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Battalion snipers accept new mission

2-69 Armor's scout platoon set to over-watch Iraqi roads

By Capt. Chas Cannon
2-69 Armor Regiment

Sgt. James Finney of Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment Scout Platoon, never thought he would have the job he holds now, but he's not complaining.

As an Army sniper, Finney's job is to eliminate key targets and targets of opportunity, as well as conduct reconnaissance. "Anything we can do to help the maneuver commander," he said.

As a cavalry scout in his first tour to Iraq, Finney did not know much about sniping. In fact, 2-69 did not even have a sniper team. That has changed, however, as well-trained, motivated sniper squads now fill the ranks of the Speed and Power battalion.

Although sniping is used to take out high value targets, usually individual people, Finney admits that that is not all he and his squad will be doing.

"I think they plan on using us mostly for (Improvised Explosive Device) watch," he explained.

His new role as a sniper also includes more interaction with the local populace. Learning the basic phrases of introduction in Arabic were recent training events for his sniper team.

"Hopefully, we'll have an idea of what's going on as far as trying to speak their language," he said. "I think that will help them to see that we're really trying."

Staff photo by Spc. Natalie Loucks

Sgt. James Finney sights his M14 rifle at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, January 29th. Finney, along with other members of 3rd Brigade's 2-69 Armor scout platoon, will regularly use M14's in Iraq to observe potential IED sites and engage high-priority targets from a distance.

The addition of snipers comes as good news to other members of the Panther battalion. IED's are the biggest killer of Coalition forces in Iraq. With an extra set of eyes on the roads, the Soldiers of 2-69 and the brigade should feel somewhat more comfortable.

Normally the "eyes and ears" for their battalion, the 2-69 scouts will now use the silent, unblinking eye of a high-powered scope to keep ever-watchful vigilance on Iraq's roadways, ensuring coalition forces and the citizens of Iraq, can use them in safety.

When asked if he had any problem shooting someone setting up an IED, Finney simply said, "Not as long as it saves lives."

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Green patches unique to 3rd Brigade Combat Team

Story and photo by
Spc. Natalie Loucks
3rd BCT PAO

Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team wear the distinctive "green patches" that have earned them notoriety in theater.

It is a recent tradition Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, "Sledgehammer", 3rd Infantry Division are immensely proud of. It is a symbol of competence, camaraderie and easy identification, one that catches the eye of those outside the brigade.

The green name tapes, U.S. Army patch, special skill tabs, badges, and Marne unit patches normally sewn on the woodland battle dress uniform were sewn on the desert combat uniforms of 3rd BCT Soldiers due to a rapid deployment, said Maj. Ed House, 3rd BCT Operations Officer.

The Brigade participated in Operation Desert Spring in Kuwait during the spring of 2002, House said. The deployment timeline was short and the tan tags and patches were not readily available. Col. Daniel Allyn, former 3rd BCT Commander, made the decision to pull the green patches off the woodland BDU's and transfer them to the DCU's.

The deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom I continued this tradition for the Sledgehammer Brigade.

"It was a way to identify the brigade and logistically, it made sense," House said. "(Most) Soldiers already had the green sewn on and it was easy for the new Soldiers to get the green ones sewn on instead of having to change everyone's uniform."

During OIF I, the "Green Patch Brigade" made a name for themselves. Captured enemy Soldiers identified 3rd BCT as "different" than the other units with the 3rd ID patch, House explained.

"The Iraqi people thought we were Special Forces," said Spc. Steven Gamble, a truck driver, in Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade and OIF I veteran. "They saw us as an elite force."

The green patches may have a different affect during OIF III, House said. The unit is not focused in one location. This mission is one of providing stability and support where we are geographically separated working to accomplish one common goal.

House said the 3rd BCT has always been slightly different from other divisional units due to the geographic separation of being based out of Fort Benning. The 1st, 2nd and 4th Brigades of the 3rd ID are assigned to Fort Stewart.

"I like the idea of being different," said Private 1st Class Johan Echaniz, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade. "I know who's in our brigade just by looking at the color on their uniform."

Echaniz had never heard of green patches being sewn on DCU's before being assigned to 3rd BCT. "I didn't understand why we would put green patches on our tan uniforms when everyone else had tan patches. It seemed odd at the time," he said. "When I heard the story of why

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View from the "Top"

Sensitive is Secure: The importance of your sensitive items

By 1st Sgt. Michael Thompson
Special to the Hammer Times

It is extremely critical that we account for our sensitive items as well as any property that we are responsible for maintaining. Proper accountability is every Soldiers responsibility, but leaders must ensure they account for their Soldier's property to include all force protection ammunition.

If a Soldier misplaces ANY item, it must be reported immediately to your leadership. Do not wait hours to report any lost or stolen items to your chain of command. Leaders do not have "quiet hours," we are available throughout the day and night.

Soldiers should never be nervous when reporting missing sensitive items. Reporting will better assist the command in locating the missing items. Your initial report will always be reported to your chain of command and not the Mayor's Cell or any agency outside your chain of command.

THOMPSON
HHC 3rd BCT

The longer you wait decreases the chances of recovering the item or items. Report, report, report! As soon as possible to your chain of command. We do not want weapons and sensitive items to end up in the wrong hands plus, it places pressure on the command to replace a weapon system.

Doing the right thing IS reporting.

What to do if you've lost a sensitive item

Report it; Notify your chain of command at once
Retrace your steps; If it's just misplaced, it should still be in the vicinity
Time is against you; Report, report, report!

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Long flights, layovers lead to wet arrival

By Capt. Chas Cannon
2-69 Armor Regiment

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment touched down onto Kuwaiti soil over the last two weeks to form what will soon be a large contingent of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Headed to Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom III, the Soldiers of the 2-69 Armor Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Robert Roggeman, had some scary stories about their flights overseas.

Some Soldiers experienced a lot of turbulence. Others were part of a touch-and-go landing. 2nd Lt. Warren Withrow, the battalion's assistant intelligence officer, summed it up best when he described his flight as simply, "Long."

One particular flight left Ft. Benning, Ga., then stopped at Gandor, Canada; Shannon, Ireland; Budapest, Hungary; and then finally touched down in Kuwait City. Most flights took about 35 hours.

Most Soldiers completed the journey without any complications only to arrive during a torrential downpour at Camp Buehring in Kuwait. The rain began around 2 a.m. on January 21st, and was continually falling into the late evening on the 22nd. Many of the tents in which the Soldiers are staying leaked, causing them to re-arrange their cots in already cramped conditions.

"They need to think about water proofing the tents (here)," said Spc. Jeremy Curtis of HHC.

The lengthy storm caused some confusion on the part of the Soldiers, who were surprised to see so much rain in a desert environment.

Although wet, cold, and missing their loved ones, the Soldiers kept their heads up until the rain finally stopped allowing their uniforms and equipment to dry out.

Motivation is the key, explained Roggeman.

"Don't count the days; make the days count," and "Either get better or get bitter" are two of the battalion commander's persistent proverbs.

Right, Capt. Ryan Latham of 3rd BCT, checks his email at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center located on Camp Buerhing. The center offers free internet access, free telephone services and a library. Bottom, Capt. Maximino Gonzalez (right front), 1st lt. Chris Wisniewski (right rear) from the 42nd Infantry Division of Troy, New York, and Spc. Jorge Sanchez (left front), and Staff Sgt. Bill Allison of the 3rd BCT relax outside of Green Beans Coffee on Camp Buerhing.

Staff photos by Spc. Natalie Loucks

Soldiers drive on with new armor

By Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

Due to the threat by the Iraqi insurgent's use of improvised explosive devices, the Army is currently in the process of adding armor to vehicles crossing into Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

The armor is being installed on vehicles in Kuwait by Department of Defense civilians and civilian contractors. The armor is being added to several different types of tactical vehicles.

"Right now we are applying level two add on armor to all the 1097s, 998s, 1025 and 1026 humvees," said Michael Cannon, the foreman for the forward repair activity at Camp Arifjan.

There are three different levels of armor the civilians and contractors install, Cannon said. Level one, or 1114 armor, is factory installed. It provides 360 degrees of minimum protection. Level two is armor that is add-on armor that is installed by the civilians. The armor is applied to the sides of the vehicle, and has gone through ballistic testing and is proven to stop certain types of rounds. Level three armor is steel plates that the Soldiers are adding on themselves, but hasn't been tested.

"Level three armor still provides a certain amount of extra protection," Cannon added.

Soldiers were in the back of the garage welding turret skirts around the gunner's position on a two and a half ton truck.

"The armor that is being added on in the back there is strictly for the gunner," Cannon said.

Air conditioning is being installed in the vehicles along with the armor. On a slow day, it can take an entire day to install all the features required.

"It can take up to ten hours max for the vehicle to be brought in, apply the windshield, the armor and the air conditioning. An ambulance doesn't take as long because they already have an air conditioner," Cannon said.

The crews are currently working in two shifts, making it a 24 hour a day, seven day a week operation. The company will be able to do this due to the fact they have hired nearly 30 new contractors, Cannon said.

Spc. Christopher Morris, a generator mechanic from the 272nd Chemical Company of the 42nd Infantry Division, weld s a turret skirt onto a five-ton truck.

Adding armor to the vehicles not only adds protection from small arms fire and IEDs, but provides Soldiers with a heightened sense of security during convoy operations.

"The armor gives the Soldiers a sense of security, and it has been proven to save lives. This armor will give Soldiers side protection, especially from IEDs," Cannon said. "Just looking at it, you can tell it will withstand some rounds also, and it will give them the protection that they need when they go to Iraq. Soldiers have brought back examples of how the armor has helped them stay alive. In the back we have some windshields and side windows that have withstood an IED blast."

Making the grade

Staff photo by Spc. Natalie Loucks

Maj. Terry Ivester, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team Fire Support Officer, appluades the newly promoted Capt. David Sadovy during a late afternoon ceremony, January 29th. Sadovy is the 3rd BCT Assistant Fire Support Officer.

Green patches makes unit easily identifiable

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we did it, it made sense."

House expects the tradition to continue. "It's unique, it's something the Soldiers rally around," he said.

House served in OIF I and is currently serving in OIF III with the 3rd BCT.

"The patches don't make the unit," House said. "However, I like the fact that we are different. We stand out and we are outstanding."

House said it doesn't take green patches to distinguish a 3rd BCT Soldier from the rest.

"I can walk across camp and easily recognize a Sledgehammer Soldier," he said. "The discipline he or she shows is easily identifiable."

3ID Legal Assistance
Where: MWR building (next to chapel and finance)
Open: Daily, 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m.
Services: Wills, powers of attorney, appointments of health-care guardian