Klaassen	SSG Stephen Wilkerson	SGT Travis Nease
SFC Vincent Moscatello	SSG Jeremy Woolver	SGT Jesse Neugebauer
SFC David Perky Jr.	SSG Lance Zerger	SGT Wesley Parra
SFC Vincent Pierre	SGT Thomas Adkins	SGT Christopher Pettit
SFC Adam Rogers	SGT Franklin Armstrong	SGT Shawn Pierce
SFC Jose Saldana	SGT James Baldwin	SGT Jordan Pope
SFC Jeffery Shields	SGT Jeremy Beard	SGT William Reid
SFC David Sleziekey	SGT Bobby Bell	SGT Jason Schaeffer
SFC Carlton Speller	SGT James Black	SGT Matthew Schoolfield
SFC Tracy Taylor	SGT Jason Blount	SGT Robert Shipley

SGT Richard Sholar  
SGT Lee Smith  
SGT Christopher Solis  
SGT Gregg Soppet  
SGT Justin Steckman  
SGT Kevin Streeter  
SGT Robert Strong  
SGT Frederic Tabert  
SGT Frederick Taylor  
SGT Kelly Toliver  
SGT Travis Ulrich  
SGT Chad Underwood  
SGT Curtis Vasquez  
SGT Kaleb Wallace  
SGT Jay Wick  
SGT Matthew Wood  
SGT Jon Young  
SGT Jonathon Zerger  
CPL Jason Bellar  
CPL Ernest Childers  
CPL Anthony Davis  
CPL Raul Perez  
CPL Christopher Root  
CPL Adam Schuster  
CPL Nicholas Sevedge  
CPL Derrick Tadlock  
CPL Jordan Williams  
CPL Warren Williams  
SPC Christopher Adamson  
SPC Matthew Adamson  
SPC Robert Ahrens  
SPC Gilbert Aitken  
SPC Keaton Aldridge  
SPC Cody Alldredge  
SPC Casey Allen  
SPC Preston Allen  
SPC Randy Allen  
SPC Michael Alonzo  
SPC Jared Anderson  
SPC Haden Andrew  
SPC Michael Andrews  
SPC Aaron Aries-Vales  
SPC Emanuel Arroyo  
SPC Jeremy Aston  
SPC Clent Baker  
SPC Delano Barney  
SPC Michael Bebo  
SPC Jeremy Bennett  
SPC Derek Bentley  
SPC Mitchell Betchan  
SPC James Bland  
SPC Timothy Blair  
SPC Jeremy Brady  
SPC Nicholas Brewer  
SPC Danny Britton  
SPC Christopher Brown  
SPC Thomas Bryant  
SPC Jonathan Brzowski  
SPC Henry Bui  
SPC Harold Burris  
SPC Justin Burrows  
SPC Brenton Bush  
SPC Casara Butler  
SPC Cody Campbell  
SPC Denny Cargal  
SPC Randy Carnes  
SPC Dustin Carney  
SPC Lance Carney  
SPC Kevin Cecil  
SPC Willie Clark  
SPC Justin Coffey  
SPC Joshua Cook

SPC Lee Davis  
SPC Melissa Decker-Horz  
SPC Christopher Degraffenried  
SPC James De La O  
SPC Kevin Dornan  
SPC Ralph Douvillier  
SPC Delbert Dye  
SPC Justin Edwards  
SPC Anthony Ekman  
SPC Lionel Elix  
SPC Alex Elliott  
SPC Jody Elmore  
SPC Howard Erikson  
SPC Kevin Everley  
SPC Tyler Ferguson  
SPC Jay Fertig  
SPC Scot Fitzhugh  
SPC Frank Fleming  
SPC Albert Folske  
SPC Nickolas Fowler  
SPC Trea Fulton  
SPC Eric Gambill  
SPC Lance Gasset  
SPC Colbert Gordon  
SPC Zakariah Graves  
SPC Dennis Green  
SPC Taylor Green  
SPC Tony Grigsby  
SPC Eric Guyton  
SPC Andrew Haden  
SPC Ephraim Hamilton  
SPC Robert Hardy  
SPC Eric Harlan  
SPC Robert Hardy  
SPC Leslie Hayes  
SPC Jon Hefner  
SPC Jonathan Heim  
SPC Raymond Hernandez  
SPC James Hock  
SPC Jonathan Holt  
SPC Miranda Hornbeck  
SPC Aaron Howard  
SPC Kale Howes  
SPC Danny Huddleston  
SPC Timothy Huff  
SPC William Hunt  
SPC Joshua Hunter  
SPC Joshua Jezisek  
SPC Jarvis Johnson  
SPC Ronald Johnson  
SPC Jaren Johnston  
SPC Dillon Jones  
SPC Quinn Jones  
SPC Kimberly Kaumavae  
SPC Kenneth Keeton  
SPC Ryan King  
SPC Misty Kirchen  
SPC Dustin Lamson  
SPC Brandon Landrum  
SPC Steven Latre  
SPC Steven Lemons  
SPC David Levere  
SPC Jon Lewis  
SPC Aaron Long  
SPC Joshua Luers  
SPC Christopher Luinaquintero  
SPC Mark Lumpkin  
SPC Donnie Macom  
SPC Kevin Malocsay  
SPC Adam Manoles  
SPC Jeremy Mansell  
SPC Matthew Mansell

SPC Austin Martin  
SPC Brian Mason  
SPC Aaron Maxon  
SPC Jedediah May  
SPC William McDaniel  
SPC Jason McDonald  
SPC Dwight McElveen  
SPC Zachary McElveen  
SPC Mark McFarland  
SPC Jeremy Menchaca  
SPC Daniel Mendoza  
SPC Cody Miller  
SPC Stacey Miller  
SPC Jonathan Moore  
SPC Michael Moore  
SPC Lyndal Morgan  
SPC Raymond Morrison  
SPC Chad Moyer  
SPC Jesse Murray  
SPC Sean Murray  
SPC Ricky Myers  
SPC Richard Narvaiz  
SPC Gerald Negelein  
SPC Christopher Newman  
SPC Adam Newton  
SPC Joseph Norris  
SPC Daniel Olson  
SPC Antonio Olvera  
SPC Patrick Ontiveros  
SPC William Paddock  
SPC Jared Page  
SPC Kevin Painter  
SPC Joshua Palmer  
SPC Martin Parker  
SPC Aaron Pawnee  
SPC Paul Payne  
SPC Jessie Pena  
SPC Stephen Pennington  
SPC Scott Pepi  
SPC Jose Perez  
SPC John Phillips  
SPC Jarrett Portwood  
SPC Joaquin Puente  
SPC Mario Ramirez  
SPC Rickey Raper  
SPC Jason Ratliff  
SPC Douglas Riley  
SPC Jacob Roberson  
SPC William Robinson  
SPC Kevin Roed  
SPC Eugene Ross  
SPC John Rowlan  
SPC Taylor Sandefur  
SPC Scott Schroeder  
SPC Gregory Self  
SPC Wesley Sharp  
SPC Jesse Shillingstad  
SPC Benjamin Short  
SPC Joshua Shugert  
SPC Eric Sikes  
SPC Nathan Simpson  
SPC Patrick Simpson  
SPC Timothy Skitt  
SPC Brian Slater  
SPC Justin Smith  
SPC Michael Smith  
SPC Jonathan Sokoll  
SPC Justin South  
SPC Gerald Spangler  
SPC Michael Starr  
SPC Michael Swain  
SPC Joshua Tate

SPC Kreston Taylor  
SPC Christopher Terwilligar  
SPC Michael Thompson  
SPC Nicholas Thompson  
SPC David Thronesbery  
SPC Pedro Valle  
SPC Andrew Waddel  
SPC Kyle Watson  
SPC Arvie Wess  
SPC Justin Wilkerson  
SPC Lorenzo Williams

SPC Jonathan Williamson  
SPC Andrew Wilson  
SPC Randy Woodman  
PFC Joshua Avants  
PFC Montrel Boston  
PFC Thomas Christian  
PFC James Duckett  
PFC Joshua Fox  
PFC Joshua Garison  
PFC Bradley Hukill  
PFC Austin Marvin

PFC Steven Shell  
PFC Jason Snelling  
PFC Bryan Turnbull  
PFC Herbert Ward  
PFC William Wasson  
PFC Barry Woodruff  
PVT Kyle Coe  
PVT Joseph Jackson  
PVT Joshua Martin  
PVT Michael McCracken

## **“BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE“**

On Monday, 16 May 2005 the “United States Federal Register” was published and in Part LXII; the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Defense gave notice of Base Closures and Realignment (BRAC). In this notice it was stated: *“Close the Keathley and Burris United States Army Reserve Centers located in Lawton and Chickasha, Oklahoma; close the Wichita Falls United States Army Reserve Center in Wichita Falls, Texas; close the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 6th United States Army Reserve Centers and Equipment Concentration Site (ECS) located on Fort Sill and relocate units into a new Armed Forces Reserve Center (AFRC) on Fort Sill, Oklahoma and a new United States Army Reserve Equipment Concentration Site to be collocated with the Oklahoma Army National Guard Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site on Fort Sill. The new AFRC shall have the capability to accommodate Oklahoma Army National Guard units from the following Oklahoma Army National Guard Readiness Centers: Lawton, Frederick, Anadarko, Chickasha, Marlow, Walters, and Healdton, Oklahoma; realign B/1–158th Field Artillery (MLRS) from the Oklahoma Army National Guard Readiness Center located in Duncan if the State of Oklahoma decides to relocate those National Guard units.”*

The 21st Century called for the closing of many National Guard and Army Reserve armories and then relocating them in a process known as the BRAC whose primary goal is military transformation. A new 45 million dollar state-of-the-art facility called the AFRC was constructed on Fort Sill, Oklahoma. This facility co-located Army Reserve and Oklahoma National Guard units into a single complex. This new AFRC spanned 28 acres and included four main buildings: a 125,000 square foot training center; a 25,000 square foot maintenance facility; a 48,000 square foot heated storage building; and a 4,600 square foot unheated storage building. In February 2011 the 1st Bn 158th FA (HIMARS) had completely moved from their old armories into the new AFRC on Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

## **OPERATION “ENDURING FREEDOM“**



The longest war in U.S. history began on 11 September 2001 when terrorist crashed airliners into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania. These attacks were carried out by the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization led by Osama bin Laden, who was living or hiding in Afghanistan. The “Taliban” who at this time were the de facto ruling governors of Afghanistan after the 1996 Soviet withdrawal were demanded by President George W. Bush to extradite him into American hands. The Taliban refused to hand him over and on 7 October 2001, the U.S. launched “Operation Enduring Freedom”. The U.S. along with its allies drove the Taliban from power in order to deny Al-Qaeda a safe base of operations in Afghanistan. A coalition of over 40 countries formed a security mission that was called the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The war afterwards consisted of Taliban insurgents against the Afghan Armed Forces (AAF) and its allied ISAF forces. Later the AAF and ISAF were joined by the Northern Alliance, who were the Afghan opposition fighting the Taliban in the ongoing civil war after 1996. By December 2001, the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda allies were defeated and in 2004 the Afghan Transitional Administration held elections and Hamid Karzai was elected president of the country, now named the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with a self defense force called the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF).

After NATO Resolution No. 1510 was passed on 13 October 2003 ISAF was able to expand its missions in support of the newly formed Afghan National Army (ANA). This was completed in 4 geographical stages with Regional Commands (RCs) working with PRTs. RC-North (RC-N) completed October 2004, RC-West (RC-W) completed September 2005, RC-South (RC-S) completed July 2006, and with RC-East (RC-E) completed October 2006 ISAF took responsibility for the entire country.



On 1 May 2011, United States Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in Abbotabad, Pakistan. Soon after NATO leaders executed an exit strategy and started withdrawing their forces and the U.S. announced that its major combat operations would end in December 2014, leaving a residual force in the country. On 28 December 2014, NATO ended ISAF combat operations in Afghanistan and transferred full security responsibility to the Afghan government. The NATO led Operation “Resolute Support” was formed the same day as a successor to ISAF. The U.S. military forces rotating to Afghanistan served in Operation “Enduring Freedom” (OEF) that was conducted 7 October 2001

through 31 December 2014 and Operation “Freedom's Sentinel” (OFS) conducted from 1 January 2015 to present.

It should be noted at this time that in February 2013, the 3rd Battalion, 27th Field Artillery (Airborne) (FA) deployed its Battery “B” headquarters, along with a HIMARS firing platoon and a Q-53 radar section, to Shindand Air Base (AB), Afghanistan for a nine month deployment and on 1 July 2013 Colonel James Crider; commander of Task Force Raider the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division; relinquished authority of Zabul Province over to Colonel Bill Ostlund; commander of Task Force Duke the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. Task Force Duke, headquartered on FOB Apache, was there to support the ANSF in Afghan-led operations, provide security for Afghan elections, and to conduct retrograde operations in RC-S. There are six battalions in the “Duke” Brigade Combat Team:

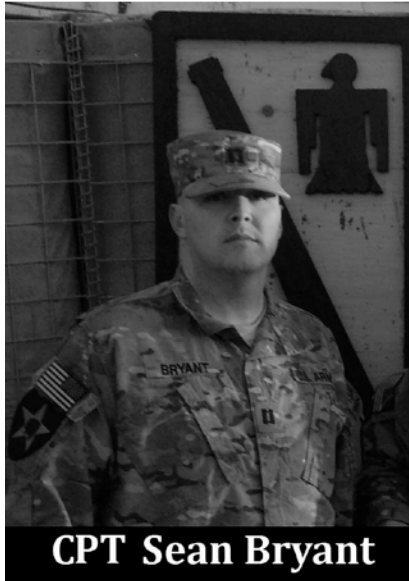
- 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment; the “Blue Spaders”
- 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment; the “Ramrods”
- 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment; the “Raiders
- 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment; the “Centaur’s”
- 201st Brigade Support Battalion; the “Always Ready”
- 3-1 Special Troops Battalion; the “Valiant Warriors”



It is important to remember these facts in order to ascertain the significance resulting from Battery “A”, 1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) deployment. Osama bin Laden was dead, ISAF ended combat operations, and an exit strategy was already being executed as Combined Task Force (CTF) Duke was conducting retrograde operations. In other words transfer of base and life support would be handed over to the ANSF. To understand the true magnitude of retrograde operations you must understand that this is a defensive task that involves organized

movement away from the enemy. In order to reduce the footprint that has accumulated over 10 years of combat operations makes you ask the question: Where does all the stuff go? The answer is that this equipment must be reintegrated back into the Army's supply system and removed if it is no longer necessary if combat operations have ceased. So it was this long-range planning that allowed the battalion to train in its wartime contingency and they would be expected to “fall-in” on equipment already in theater and CTF Duke who was retrograding by infiltration from Combat Out-Posts (COPs) to FOBs would still need covering fires if they were being harassed.

Lieutenant Colonel Jerald Gilbert, commander of the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS), receives the mission in alert order form and promptly thereafter he notifies Battery “A’s” commander,



Captain Sean Bryant and senior enlisted First Sergeant Lance Grant and Battery "B", 1st Battalion, 171st Target Acquisition Battery, with senior enlisted Sergeant First Class John B. McClung were notified that they would deploy to Afghanistan to support ISAF by providing "timely and accurate" field artillery fires to the RC-S, specifically CTF Duke.

Immediately upon this notification all training is now focused on completing any Pre-Deployment Training that would support theater entry requirements set forth by the combatant commander. This PMT is essential to the artilleryman in the fact that their mission is to provide "timely and accurate" fires and failure is not an option but they must also meet the basic training requirements to enter into the Afghanistan Theater. A significant portion of training and readiness will occur during pre-mobilization and the PMT was conducted in August 2013. Camp Gruber, Oklahoma supported the PMT by providing small arms and individual weapons familiarization and qualification ranges and record fire ranges and this was essential since every man carried the 9mm Beretta sidearm as well as a 5.56mm long rifle. Camp Gruber also provided vehicle mounted

weapon qualification ranges, small unmanned aerial vehicle operations area, a MOUT Facility and a Breach Facility.

After A/1-158 FA returns from Camp Gruber they immediately go to the "field" on Fort Sill, Oklahoma and start preparations for conducting their preliminary HIMARS gunnery tables. These gunnery tables provide a methodology for progressively training the firing platoons and ensure that all crews can safely and effectively perform required gunnery tasks by "dry-fire" and then the live-fire certification phase. The tasks, conditions, and standards are provided on the gunnery tables and there are three different qualification events every crew must pass, the fire when ready, fire at my command and time on target. A/1-158 FA was validated on Table VI and given the "thumbs up" to proceed to the mobilization site.



On 23 September 2013, the A/1-158 FA deploys to its mobilization site at Fort Bliss, Texas. Here they will be under the auspices of the 5th Armored Brigade, U. S. First Army's Western Division whose mission is to validate and certify theater specific training to the mobilized unit. They will provide realistic, mission-focused and demanding training to better prepare the A/1-158 FA for deployment and validate the wartime contingency capability of "timely and accurate" fires. The first order of business at the MOB site is personal readiness for deployment. This starts with completing legal documents, validating Records of Emergency Data, getting

financial affairs in order, insuring family members have the appropriate military identification cards and ensuring that their Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) beneficiaries are up to date. Medical processing starts next with Hearing, Dental and Vision examinations, optical inserts are issued. Immunizations for Tetanus, Diphtheria, Hepatitis A and B, Typhoid, Anthrax, Cholera, Tuberculosis and HIV testing are required by CENTCOM before deploying into Afghanistan. The unit also had to ensure that Theater Specific Individual Requirements Training (TSIRT) was completed by everybody and this includes Level 1 Antiterrorism Awareness Training, Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) Training, Cultural Orientation, Cyber Awareness Challenge, and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Concussion

Training. There is also training required for the most serious threat in Afghanistan the IED. Taliban, insurgents, and Al Qaeda foreign fighters use IEDs to cause casualties and create insecurity in the populace due to their simplicity and difficulty of detection.

All of this training is part of the month long mobilization of the A/1-158 FA but to certify and validate they must be examined in the Mission Readiness Exercise. During the last week of mobilization; the 23 thru 27 September 2013; they moved to the Oro Grande Base Complex along with more than forty Observer Coach Trainers (OCTs) of the 5th Armored Brigade who will oversee and observe the training and then provide feedback and suggestions throughout the exercise. This training exercise entails marksmanship, resupply, countering homemade bombs and goes through the full range of operations and capabilities but most importantly it gets to showcase the A/1-158 FA real world skills of firing its M142 HIMARS launchers. Mandatory certifications in providing artillery support capabilities are required for deployment and the validation culminating with the launcher crews firing approximately 34 rockets. Late at night the blue New Mexico sky lit up with rocket engine glows zooming across its horizon and impacting with a loud thud. Battery "A" was shooting "rippers"; Reduced Range Practice Rockets (RRPRs). These rockets have a shorten range for safety purposes and don't have warheads so they don't explode upon impact. These rockets are like "flying telephone poles" and they just land with a thud and a cloud of dust. The fire missions ended with simultaneous and consecutive rounds downrange and battery level gunnery was validated. After qualification all M142 rocket launchers were loaded onto the railhead and shipped back to Fort Sill, Oklahoma by the battalion support team.

On 14 October 2013, A/1-158 FA moved to Biggs Army Airfield and its Silas L. Copeland Arrival Departure Airfield Control Group (ADACG). The ADACG took control of the reception and the loading of A/1-158 FA. Here they were briefed about the flight requirements, manifest was checked and soldiers, duffel bags and carry on was weighed. The unit was moved to a sterile control point and fed before the flight and then



they waited for their bulk baggage to be palletized and loaded and after this was accomplished the aircraft was boarded by manifest. This was a commercial flight and because there were very few pax's aboard the stewardess had to re-seat everybody in order to evenly distribute the weight, once this was accomplished then the flight took off landing at Fort Hood, Texas. Here they took onboard more pax's and soon after they departed and while still in CONUS they had to touch down in Norfolk, Virginia for repairs and here everyone was made to deplane

and because this commercial flight had no relief crew they were bused to a local Hampton Inn and lodged there until the aircraft took off the next day. The aircraft flew into the Transit Center located at Manas Air Base, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The base was opened in 2001 to support U.S. military operations in the ongoing OEF and is a transit point for U.S. military personnel coming and going from Afghanistan. Within twenty four hours the A/1-158 FA and the B/171 TAB boarded a C-17 Globemaster and flew into KAF.

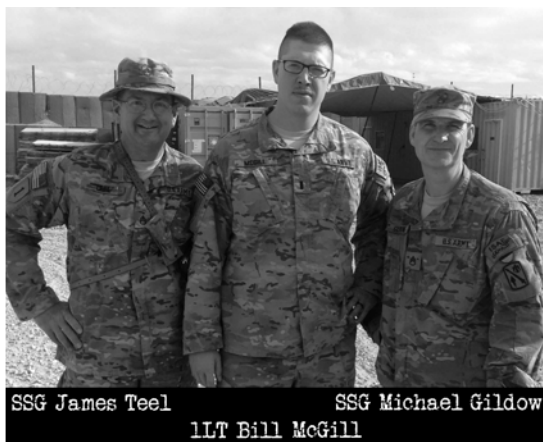
It was here that the A/1-158 FA is given their change of mission. They would proceed to Shindand AB and transfer and assume operational control over the 3rd Battalion 27th FA (HIMARS) M142 rocket launchers. They would move them to FOB Apache and establish digital communications and provide timely and accurate fire support to the RC-S ISAF. The B/171 TAB would transfer and assume operational control over the organic AN/TPQ-53 radar system and provide radar support the Shindand base security forces known as TF Granite. Shindand AB is located in the western part of Afghanistan in the Herat Province, 7 miles northeast of the city of Shindand and 75 miles from the border of Iran. The airstrip runway has a concrete surface and Highway 1 connects it to the national ring road allowing vehicle access to the city of Kandahar. Shindand AB is capable of housing over one hundred military aircraft making it

one of the largest Afghan Air Force bases. A large heavily constructed perimeter fence surrounds the base with 52 guard towers manned and patrolled by the Mongolian National Army. In 2013, the 1st Battalion, 214th Field Artillery Regiment, deployed to Shindand AB as TF Granite and assumed the Base Defense mission and carried out patrol and assessment missions, checkpoint control and flight line security for the base and dedicated one firing battery as a tactical security element for the outside-the-wire counter threat operations.



**Battery "B", 171st Target Acquisition Battery (TAB)**

Kneeling L-R: CSM Steven Owens - SPC Lucious Guthrie.  
 Standing L - R: SPC Andrew Mieher, SFC John McClung, SPC Micah Israel, SPC Trevor Stewart, SGT Bryan Olson, SPC Johan Silva, SGT Casey Kimbler, SPC Jeremy Josey, SGT Matthew Heath.



SSG James Teel                      SSG Michael Gildow  
 1LT Bill McGill

The battery is split into three locations, two in RC-S, FOB Apache and Kandahar Airfield (KAF) and the third in RC-W at Shindand AB which are in the Zabul and Herat provinces, respectively. Originally all of the equipment and rocket launchers for A/1-158 FA were located at Shindand AB, so Captain Bryant proceeds there to secure the equipment. Four M142 rocket launchers are loaded onto C-130 aircraft and flown into FOB Davis; a Special Operations Command base approximately 2,000 meters northwest of FOB Apache; and upon arrival the equipment and launchers were moved and positioned on FOB Apache. Concurrently while this was happening First Lieutenant Bill McGill, First Sergeant Grant and Sergeant First Class James Brown, and Staff Sergeants Michael Gildow and Tommy Bryant begin the over whelming task of setting up operations on a FOB with limited resources available.



They find an abandoned building, clean it out and start scrounging and acquiring all the electronics. Sergeant First Class Brown; the Fire Direction Center chief; integrates all the electronics into the Secret Internet Protocol Router (SIPR) network and establishes digital communications within 48 hours of the launchers touching down on the ground at FOB Apache thus giving A/1-158 the capabilities of providing HIMARS coverage in support of CTF Duke. They maintained 2 rocket launchers In Position Ready to Fire (IPRF) 24 hours a day and the other two launchers in maintenance storage, thus rotating their “ready” statuses periodically. On 16 January 2014, A/1-158 FA Launcher A-42 of the 1st Fires Platoon crewed by Staff Sergeant Steven Stanley, Sergeant Matthew Schoolfield and Specialist Joshua Hale received a “Fire Mission” and they launched two rockets on enemy targets, destroying an enemy communications repeater sight that insurgents were using against the coalition forces, making this the first time since Desert Storm that the 158th Field Artillery fired rockets in support of the GWOT. Shortly after this A/1-158 FA received another “Fire Mission”, a 2nd Fires Platoon launcher crewed by Sergeant First Class William Johnson, Sergeants Ralph Tocco and Nathan Spencer received and initiated the fire mission that sent two rounds to separate enemy targets, destroying them both promptly.

When the rocket launchers were rotating in and out of maintenance storage the maintenance support crews were configuring the Increased Crew Protection (ICP) cabs by installing the “Up-Armored” appliqué kits onto the launchers. The kits were supplied to bring the launchers IAW Standard NATO Agreement (STANAG) level II armor requirements. This kit was designated the Low Signature Armored Cab (LSAC) and consisted of 43 pieces of bolted on armor that could be installed on the cab in less than two hours and removed in less than one hour with a removable machine gun mount. With the appliqué armor mounted onto the M142, the additional weight would not meet the C-130 transportability requirements and this was essential to know in retrograde planning operations.



**SGT Cory Clemons on M142 Rocket Launcher with applique armor and "Gator" logo.**

On 8 July 2013, Major General Paul LaCamera, Commanding General, 4th Infantry Division, assumes command of RC-S and on 28 December 2014 RC-S becomes HQ CJTF-4 or the Train Advise Assist Command-South (TAAC-S) in compliance with the Resolute Support Mission. Retrograde operations are prevalent throughout the command. Massing equipment and synchronizing the vehicles needed to move them is a monumental effort in TAAC-S and much of it is Class VII (major end items such as vehicles) and Class IX (repair parts). After this is Class II (general supplies, mostly consisting of printers, computer monitors, and desk furniture) and including large amounts of life-support items, such as air conditioning units, electrical units, and water heaters. All of it to be reintegrated back into the Army supply system.



**SGT Antonio Olvera**

FOB Apache was in the process of retrograding so it was decided that First Lieutenant Christopher Lanham and Sergeant First Class Earl Johnson and a portion of the battery (minus) would be placed at KAF to perform non-standard artillery missions in support of RC-S. Here they orchestrated all the cantonment “day to day” liaison requirements needed for the launchers forward as well as the (minus) life support requirements at KAF. It was here that the (minus) was tasked with additional duties and the A/1-158 FA would add unique and different missions to its list of many accomplishments. HIMARS Fires was the primary mission but soon due to units rotating out of theater and the reduction of forces they added Personal Security Details, Route Convoy Clearance, Entry Control Point Security, Human Resource Clerks, some of the Base Security and they manned the Permanent and Transient Billeting office and they were also tasked to assume the Postal Duties for their APO. They mastered and learned “mail handling” for the 20,000 (plus) soldiers on the base and their merit was duly noted by all the coalition forces. Sergeant Antonio Olvera a member of the “Iron Horse Express” PSD and Specialist Justin Reinschmidt were in high demand for their security skills.

On 23 June 2014, A/1-158 FA was present for an awards ceremony on KAF. Brigadier General John Thomas, Deputy Commanding General Support presented awards to unit members. For their service in Operation Enduring Freedom, A/1-158 FA received numerous Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medals and every soldier received the Afghanistan Campaign Medal and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medal with "ISAF" clasp for their service in Afghanistan.

Battery "A" left Afghanistan on 1 July 2014 and included a stop at Fort Bliss, Texas where they spent eight days at the Fort Bliss Joint Mobilization Station (JMS) and then on 8 July 2014 they boarded buses and made an overnight bus trip to Mustang, Oklahoma.



### Composite Roster of Battery "A", 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) \*

CPT Sean Bryant	SGT Michael Morales
1LT Christopher Lanham	SGT Matthew Morgan
1LT Bill McGill	SGT Antonio Olvera
1LT Keith McKemie	SGT Daniel Rameriz
1LT Jeffery Morefield	SGT David Ray
1SG Lance Grant	SGT Randy Rose
SFC James Brown	SGT Matthew Schoolfield
SFC Vernon Defoor	SGT Nathan Spencer
SFC Earl Johnson	SGT Ralph Tocco
SFC William Johnson	SGT Matthew Walkup
SFC Gordon Underwood	SPC Robert Ahrens
SSG Thomas Adkins	SPC Randall Arismendez
SSG Jason Bellar	SPC Kyle Baker
SSG Jason Blount	SPC Jeremy Blake
SSG Adrian Brown	SPC Glen Dorsey
SSG Thomas Bryant	SPC Jeremy Josey
SSG Randy Eden	SPC Andrew Mieher
SSG Anthony Ekman	SPC Brandon Peralta
SSG Michael Gildow	SPC Jeremie Ploof
SSG Arry Johnson	SPC Zachary Pruitt
SSG Benjamin Maxwell	SPC Justin Reinschmidt
SSG Steven Mazur	SPC Christopher Rochell
SSG William Reid	SPC Benjamin Sawatzky
SSG Christopher Solis	SPC Grant Shriver
SSG Steven Stanley	SPC Trevor Stewart
SSG James Teel	SPC Joseph Tassinan
SGT Cory Clemons	SPC Joshua Tate
SGT Richard Dorsey	PFC Joseph Hershberger
SGT Matthew Gaulrapp	<b>B/171 Target Acquisition Battery *</b>
SGT Jeremy Green	SFC John McClung
SGT Dennis Green	SGT Casey Kimbler
SGT Taylor Green	SGT Bryan Olson
SGT Joshua Hale	SPC Lucious Guthrie
SGT Matthew Heath	SPC Johan Silva
SGT Joshua Jezisek	SPC Micah Israel
SGT Roger Kime	
SGT Kenneth Manning	



Rocket Launcher A-42 fires a 2 round rocket salvo from Forward Operating Base "Apache", Zabul, Afghanistan.

### **OPERATION "ENDURING FREEDOM/RESOLUTE SUPPORT"**

Battery "B", 1-158 FA BN (HIMARS) was one of the many U.S. military forces that rotated to Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom which ended 31 December 2014 and then fell under Operation Freedom's Sentinel that had started on 1 January 2015 and has continued to the present. Effective 1 January 2015 the U.S. mission in Afghanistan would focus on NATO's Resolute Support Mission of Training, Advising, and Assisting (TAA) the Afghan National Defense & Security Forces (ANDSF) in order to build their capabilities and sustainability. The Regional Commands (RCs) now change to TAA Commands and the 1-158 FA BN (HIMARS) is now under the auspices of TAAC-S. The command chronology is that on 8 July 2013, Major General Paul LaCamera, Commanding General, 4th Infantry Division, assumes command of RC-S, which now becomes HQ Combined Joint Task Force 4 and then on 7 July 2014, Major General Michael Bills, Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division, assumes command of RC-S and this turns into HQ Combined Joint Task Force 1 and then on 14 October 2014, Brigadier General Douglas Gabram, 1st Cavalry Division, assumes command for Train, Advise, Assist Command-South. On the ground units were busy creating retrograde yards, scrambling for containers, packing, inventorying and accounting for equipment and contractors.

Commander and battalion staff had already started the MDMP for the 1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) after Battery "A" had mobilized and departed for Afghanistan. In March 2014 all focus was on PMT and now it was directed towards Battery "B", who would relieve their sister unit in Afghanistan. Not surprisingly but the unit immediately started on small arms and individual weapons familiarization followed by record fire qualification ranges. PMT concentrated on basic soldier tasks and warrior skills, all perishable skills, so it served as refresher training. Map reading/land navigation, tactical casualty care, traffic control points, entry control points, counter-IED training and Combat Life Saving courses was covered but the training was culminated by a combat scenario based training lane.

On 3 May 2014, Battery "B", 1-158 FA BN (HIMARS), under the command of Captain Randall F. Wright and senior enlisted First Sergeant Emmanuel Williams and along with 70 soldiers to include members of Battery B, 171st Target Acquisition Battery under the command of Sergeant First Class Charles Bishop, were alerted and mobilized for combat operations in Afghanistan. On 6 May 2014, B/1-158 FA arrived at



**CPT Randall Wright**

Fort Bliss, Texas to begin their mobilization training for their upcoming deployment. This would be their final opportunity to conduct live-fire training on their core military occupational specialty of providing timely and accurate field artillery fire. Through all the CENTCOM mandated theater entry training and battle focused field training B/1-158 FA certified and validated 8 each M142 launcher crews. Once again after the qualifications the support teams moved all the equipment back to home stations.

The Department of the Army had announced a significant policy change in 2012 concerning women in the Army and Army Directive 2012-16 opened up three Field Artillery Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) of 13M, Multiple Launch Rocket System Crewmember; 13P, Multiple Launch Rocket System Fire Direction Specialist; and 13R, Field Artillery "Firefinder" Radar Operator to women. Serving in the U.S.

Army's field artillery is nothing new for American women, Mary Ludwig, also known as Molly Pitcher, fought at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, when her husband fell, she continued operating his cannon through the battle. In the 1970s and 1980s, women served in Pershing and Lance missile units. For females, this change in policy permitted them to serve in all duties in the HIMARS battalions. Sergeant Canisha Harjo a 91D Generator Mechanic and Privates First Class Makyla K. McKean and Jerra-Amie N. Hodges both 13Ps Fire Direction Specialist; were now preparing for combat operations at Fort Bliss; earmarking them as the first females to enter a combat zone with the B/1-158 FA. Months before the mobilization began the 13Ps were integrated into the unit in a seamless transition and given three very critical functions. First is that the fire solution is accurate and satisfies the requirements of the supported force, secondly was the safety box of the data and lastly they have to have the situational awareness of the battlefield and the ability to anticipate and react quickly to the tactical situation in accordance with the field artillery support plan. All these functions were tested and validated at the Mob-Site with the end result being the battery cleared for deployment into the theater.



**SPC Justin Harper**

**PFC Jera Amie Hodges**

**PFC Makyla McKean**

**SPC Johnathan Gablemann**

On 16 June 2014 B/1-158 FA moved from Fort Bliss to Biggs Army Air Field to the Silas L. Copeland A/DACG and boarded aircraft and flew into Leizig/Halle, Germany, where they refuel and got a rest break and then reloaded and flew into Mihail Kogalniceanu or MK Air Base, Romania. MK is located about 25 miles northwest of the Black Sea city of Constanta and about 2,500 miles northwest of Afghanistan and replaces the transit center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. From here they flew directly into KAF. Concurrently A/1-158 FA has retrograded to KAF and Captain Bryant and First Sergeant Grant meets Captain Wright

and First Sergeant Williams and a “battle hand-off” is exchanged and the RIP/TOA begins immediately. It is here that the B/1-158 FA is briefed on the TAAC-S current tactical situation and the “left seat-right seat” begins.



**Battery "B" 171st Target Acquisition Battery (TAB)**

**Kneeling: CPL Dustin Fuller**

**Standing L-R: SSG Jason Dobbins, SPC Aaron Bailey,  
SPC Nathan Frank, SFC Charles Bishop, SSG Bryce Behrens.**

The Relief B-171 TAB immediately departs for Shindand AB where they link up with and relieve the AN/TPQ-53 radar technicians who assumed responsibility in the winter of 2013 and once they relieved them they were sent to rendezvous with A/158 FA on KAF and initiate their departure out of theater. The Relief B-171 TAB would now operate the last counterfire target acquisition radar systems on Shindand AB. The Q-53 detects, classifies, tracks and determines the location of enemy indirect fire in 360 degree modes and can be set up in five minutes, taken down in two minutes and supports a two-man operation. The Q-53 has demonstrated the ability to identify and track unmanned

aerial systems and is highly mobile on the battlefield and is a “first in-last out” asset and its QRF was the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Shindand AB was closing and getting turned over to the ANDSF so the Relief B-171 TAB eventually retrograded and closed down the radar site. On a cold morning in November 2014 the Relief B-171 TAB loaded onto C-17 Globemasters and accompanied their Q-53s back to Bagram AF Base (BAF). Sergeant Harjo redeployed from KAF to BAF to assist in the last services required to remove them off their hand receipts and turned them over to the 401st Army Field Support Brigade of the 1st Theater Sustainment Command all part of CENTCOM’s Theater-Provided Equipment (TPE). Once hand receipts were cleared the Relief B-171 TAB hopped on aircrafts to KAF and rendezvoused with B/1-158 FA and departed theater 21 December 2014.

Simultaneously when the Relief B-171 TAB departs for Shindand AB the main body of B/1-158 FA departed for FOB Apache. Upon arrival at FOB Apache they find themselves in the midst of the retrograde; an arduous and complex process of bringing home all U.S. equipment and in Afghanistan it is literally a fighting withdrawal; one of the most difficult battlefield maneuvers. Everything that exits the FOB goes by helicopter or by truck and everything needs to be provided protection. The M142 rocket launchers have their appliqué armor mounted for their final destination to the TPE yards where they will be trucked in by wheeled convoy with 1st Cavalry Division QRF armored vehicles that leapfrog ahead and around the convoys providing them overwatch protection. On 4 August 2014 B/1-158 FA has relinquished all fire support assets to the retrograde and now they must move to KAF to allow other units to occupy what space is left on FOB Apache. Eventually contractors and non-essential items are moved to KAF, the FOB turns into a tactical outpost waiting for removal of the “T-Walls and Hesco Barriers” and the remaining soldiers will retrograde to their next location.

When the Relief B-171 TAB and the main body of B/1-158 FA departed from KAF a stay behind party, led by Sergeant First Class Lance Zerger was left at KAF to assume the garrison duties that A/1-158 FA was tasked with. These duties were varied and included responsibility of billeting and tabling “mayor’s cell” sections and manning desks in the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC). Specialist Quinton Hall of Vernon, Texas and Shawn Pierce of Edmond, Oklahoma where tasked with the monumental duties of postal clerks for the garrison. Eventually after the main body turned in the rocket launchers in early August 2014 they would reunite with the stay behind party on KAF but very soon their mission would

change due to the ever changing conditions on the battlefield. Captain Wright understood the flexibility and adaptability that the B/1-158 FA endured during the deployment, spending countless hours training for their primary artillery mission yet performing other missions. B/1-158 FA demonstrated the ability to augment or supplement other joint and or coalition forces during the retrograde as a valuable and creditable ground force.



An ever-present concern during all retrogrades is Force Protection and knowing about two prior incidents may theorize the next mission that was tasked to the B/1-158 FA. First is that northwest of Kabul International Airport (KIA) is FOB Oqab, only 125 x 225 meters, and although it is small it is of significance importance because it is the Headquarters for the 438th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group (AEAG) and NATO Air Training Commander; Brigadier General John E. Michel who resides on the FOB with his Command Chief Master Sergeant, seven colonels, operations personnel and a small detachment of USAF Security Forces; all totaling around 50 personnel. On 17 July 2014 at about 0415 hours 4 thru 11 Taliban insurgents began by firing rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles from a multistoried building located about 350 meters from the perimeter of the FOB. The USAF security forces manning the guard towers identified the attackers' positions and started fighting back. Soon two Quick Reaction Forces mounted in MRAPs pushed closer to the insurgents and cleared the multistoried building. The insurgents were soon repelled back by M203 grenade launchers and M240B medium

machine gun fire from the tower guards. During the five hour siege the Americans fired more than 3,000 rounds of small arms killing four of the attackers. Secondly the single most publicized "green on blue" insider attack occurred on 5 August 2014 at an outdoor gathering on the grounds of the Qargha academy, also known the Marshal Fahim National Defense University, located less than 6 miles from FOB Oqab, when an Afghan soldier opened fire an killing a US Major General Harold J. Greene and wounding at least 15 other troops including a German brigadier general. General officers rarely die in combat zones, because within reason their placement is in rear planning areas, but in Afghanistan it was evident that battle fronts and rear areas change places frequently thus placing greater concerns for Force Protection.

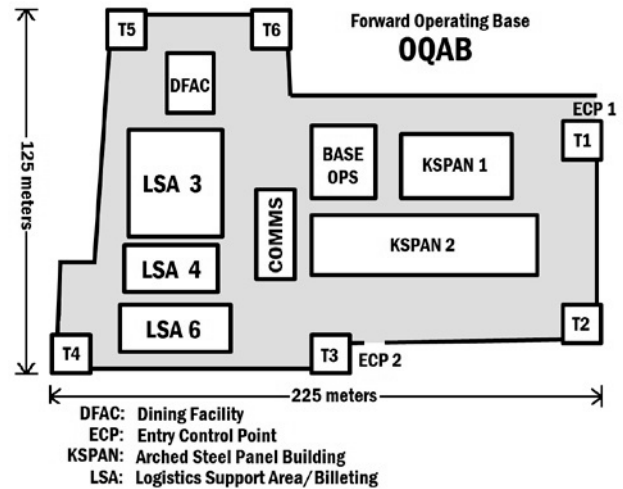


**Kandahar Air Field Support Team**

Back Row L-R: SPC David Daugherty, SPC Kevin Steele.

Front Row L-R: SFC David Farrow, SGT Mario Ramirez, SSG Danny McKillip, SPC Gary Bailey, SSG Aaron Pawnee, SPC Jeremy Brady, SPC Sean Eckrote.

In early September 2014 the B/1-158 FA was given the mission of providing Base Security Operations on FOB Oqab and they departed KAF leaving a 9 man detachment on KAF who performed as a Guardian Angel (GA) ground support detail to the USAF 438th Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW). This detail was led by Sergeant First Class David Farrow, Staff Sergeants Danny McKillip and Aaron Pawnee, Sergeants David Daughriety, Sean Eckrote and Mario Rameriz and Specialist Gary Bailey, Jeremy Brady and Kelvin Steele. The GA's role on BAF is that the ground force provides the personnel security details for the TAAC-AEW advisors. When the B/1-158 FA arrived at KIA they walked over to FOB Oqab and where able to immediately ascertain a defense plan. The FOB has only 6 observation towers, a DFAC tent and three billeting areas, a communications hut, a Command and Control building, a few Arched Support Buildings (KSPANS) and only two ECPs. The new mission on FOB Oqab is to provide security for a safe training environment to the TAAC-Air mission and pilots to ensure they focus on advising instead of security. Their everyday actions allowed the TAAC-Air mission to be successful and sleep soundly every night on the tiny FOB. The willingness of B/1-158 FA to accept a completely different mission highlighted their selfless devotion to duty and their professionalism in arms for the short period they were there. On 21 December 2014 they walked over to KIA and departed out of theater. Shortly after their departure the 950th Engineer Company assumed base security operations on FOB Oqab.



B/1-158 FA flew out of Afghanistan and arrived at MK Air Base and on 24 December 2014 they spent Christmas Day in Romania where they participated in a traditional Christmas dinner at the DFAC. In a few days they boarded aircraft and on 29 December 2014 they touched down at Silas L. Copeland A/DACG on Fort Bliss, where they began the demobilization process. In the early hours of 8 January 2015 they loaded their gear onto buses and returned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma on 9 January 2015 where they were met by their families to a standing ovation.





**Composite Roster of Battery “B”, 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) \***

CPT Randall Wright	SPC Timothy Adkins
1LT Jason Elbert	SPC Trent Alexander
1LT Prescott Kiplinger	SPC Travis Armstrong
1LT Duanne Miller	SPC Gary Bailey
1LT Marco Yates	SPC Jeremy Brady
1SG Emmanuel Williams	SPC Joshua Brown
SFC David Farrow	SPC Chad Cline
SFC Brian Hekia	SPC Wesley Cole
SFC Billy Holley	SPC David Daugherty
SFC John Miller	SPC Sean Eckrote
SFC Greg Morris	SPC Jonathan Gablemann
SFC Carlton Speller	SPC Quinton Hall
SFC Lance Zerger	SPC Justin Harper
SSG Kasey Bickerstaff	SPC Xavier Hernandez
SSG Jay Fertig	SPC Jera Amie Hodges
SSG Jack McComas	SPC Steve Hollis
SSG Danny McKillip	SPC Rudy Johnson
SSG Larry Nix	SPC Makyla McKean
SSG Kerry Pemberton	SPC Brad Milne
SSG Stephen Pennington	SPC Adrian Otap
SSG Chris Polsgrove	SPC Shawn Pierce
SSG Rodney Poolaw	SPC Mario Rameriz
SSG Michael Rogers	SPC Joshua Shultz
SSG Eric Sikes	SPC Timothy Skitt
SSG Frederick Tabert	SPC Kelvin Steele
SGT Christopher Adamson	SPC Jonathan Stephens
SGT Cody Aldredge	SPC Travis Theisen
SGT Christopher Black	SPC Matthew Topaum
SGT Canisha Harjo	PFC Nathan Frank
SGT Vincent Martinez	PFC Aaron Higdon
SGT Cody McCracken	<b>B/171 Target Acquisition Battery *</b>
SGT Kyser McGill	SFC Charles Bishop
SGT Christopher McWethy	SSG Bryce Behrens
SGT Miguel Medina	SSG Jason Dobbins
SGT Paul Moore	CPL Dustin Fuller
SGT Patrick Morris	SPC Nathan Frank
SGT Aaron Pawnee	SPC Aaron Bailey
SGT Tyler Webb	

**OPERATION “SPARTAN SHIELD”**

Taking advantage of a lawless environment and being fueled by sectarian strife, a small jihadist group ascended from obscurity into claiming that it had created an Islamic caliphate (an Islamic state under the leadership of an Islamic ruler with the title of caliph, a person considered a politico-religious successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad). This group was called the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS), and their rise to power is also referred to as Da’esh. Da’esh sounds similar to an Arabic verb meaning to crush and tread underfoot, to trample down and because of its negative connotations is used to challenge the legitimacy of the terror group. ISIS acquired conventional weapons and built large groups of fighters, took over and controlled large cities and swatches of territory within Iraq and Syria, and then they perpetrated atrocities that shocked the world. By 15 June 2014, the security situation in Iraq had deteriorated and Iraqi cities of Mosul and Tikrit fell to ISIS control that the Department of Defense (DOD) formally established Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR).



Training Year 2019 was very simple to understand but it was a monumental undertaking for the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) prior to its mobilization and deployment of providing HIMARS long range artillery support to Operation Spartan Shield (OSS) and OIR, both DOD operations in the Middle East commanded by CENTCOM. OIR reflects the unwavering resolve and deep commitment of the U.S. and partner nations to eliminate the terrorist group “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL). OIR campaign is primarily an “air waged” and “long range artillery” campaign in Iraq and Syria in support of prominently the Iraqi security forces and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). OSS allows the continuing efforts to defend the United States from airborne attacks, maintain air sovereignty, and defending critical U.S. facilities from a potentially hostile threat and contributes to CENTCOM’s mission imperatives of Counter, Protect, Defend and Prepare while simultaneously building partner capacity in the Middle East. Task Force Spartan is the U.S. Army component of OSS headquartered out of Army Central Command Headquarters (ARCENT) or Third Army, at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. ARCENT was commanded by Lieutenant General Terry R. Ferrell focusing primarily on the Middle East with an Area of Responsibility (AOR) stretching from the Central Asian States to the Horn of Africa encompassing an area of approximately 6,500,000 square miles. Task Force Spartan; a subordinate units of ARCENT is a multi-component organization, made up of active Army and National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve support units that maintain military posture in Southwest Asia to strengthen defense relationships and build partner capacity.



On 2 June 2019 the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) of the 45th Fires Brigade and the 97th Air Mobility Wing (AMW) of Altus AFB were conducting final inspections of the webbing tie down straps that secured the M142 rocket launchers to the cargo floors of their C-17 Globemasters. Once the USAF loadmasters gave their “thumbs up” the crews loaded up and flew: two sorties delivering six M142s; to Fort Smith, Arkansas where the launchers manned by their crews drove them off the aircraft and road marched to Fort Chaffee where they immediately went into positions and awaited fire missions. This was the beginning of Annual Training exercise “Western Strike” which would

conclude 14 June 2019 and would test and prepare the 1-158 FA HIMARS in its core military occupational specialty of assembly and deployment into a theater of operations and shooting its rocket launchers.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Neeley, commander of the 1st Battalion 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) and his staff had already received the 360-day mobilization order in January 2019 and they had analyzed the Mission Analysis Readiness Resource Synchronization (MARRS) and started planning the collective training and cross-leveling to ensure the deploying element would be sufficiently manned for the mission requirement of 120 paxs. Battery “A” was selected as the element to deploy and it was under the command of Captain Jeffrey Morefield with senior enlisted First Sergeant Jackie Bruesch. A/1-158 FA went into its planning and preparation mode, immediately cross leveling to meet the request for forces requirement. A “rule of thumb” in the preparation mode understands that a single mistake when you are unprepared can derail your success and it may sound like an oxymoron but “being prepared for the unexpected” can help you prepare for these potential derailments. New policy mandated that all individual tasks PMT had to be trained and certified prior to its mobilization. So throughout the 2019 calendar year the A/1-158 FA conducted as much PMT that they were capable of



squeezing into their training schedule and after the long days and nights of focusing on their mission, they seemed to have prepared for the unexpected.

On 16 December 2019, 120 members of A/1-158 FA reported to the Armed Forces Reserve Center on Fort Sill, to initiate the soldier readiness processing. During this process, deployment eligibility is determined in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Army and every soldier must meet the readiness standards per Army Regulations or they are sent home. The home station ensures that all necessary administrative, medical, dental, financial, and emergency data is in compliance with current requirements before arrival to the mobilization station. All equipment was loaded and final preparations were arranged. Of major importance was the loading of 4 each of Battery "B" rocket launchers to be shipped to the mobilization station at Camp McGregor, New Mexico. After Annual Training, Battery "A" rocket launchers were loaded onto tractor trailers and hauled down to Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina for Surface Deployment and Distribution via the 841st Transportation Battalion on their commercial cargo vessels to be "slow-boated" to Kuwait. Battery "B" rocket launchers would be utilized by A/1-158 FA in their validation and theater certification gunnery tables and then returned to home station after the battery was deemed deployable.



On 12 January 2020, hundreds of well-wishers and families packed into the Lawton High School gymnasium for a formal deployment ceremony and goodbye to the A/1-158 FA as they depart for the mobilization station at Fort Bliss, Texas. Major General Michael Thompson; the Oklahoma Adjutant General; and Colonel Jason Henry; the 45th Fires Brigade commander; were on hand to recognize and thank the battery for their service to the nation and after they had rendered their remarks they were able to mingle with the soldiers and their families. The 145th Army Band was on hand to officially highlight the ceremony with patriotic themes and musical compositions and the ever popular "The Army Song". Once the ceremony was over, and the

deploying soldiers were able to say their final goodbyes as they were loaded onto buses and moved over to the Lawton/Fort Sill Regional Airport where they boarded an aircraft and flew directly to Fort Bliss, Texas.

Once they arrived to the Mobilization Station they spent some time at Fort Bliss proper, for welcoming and in processing briefs, SRP and theater specific OCIE issuing stations. Individual Protective Equipment (IPE) is a compilation of protective clothing, personal decontamination and detection equipment used for Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear (CBRN) protection. All deploying personnel are issued IPE and it must be in their possession prior to departure from the mobilization station. Then A/1-158 FA is moved out to Camp McGregor. Camp McGregor is north of the main reservation and is located in New Mexico, in the valley basin of the Sacramento Mountains adjacent to White Sands National Monument and south of the city of Alamogordo. The McGregor Range Complex consists of small arms ranges, air defense and artillery firing ranges. South of the range complex is the base complex with open bay barracks, that are very spacious with modern heating and air conditioning units. There is a DFAC, gym facilities, running track, a mini PX that houses a barber shop, tactical store an internet café on the base complex. There are hourly shuttle bus transfers to the main reservation for mobilizing units to follow up on all mobilization alibis at the Mob Site. It was during these early days at Camp McGregor that soldiers were noticing "runny noses" and flu like symptoms and soon it was colloquially termed the "McGregor Gunk". On 31 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declares a public health emergency when it is discovered that the COVID-19 or "corona" virus is quickly spreading throughout the world from human-to-human transmission. The Army declares masking and distancing protocol, their purpose is to prevent the spread of this aerial virus between people in close proximity who cannot maintain 6 feet distancing in work

centers. The soldiers don't lose focus on their mission and these directives don't hinder the progression of A/1-158 FA through the mobilization process. After the live fire events the A/1-158 FA was certified as theater "deployable" offering ARCENT the ability to attack long-range, High Payoff Targets (HPTs) and destroy them. Battery "B" rocket launchers are now shipped back to home station.

On 2 February 2020, A/1-158 FA along with their baggage was bussed over to the Silas L. Copeland ADACG. The ADACG briefed the unit about the flight requirements, the manifest was checked and a majority of the soldiers were moved to the tarmac where they filed onto an awaiting commercial chartered aircraft that would transfer them to Kuwait. 4 separate chinks would board awaiting C-17 Globemasters and ride "shotgun" with the remainder of A/1-158 FA equipment. The commercial chartered aircraft departed Biggs Army Airfield stopping in Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany where they were able to stretch their legs while the aircraft refueled then they boarded and continued on with their flight. The "strato-aircraft" landed a few hours later and were stuck at Spangdahlem AB due to in climate weather conditions, which delayed their arrival time to Kuwait. The Air Mobility Command at Spangdahlem AB supports cargo and passenger traffic as part of its airlift mission because of the closure of the Rhein-Main Air Base in 2005. When the battery finally arrived at Camp Arifjan on 3 February 2020, they watched on live TV as the United States had declared a Public Health Emergency due to the corona virus outbreak. Once again local directives are issued regarding virus protocols and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).



The Order of Battle for the Spartan Shield mission has the Headquarters of the 42nd Infantry Division from New York Guard with Major General Steven Ferrari, Task Force Spartan commanding general, with senior enlisted leader, Command Sergeant Major Corey Cush. The task force is composed of an Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), Theater Engineer Brigade (TEB), Field Artillery Brigade (FAB), Aviation Task Forces, and a theater Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) battalion. The 115th Field Artillery Brigade; commanded by Colonel Terry Jenkins with senior enlisted Command Sergeant Major Thad Ehde; was the Command and Control (C2) for all Force Field Artillery Headquarters (FFAHQ) assets; directing all missions with HIMARS rocket launchers located in five countries; headquartered and billeted out of Camp Redleg, a small camp located

on Al Minhad Air Base in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Another subordinate unit of the 45th FiB and a long range shooter was the 4th Battalion 133rd Field Artillery Regiment (FAR), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm Warbrick with senior enlisted Command Sergeant Major Roger Branch, of the TXARNG. The outgoing battery was Battery "C", 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, commanded by Captain Timothy Tierney with senior enlisted First Sergeant Joshua Phillips of the WYARNG from Casper, Wyoming. The "left seat-right seat" had started immediately once the battery had settled into their housing. The corona virus outbreak and new virus protocols did not hinder the RIP/TOA and on 26 February 2020 A/1-158 FA assumed authority and C/2-300 FA started their departure out of theater.

On 8 January 2020, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched "Operation Martyr Soleimani" which was a mass launching of numerous ballistic missiles at the Ayn al-Asad airbase (AAAB) in western Iraq, as well as another airbase in Erbil, Iraq all in retaliation to the killing of Major General Qasem Soleimani by a U.S. drone strike. No service members were killed due to an early warning provided by the United States Space Force (USSF). In the months following the attack and by 13 April 2020, the U.S. had installed and activated Patriot air defense systems, an Army C-RAM system, and an AN/TWQ-1 Avenger at AAAB and at Camp Taji. Since the attack other surface systems were gradually moved into Iraq and accordingly A/1-158 FA pushed the 1st Platoon north into Iraq and relocated them at AAAB along with 2 each M142 HIMARS rocket launchers (A-11 and A-31), 1 FDC vehicle, and one "Up-armored Humvee". The rotation plan was to rotate platoons throughout the duration of the deployment, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 1st Platoon remained there until they were ordered to cease operations and move out and report back to Camp Arifjan. The 1st Platoon was able to create ingenious training rehearsals of fire missions, and cross training of the 13M and 13J while constantly carrying a fully loaded six pack of live rockets to respond to any threats. A/1-158 FA 1st Platoon consisted of First Lieutenant Sean Dellinger, Sergeant First Class Steven Stanley, Staff Sergeants Trenton Richards and Randy Woodman, Sergeants Alex Cowns, Te'Neal Francis, Joshua Hale, and Kimberlin Turpin, Specialist

Fourth Class Sherman Addy, David Daughriety, Skylar Ledesma, Alexis Leger, Cody May, Mason McCormick, Michael Poe, Fidencio Ramirez, Handsome Sheppard, and Tanner Wimmer, and Privates First Class Jacob Bellamy, Angel Carnero and Alexa Hale.



## **Forward Deployed to Ayn al-Asad Airbase (AAAB)**

### **1st Firing Platoon, Battery "A", 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS)**

Left to Right Kneeling: 1LT Sean Dellinger, SSG Trenton Richards, PFC Angel Carnero, SGT Te'Neal Francis, SPC Alexis Leger, SPC Handsome Sheppard, SGT Alex Cowns.

Left to Right Standing: SPC Tanner Wimmer, SPC David Daughriety, SPC Cody May, SPC Fidencio Ramirez, PFC Jacob Bellamy, SGT Joshua Hale, SSG Randy Woodman, SGT Kimberlin Turpin, SPC Skylar Ledesma, SPC Michael Poe, PFC Sherman Addy, SPC Mason McCormick, SFC Steven Stanley.

On 11 March 2020 the WHO Declared COVID-19 a Pandemic and on 13 March 2020 President Donald Trump Declared COVID-19 a National Emergency which unlocks billions of dollars of federal funding to fight the spread of the disease and the United States goes into “quarantine”, commonly called “lockdown”.



In April and May 2020, Task Force Spartan participated in multiple bilateral exercises with the UAE. One in particular was Operation Thundercloud which culminated in a joint HIMARS live fire with the UAE artillery counterparts who fired their Artillery Saturation Rocket System (ASTROS II) and lighting up the desert nights. Exercise Iron Union 13 included partnership training at the battery level, and validation of fires planning and firing capabilities with UAE and U.S. instructed courses. The fire direction centers of both countries worked together to ensure timely, safe and accurate fires from their systems to ensure operation in a bilateral capacity. All the training and exercises leading up to the joint live-fire, validated capabilities and there was a shared understanding to operating in a bilateral environment. Another bilateral exercise and Combined Arms Live Fire (CALFX) was occurring at Udairi Range close to Camp Beuhring, Kuwait and the significance of this

LFX was that soon it would be earmarking the withdrawal of some forces since the objective of building interoperability with the Kuwaiti Land Forces Field Artillery via a bilateral live fire exercise was obtained.

On 27 May 2020 Major General Ferrari spent the morning with A/1-158 FA and during the visit, the Task Force leadership team witnessed a simulated fire mission and static reloading demonstration of a M142 launcher, they also had the opportunity to meet with the soldiers of the unit and during the visit, they recognized two of the unit Soldiers, Sergeant Christopher Adams and Private First Class Justin Howe, and presented them with a Task Force Spartan coin of excellence.



On 28 May 2020 the U.S. deaths to COVID-19 surpass the 100,000 mark and it soon becomes a sobering and heart-breaking reminder of the unprecedented pandemic. The Task Force Spartan response to protect all its soldiers in the Middle East is to stand up a COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) for coordinating and synchronizing a unified plan. The three-pronged approach started with education about the virus, next were implementation of safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus, and finally enforcing the safeguards. Corona virus spreads from person to person through close contact so the challenge was the close proximity environment where all soldiers billet and mess together. Practicing better hygiene habits, social distancing, disinfecting and sanitizing

and wearing of the face masks soon become the norm. Other protocols are in place for all situations such as screening, testing and isolation or quarantine. A/1-158 FA had no incidents that required a higher level of supportive care such as treatment in a field hospital.

The mission of A/1-158 FA never faltered during the pandemic, they were to provide “timely and accurate” and long range artillery fires to the FFAHQ. The uppermost importance is that this was required in accordance with the Army’s 2019 Modernization Strategy. Improvements of our adversaries’ artillery systems present a challenge to the U.S. military, especially to our ground combat forces. While the U.S. military has a variety of means to deliver long range fires, such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and missile support from Navy aircraft, these are frequently unavailable due to weather, terrain and availability and generally HIMARS does not suffer from these restrictions The U.S. Army seeks to improve its ability to deliver Long Range Precision Fires (LRPF) by developing, modifying and upgrading current

artillery systems and tactics. The mere fact that A/1-158 FA refused to submit to the COVID-19 degraded environment and maintain operational readiness became a testament to the deployed soldiers and their leadership who never failed to protect and project its artillery combat power amid increasing Iranian aggression and hostilities in the Middle East.

A/1-158 FA mobilized and deployed in the early stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the 2019 Persian Gulf Crisis where there were increased military tensions between the Islamic Republic of Iran, whom designated CENTCOM as a terrorist organization and the U.S. who began a buildup of its military presence in the region to deter an alleged planned campaign by Iran and its allies. The 2019 Persian Gulf crisis escalated in late 2019 and early 2020 and incidents branched out to affect the Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy conflict as well as the Iran–Israel proxy conflict. It was soon determined that A/1-158 FA had met its objective that it was called up to perform and on 25 July 2020, 93 days short of completing 360 days “boots on ground” the battery was ordered back to home station. A/1-158 immediately prepared their rocket launchers for shipment back to final destination of Fort Sill via the “slow-boat” back to the Red River Army Depot for reset and then on 31 July 2020 they boarded commercial aircraft and returned back to the mobilization station at Fort Bliss, stopping in Ireland for refueling.



**"Operation Spartan Shield"**

**2nd Firing Platoon, Battery "A", 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS)**

Left to Right: SPC Montanta Weaver, PFC Coltin Kilgore, SPC Austin Kirkwood-Denney, SPC Cody Lane, SPC Pedro Lopez, 1LT Nicholas Case, SPC Mikeem Fool, SSG Bryan Hoffman, SSG Matthew Conner, SFC Jason Bellar, SPC Jesse Cook, SGT Taylor Green, SPC Jacob Cuevas, SPC Jacie Ketcherside, SPC Michael Poe, SPC Christopher Burk, SPC Ceeqe Sztandera, SSG William Pipkin, SPC Malik Carpitcher, SPC Glen Dorsey, SSG Cory Clemons. (Not Pictured is SPC Joseph Hershberger)

At the mobilization station it was a reverse process, turning in OCIE and IPE, medical out processing, personal actions and finally on 21 August 2020 they boarded a “Sun Country” chartered aircraft that touched down in Oklahoma City in a few hours. Here they boarded 3 buses with police escorts that drove them to the 45th Fires Brigade armory in Mustang, Oklahoma. The families of the deployed soldiers showed their overwhelming support by jam packing the armory to standing room only. The anxiety of the deployment was over with as the soldiers and families rejoiced in the comfort of unification.



**Composite Roster of Battery "A", 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) \***

CPT Jeffrey	Morefield	SGT Jacob	Kenworthy	SPC Skyler	Ledesma
CPT Jayce	Crowder	SGT Bradley	Koshy	SPC Alexis	Leger
CPT Christopher	Meyer	SGT Jesse	Marmaduke	SPC Pedro	Lopez
CPT Thomas	Tucker	SGT Matthew	Martin	SPC Cody	May
CPT Bradley	Yoder	SGT Makyla	McKean	SPC Mason	McCormick
1LT Jordan	Armstrong	SGT Angela	Miller	SPC Juanita	Mendoza
1LT Nicholas	Case	SGT Quanah	Smith	SPC Jaleel	McMillon
1LT Kenneth	Davis	SGT Mackenzie	Styles	SPC Daniel	Messner
1LT Geoffrey	Day	SGT Clint	Toothman	SPC Colt	Meyer
1LT Sean	Dellinger	SGT Kimberlin	Turpin	SPC Adrian	Moore
1LT Ryan	Stockton	SGT Trey	Waldrum	SPC Dominick	Nasluchacz
WO2 Corey	Klaassen	SGT Benaiah	Ware	SPC Jennifer	Nolan
1SG Jackie	Bruesch	SGT Alec	Warren	SPC Dakota	Norton
SFC Jason	Bellar	SGT Tyler	Webb	SPC Kelli	Osage
SFC Denny	Cargal	SGT Virginia	Williams	SPC Montana	Owens
SFC Randall	Duty	SGT Seth	Yackeschi	SPC Glenn	Perez
SFC Anthony	Ekman	SPC Randy	Arimendez	SPC Anton	Pickens
SFC Benjamin	Maxwell	SPC Travis	Armstrong	SPC Michael	Poe
SFC Shawn	Pierce	SPC Sarina	Basaldua	SPC James	Pradier
SFC Steven	Stanley	SPC Johnnie	Bennett	SPC Larry	Privett
SFC Ralph	Tocco	SPC Matthew	Bolte	SPC Fidencio	Ramirez
SSG Lawrence	Bass	SPC Colin	Book	SPC Leandros	Rose
SSG Belinda	Casey	SPC Christopher	Burk	SPC Handsome	Sheppard
SSG Cory	Clemons	SPC Jesse	Cook	SPC Ceege	Sztandera
SSG Matthew	Conner	SPC Jacob	Cuevas	SPC Andrew	Tyner
SSG Kristin	Fladby	SPC David	Daughriety	SPC Cecilia	Vela
SSG Brian	Hoffman	SPC Austin	Kirkwood	SPC Montana	Weaver
SSG Matthew	McKeown	SPC Jacob	Dickison	SPC Brianna	Wheeler
SSG William	Pipkin	SPC Glen	Dorsey	SPC Tanner	Wimmer
SSG Travis	Purcell	SPC Jeremiah	Duncomb	SPC Giovanni	Winters
SSG Trenton	Richards	SPC Mikeem	Fool	PFC Sherman	Addy
SSG Shannon	Ruger	SPC Bryce	Garza	PFC Jacob	Bellamy
SSG Nathan	Spencer	SPC Mariah	Gilliam	PFC Shawn	Bridenstine
SSG Dustin	Taber	SPC Peyton	Gorman	PFC Angel	Carnero
SSG Randy	Woodman	SPC Dillon	Haley	PFC Malik	Carpitcher
SGT Christopher	Adams	SPC Andrew	Harrison	PFC Christian	Easley
SGT Brett	Boswell	SPC Joseph	Hershberger	PFC Alexa	Hale
SGT Alex	Cowns	SPC Daniel	Jones	PFC Joshua	Harrison
SGT Te'Neal	Francis	SPC Sydney	Jones	PFC Justin	Howe
SGT Taylor	Green	SPC Jacie	Ketcherside	PFC Zaria	Jessie
SGT Joshua	Hale	SPC Cody	Lane	PFC Coltin	Kilgore
SGT Canisha	Harjo	SPC Devon	Laughy	PVT Michael	Davis
SGT Jeremy	Josey	SPC Phillip	Lawless		



**Battery "A", 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS)  
23 December 2019**

## OPERATION “FREEDOM”S SENTINEL“

In December 2006 the Army Chief of Staff, General Peter Schoomaker had received a “status of forces” briefing, infamously named the “we’re out of Schlitz” briefing depicting the shortage of forces needed to sustain combat operations in the GWOT once the Reserve Component (RC) forces were moved from a strategic reserve force to an operational force. On 19 January 2007 he instituted significant changes to the mobilization of RC forces in support of the GWOT, most notably that they would only serve 12 months total of active duty for each mobilization. The new goal was to reduce mobilization station training time to approximately 2 months, leaving 10 months “boots on ground” in the area of operation. This new mobilization policy became attainable by shifting all individual tasks to be trained and certified prior to mobilization and certification means that the training is conducted to a standard. A new plan was designed to reduce the required PMT time by accomplishing all individual tasks prior to mobilization. Once PMT is completed the unit is mobilized, next they complete home station processing and then travel to the mobilization station, here they complete the required training and validate their readiness for deployment, then they deployed to theater, followed by redeployment, then going back through their mobilization station for out processing.

Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) is the official name for the mission succeeding OEF in continuation of the Global War on Terrorism. OFS is part of the NATO-led Operation Resolute Support mission (ORS) to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces, beginning 1 January 2015. It is the follow-on mission to the ISAF that terminated on 28 December 2014. The legal framework for ORS was signed in a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on 30 September 2014 and ratified by the Afghan Parliament on 27 November 2014. The SOFA defines the terms and conditions that NATO forces are deployed and their missions authorized and the terms supported by the UN Security Council Resolution 2189. On 14 April 2021 NATO announced that ORS would implement a drawdown of troops and disband ORS on 12 July 2021. Train Advise Assist Commands (TAACs) would directly support four of the six Afghan National Army Corps in this concept and replace the former RCCs. OFS has two components: counterterrorism and working with allies as part of ORS. A new type of U.S. unit, the Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFAB), has begun deploying to Afghanistan to support the mission. Battery “B”, 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) would report to the NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/ Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A/SOJTF-A) with 30 paxs and 3 each M142 rocket launchers and would support the entire Combined Joint Operations Area (CJOA). It would deploy in support of CENTCOM and conduct joint operations with specialized units from the Navy, Air Force, and Army to include firing long-range precision munitions in theater.



**CPT DANNY BARTHEL**



On 2 June 2019 the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) of the 45th Fires Brigade departed for Fort Chaffee, Arkansas for Annual Training exercise “Western Strike”. The exercise would conclude with a test to validate and certify the core proficiency of the battalion in its ability to deploy and deliver deep, timely and accurate fires in any theater of operations. The test is called the “live fire” and the battalion was issued 48 rockets for its 16 each crews (8 each 3-man crews per battery), 3 rockets per crew to shoot on the Table 6 Certification table, requiring each crew to correctly perform a “At My Command”, a “Time on Target”, and “Fire when Ready” fire mission. All 16 crews were validated and certified as the M142 rocket launchers lit up the horizon as they sent their rockets downrange into the impact areas of the reservation.

In December 2019 and in March of 2020 B/1-158 FA would complete its SRP which would finalize the “30-man roster” and by close of business April 2020 it had completed and certified all of its required PMT. On 1 May 2020 B/1-158 FA was mobilized in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, it was commanded by Captain Danny Barthel with senior enlisted First Sergeant James Brown. On 3 May 2020,



at 1000 hours the 45th Fires Brigade conducted the first ever “Live Feed of Deployment” which allowed for about 200 family members and friends of the soldiers to virtually attend the send off. The threat of spreading the COVID-19 virus was the premise for the virtual ceremony. With virus protocols in place the ceremony went forward and the Oklahoma Adjutant General, Major General Michael Thompson, was able to officially say his farewell to the unit. On 4 May 2020 B/1-158 FA loaded buses and departed for its mobilization station located at Fort Bliss, Texas. B/1-158 FA arrived at Fort Bliss proper and without stopping proceeded north into New Mexico and the McGregor Range Complex. Their three rocket launchers B-31, B-32, and B-41 were “Line Hauled” and arrived shortly after B/1-158 FA established at Fort Bliss.

McGregor Range is located in Otero County, New Mexico and is an integral part of the Fort Bliss Range Complex. Camp McGregor is located on this range and was initially built to replicate “FOB living” in the Middle East. The barracks are encompassed with barbed wire cyclone fences with sniper screening, adorned with warning signs in Arabic/English to “Keep Away” and “No Photography Allowed”, prayers are broadcast over loudspeakers in Arabic, and the arid desert environment is similar to that of Iraq. The Mobilization Army Training Center (MATC) is located here and B/1-158 FA will be placed under the auspices of the 2nd Battalion, 362nd Field Artillery Regiment, 5th Armored Brigade, First U.S. Army Division West for their mobilization certifications.

This is a big base for desert combat training; spanning 1.12 million acres; with plenty of desert for Field Training Exercises (FTXs) and HIMARS live fire gunnery ranges but what made this unique was the fact that it was under the shadow of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Camp McGregor was designated as quarantine and isolation facilities however the training for contingency and mobilization operations never stopped. The 5th Armored Brigade set up multiple tent areas at base camp to support the expanded IT networks and services for all TSIRT, issued gloves and mask, enforced PPE protocols and mobilization training never slowed down. Ranges started on 9 May 2020 with the M240B machine gun and mobilization training culminated with “Mass All Time on Target” live fire on 24 May 2020.

On 3 June 2020 B/1-158 FA along with their baggage was bussed over to the Silas L. Copeland ADACG at Biggs Army Airfield. Here they drove their rocket launchers onto awaiting C-17 aircraft. Shortly after all vehicles and gear was secured and tied down the aircraft departed for the CENTCOM AO. The first stop would be Ramstein Air Base at Kaiserslautern, Germany. Here they spent the night while the aircraft was serviced for its next leg of its journey which would be Al Udeid Air Base (AUAB) in Qatar. This is the biggest U.S. base in the Middle East and home to the U.S. Combined Air Operations Center, U.S. Air Forces Central Command, U.S. Special Operations Command Central Forward, and CENTCOM Forward HQ and is relied heavily on to conduct its military mission. The 30 paxs and their duffel bags are off loaded and this will be their home for the next 2 weeks as they prepare to enter CENTCOM quarantine. The three M142 rocket launchers are never down loaded, they continue on to Bagram AF, Afghanistan.

B/1-158 FA was not aware that on 20 March 2020, the AUAB Installation Commander declared a Public Health Emergency related to the COVID-19 and in response several actions were initiated. All personnel arriving at AUAB would be placed into 14-day quarantine. All transient status personnel were sequestered and given a “restriction of movement” order until they depart AUAB. All arriving members were separated according to their arrival time and placed into groups called cohorts and received instructions on masking, sterilization, and maintaining physical distancing to decrease the possibility of transmission between asymptomatic people. Transient were soon moved and housed in individual rooms (two people in each room) versus open-bay facilities and received their meals at the Independence Dining Facility only at



A First Army observer, left, discusses MG practices with SSG Sean Eckrote, center, and SPC Maison Millan, right, as they prepare to engage targets at the Camp McGregor, N.M. machine gun range.

their designated cohort timeframe. Finally on the night of 19 June 2020 B/1-158 FA dragged their duffel bags and personal gear to the Rotator Terminal and boarded a C-130 Super Hercules and flew into Bagram AF.

In early 2018, General John W. Nicholson, Commander of United States Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) ordered the establishment of a Force Field Artillery Headquarters (FFAHQ) for all surface to surface fire across the Combined Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan (CJOA-A). The FFAHQ provides mission command of all fire, they produce and disseminated a Fires “Common Operating Picture” (COP), but most importantly they have the authority to position and task allocate FA units. They resource and support the TAACs with lethal fires. Mission command and synchronization allows them to provide oversight and enforce standardization in order to meet the readiness levels required once in the CJOA. HIMARS is not employed as a Force Protection system but rather a strategic system, so B/1-158 FA is placed under the auspices of the SOJTF-A headquarters at Camp Vance and designated as their “long range shooters”. Once B/1-158 FA landed in Bagram AF they scramble to offload their gear and retrieve their rocket launchers which are in storage awaiting their arrival and they position themselves for any fire missions.



### **Battery “B”, 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS)**

Standing Left to Right: SGT Jason Gordon, SGT Aaron Pierce, SSG Chris Polsgrove, SFC Dakota Engelman, 1LT Chris Pettit, SGT Stephanie Goldman, SGT Mykle Bull, SFC Misty Jenny, SSG Alexander Jameson, SGT David Burgess, SGT Joy Quary, SSG Mario Ramirez, CPT Zebadiah Wilson, SFC Michael Rogers, 1SG James Brown.

Sitting Left to Right: SPC Cody Stonerock, SPC Brooklyn Joice, SPC Jordan Jones, SPC Dillon Ives, SPC Quiana White, SGT David Gabelmann, SSG Eric Sikes, SGT Cassie Owen, SPC Andy Owen, CPT Danny Barthel, SFC Thomas Acker, SSG Reanna Wagner, SSG Sean Eckrote, SGT Ashley Bruce-Sparrow, SPC Mason Milan.

Not pictured: SGT Chris Terwilligar, SPC Matthew Healer, CW2 Marshall Bruecher.

On 21 June 2020, B/1-158 FA moved 2 launchers and a detachment of 13 pax to FOB Fenty to supply timely HIMARS fires to the historically hotly-contested Nangarhar Province. FOB Fenty is located on Jalalabad AF and is located in the Nangarhar Province and is home of the 3rd Brigade, 11th Division, 201st Corps of the ANA. In close proximity to FOB Fenty is J-Bad PRT which is located on the northern side of Highway A1 and both camps are 90 miles due east of Kabul. Rocket launchers B-32 and B-41 were positioned here with a detachment of 13 pax. They will stay positioned there until current retrograde operations move them back to Bagram AF.

Garrison life in a COVID-19 degraded environment means separation and isolation. All units are subjected to a strict daily regime of 10% virus testing and if you came into contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19, you would be isolated at a separate quarantine facility for 14 days, if asymptomatic. If you are symptomatic, you would be placed in isolation and tested daily for 14 days. If positive, a health investigation would be conducted to determine further contacts. The “New Normal” means physical distancing, wearing masks that cover nose and mouth, sterilizing and hand washing, and conforming with any measure that will mitigate the spread of the virus. These measures become a daily order of business as the reality of the pandemic settles into the deployment.



SSG Reanne Wagner with B-31 on C-17 GlobeMaster.

In late September 2020 the rocket launchers at FOB Fenty are driven onto C-130 aircraft and Strat-Air lifted back to Bagram AF proper and B/1-158 FA was reunited as a whole unit again. It should be noted that since these M142 rocket launchers are seen mainly as the long range delivery platform the battery maintained 8 each 3-man crews with B-41 designated as the IPRF and others in “standby” mode should the need arise to quickly launch more long range strikes. On 7 October 2020 B/1-158 FA received its first “Fire Mission” and a lone rocket launcher; IPRF; sped out to the tarmac and loaded onto an awaiting Super Hercules where they took off to Helmand Province, once they landed it rolled out to its firing point and shoot 6 rounds of M30A1. This M30A1 round limits the unexploded ordnance that the older DPICMS or “cluster bombs” explosives left on the ground by replacing the smaller explosives with 180,000 tungsten steel bee-bee-sized balls. This particular round is very effective against light skinned vehicles and personnel. Once the IPRF received its “End of Mission” the crew stowed its launcher and darted back to the awaiting aircraft and flew back to Bagram AF. This fire mission was the textbook definition of a HIMARS Rapid Infiltration (HI-RAIN) that integrated air movement and long-range

strike fires and the first of its kind in the CJOA. The ability to successfully HI-RAIN and support the CJOA from Kuwait, enabled the Reduction of Forces process so on 3 January 2021, B/1-158 FA retrograded back to Ali Al Salem AB in Kuwait. B/1-158 FA shot its second and last Fire Mission on 28 January 2021, another HI-RAIN mission that displayed the long range strike capability of the M142 rocket launchers. B-31 and B-32 drove to the firing point and shoot 6 rockets each of the highly precise M31A1 Guided MLRS (GMLRS) with unitary warheads or “gimlers” to its awaiting targets downrange. This show of force would be the last missions that B/1-158 FA would fire. During its deployment B/1-158 FA shot a total of 18 rounds but its last fire missions would be the first HI-RAIN mission that crossed over the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) to deliver its HIMARS firepower into Afghanistan. Earning the accolade of being one of the first female HIMARS Section Chiefs to “shoot a Fire Mission” in CENTCOM CJOA is Sergeant Reanne Wagner with Gunner and Driver; Sergeant Christopher Terwilligar and Specialist Matthew Healer respectively; the section chief being the final responsibility of firing the weapon system.

On Monday 5 March 2021, B/1-158 FA loaded its three rocket launchers and its 30 paxs on C-17 Globemasters of the 145th Air Wing and returned back to Biggs AF, Fort Bliss on 8 March 2021. Just as they had left the post, it was still under the auspices of the COVID-19 pandemic, so the demobilization process was very deliberate in its mitigation of prevention of spread of the virus. B/1-158 FA was mobilized as a unit a year prior but due to the new measures in place the unit was demobilized individually and around 17 March 2021 most of the unit had received individual travel arrangements to their homes of record. It should be noted that B/1-158 FA was subjected to many “firsts” during this deployment. Once their mission was completed they did not return home with fanfare, bands or ceremonies. They arrived amid the immunization period of the pandemic when there were still many illnesses that resulted in death sustained from person-to-person contamination so there were no “homecomings”. However, B/1-158 FA was able to complete a small “yellow ribbon” event with the detached unit members and once again the TAG; Major General Michael Thompson; was able to convey his thanks and officially welcome home the B/1-158 FA from Afghanistan.





**Composite Roster of Battery “B”, 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (HIMARS) \***

CPT Danny	Barthel	SGT David	Burgess
CPT Zebadiah	Wilson	SGT David	Gabelmann
1LT Chris	Pettit	SGT Stephanie	Goldman
CW2 Marshall	Bruecher	SGT Jason	Gordon
1SG James	Brown	SGT Cassie	Owen
SFC Thomas	Acker	SGT Aaron	Pierce
SFC Dakota	Engelman	SGT Joy	Quary
SFC Misty	Jenny	SGT Chris	Terwilligar
SFC Michael	Rogers	SPC Matthew	Healer
SSG Sean	Eckrote	SPC Dillon	Ives
SSG Alexander	Jameson	SPC Brooklyn	Joice
SSG Chris	Polsgrove	SPC Jordan	Jones
SSG Mario	Ramirez	SPC Mason	Milan
SSG Eric	Sikes	SPC Andy	Owen
SSG Reanna	Wagner	SPC Cody	Stonerock
SGT Ashley	Bruce-Sparrow	SPC Quiana	White
SGT Mykle	Bull		

**31 AUGUST 2021**

On 6 July 2021 NATO forces departed from Bagram AF and U.S forces retrograded to Hamid Karzai International Airport (KIA). Before the ANA took complete control of Bagram Air Field, they had to evict the small roving bands of looters ransacking the barracks and rummaged through the “C-Huts” taking anything that wasn’t fastened down. On 31 August 2021, Major General Chris Donahue, commander of the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps, was the final soldier to depart out of KIA, closing out the mission in Afghanistan.

\*: The author was unable to obtain official rosters thus requiring composite rosters to be drafted from various elements, thus rank, names and status may be reflected differently during the mobilization and deployment stages.



**158th**  
**Field Artillery**

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