

665th Maintenance guards airmen

By Sgt. 1st Class Kim Smith
129th MPAD

The war efforts in Iraq. The war on terrorism. Peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans. Guard and reserve activation opportunities overseas abound. But wait! What about homeland security?

The 665th Maintenance Company, headquartered in Mitchell with detachments in Rapid City, Webster, and Sioux Falls, is well aware of the activation possibilities out there.

Unit members are scattered throughout the theaters mentioned above. The headquarters and Rapid City detachment were activated in late January to support the Air Force security mission at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City and Air Guard security at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls. The Sioux Falls detachment activated in March to Fort Sill, Okla., and Fort Carson, Colo., to maintain multiple launch rocket systems. Other unit members serve with activated Guard units serving in Kuwait and Iraq.

As a general support maintenance company, unit members normally provide maintenance on the military's wheeled



Sgt. Allan Spodnik, center, a South Dakota Army National Guard soldier with the 665th Maintenance Company, checks a civilian identification badge at the Main Gate to Ellsworth Air Force Base.

By Sgt. 1st Class Kim Smith

vehicles, track vehicles, electronics equipment and multiple launch rocket systems.

Nearly a year into the activation,

morale remains high among unit members.

“This has been a tremendous learning experience for every soldier here, from the

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109th Engineers return from desert war

By Sgt. Wes Nowitzki
129th MPAD

HUMMVs, tanks, fuel tankers, helicopters, semi-trucks and soldiers swiftly driving across the border heading north with one goal, one mission—free the Iraqi people and destroy the Saddam regime.

Soldiers from the 109th Engineer Battalion were the first South Dakota National Guard unit deployed to the Gulf. They arrived in Kuwait in mid-February and moved into Iraq four days after the war began, providing an important engineer role during the war.

“We were leaning forward in the foxhole, preparing ourselves and our staff for possible deployment,” said Lt. Col. Craig Johnson, 109th Engineer Battalion Commander.

The 39 members of the 109th didn't have many days to deploy, but they were ready. When the unit received its activation orders they only had about a week to mobilize to Fort Carson, Colo., so the unit's preparation training proved to be an asset to the unit's readiness.

The unit was in Fort Carson for about a month before they packed their bags and equipment and left for Kuwait. On Feb. 18 the unit arrived in Camden Park, Kuwait. Camden Park was the reception integration staging area that prepared the soldiers to go north into Iraq.

Even though Camden Park was in Kuwait, it was still a hazardous place to be during the first part of the war. The unit went through many warnings of Scud missile attacks.

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Guard doctors head to Iraq

S.D. National Guard Public Affairs Office

An activation ceremony was held Sept. 26 for three area doctors who headed to Baghdad for a 90-day tour of service.

They will joined up with Company B, 109th Medical Battalion and replaced those South Dakota National Guard doctors who deployed in early July.

Currently, there is guidance stating that doctors can only be kept away from their practice for 90 days.

The doctors include Col. Kenneth Peterson, who works as a general practitioner in the VA Hospital at Fort Meade near Sturgis; Lt. Col. Robert Akerson, a retired pathologist from Rapid City; and Capt. Craig Cade from Indian Health Services in Rosebud. This will be Cade's second tour of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Area doctors that returned in October are Lt. Col. Jeffery Anderson, an emergency-room



By Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews

Sgt. 1st Class Mickey Higgins presents stethoscopes to Col. Kenneth Peterson and Lt. Col. Robert Akerson of the 109th Medical Battalion at the activation ceremony.

physician at Lookout Memorial Hospital in Spearfish; Maj. Ashok Kumar, pulmonary and internal physician at Fort Meade; Col. John Ottenbacher, physician from Selby; and Sturgis dentist Maj. Rick Schmid. Company B is currently located at the Baghdad International Airport. Overall, the unit has treated about 3,400 patients and completed more than 240 air and ground MEDEVAC missions in both Kuwait and Iraq.

Local doctor answers the call

By Sgt. Wes Nowitzki
129th MPAD

On July 20 Company B of the 109th Medical Battalion convoyed from Kuwait to Baghdad International Airport, Iraq, to take over a clinic for treating coalition forces and prisoners of war.

Soldiers from Fiji, Napoli, America, and Britain all received Company B's health care.

The prisoners of war included three main types: common criminals, captured enemy soldiers, and former Iraqi administration. Company B doctors decided when prisoners were healthy enough for interrogation.

A difficult thing occurred before Company B established their clinic. The company's first patients were soldiers from the unit Company B replaced. That unit's

advance party was attacked. Company B soldiers had to treat the wounded soldiers and the enemies who attacked them.

However, Kumar said, "The hardest thing for the unit was to help our soldiers in one trauma room and then go to the other trauma room and help a prisoner. And sometimes the prisoner was the one who wounded our soldiers. But it's hard in your heart sometimes to make the transition from one room to the other room and our soldiers learned how to put up with it."

Company B's rule is to treat all wounded and injured with dignity and the utmost care for all people, according to Kumar.

Once Company B settled in, they began seeing cases of tuberculosis (TB), so Kumar went into the city to consult with a local

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The Coyote

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1085th Medical Co. deploys again

By Spc. Shannon Crane
129th MPAD

The 1085th Air Ambulance Company activated 35 of its soldiers October 10 to provide air ambulance support for Kosovo Force 5B, a NATO-led international force responsible for establishing and maintaining security in Kosovo.



By Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews

Staff Sgt. Scott Sauder (left) and Staff Sgt. Kurt Gross take part in the 1085th activation ceremony.

Maj. Mike Snow, the unit commander, expressed his confidence in the unit's abilities. "It's a very good feeling to be able to stand here and tell you that the 1085th is a unit that is very well trained. We're very well equipped and we're ready to go and do this mission."

Thirty-one soldiers from South Dakota and four from the unit's detachment in Michigan will travel to Kosovo in February 2004 to begin their six-month mission.

"I know that all of you out there share my pride as we take the time to send off 35 of our very finest National Guard soldiers to do their mission," said Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, the state adjutant general. "All of these soldiers are really the embodiment of the true citizen soldier. They leave behind professional careers and businesses to serve their country. They leave behind families and loved ones to go in harm's way to serve this country, and I want to thank them for that sacrifice."

Throughout the ceremony, family members and employers were recognized and thanked for their continued support. Governor Mike Rounds addressed the soldiers and their families, stressing that he was very privileged to be at the ceremony with them.

"I want to say 'thank you' to the men and women that make up the 1085th. I want to say 'thank you' because of what you are providing for us," Rounds said. "You represent this country like very few other people ever could, and we owe you a great deal for the sacrifices that you make. Our Guard is the best of the best."

This will be the unit's second deployment in the past two years. The 1085th returned last fall from a six-month tour in Bosnia where it provided MEDEVAC support for Stabilization Force 11.

"I know that you will make us proud," Gorman said. "God bless each and every one of you soldiers, God bless your families, and God bless America."

665th guards Air Force equipment, troops

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leadership right down to the newest soldier," said Capt. Deb Bartunek, 665th commander. "They look professional, act professional; they're showing that they can do any mission they are given."

Company soldiers activated to support the security mission -- called Operation Armored Falcon -- first spent several days processing and training at Fort Carson, Colo. They also trained on such security areas as handcuffing, riot control, setting up cordons and general security measures.

The soldiers then transitioned in early February with Air Force and Air Guard security forces. Among their daily duties are random anti-terrorism measure patrol, manning the commercial gates at the two air facilities, flightline security to guard B-

1 bombers at Ellsworth and F-16 fighters at Joe Foss Field, perimeter patrol, backup security for the air facilities' police forces, manning the visitor control center at Ellsworth, supporting reports and analysis and assisting with the range to ensure all ammunition is accounted for.

Soldiers also consistently participate in common task training, weapons qualification, additional security-related training and maintenance-related training. In addition to qualifying on their M-16s, soldiers have qualified on the M-203 grenade launcher, M-249 squad automatic weapon, M-9 pistol and M-240 machine gun.

"We've blended right in and work well with them," said Sgt. 1st Class Doug Mahoney, non-commissioned officer in

charge. "It's not uncommon for an Air Force person to take orders from an Army NCO, or vice versa."

Bartunek said unit members are well aware of the importance of their security mission. "The soldiers work in rotating shifts to provide around-the-clock security. "They're walking around with a weapon and live ammo," she said, "so they take their jobs seriously."

Sgt. Allan Spodnik said he expected to be activated as the buildup for the war in Iraq began earlier this year. "It could be worse," he said. "We're at home, and we're not in a foxhole."

However, 1st Lt. Lona Wiens, officer in charge, summed up the activation by concluding the soldiers "are eager to turn wrenches again."

IPC sets stage for upcoming training

By Spc. Shannon Crane
129th MPAD

The Joint Thunder Initial Planning Conference drew to a close on October 6, leaving representatives of 60 units with positive expectations for the training exercise in June 2004.

The IPC brought together representatives from units interested in participating in the Joint Thunder 2004 exercise. The units received general information about the exercise and unit leaders physically inspected the land that will be utilized for annual training. In addition, the conference provided the opportunity for each unit to interact with its higher headquarters.

"All units participating in Joint Thunder build relationships with each other at the October IPC conference," said Col. Ted Johnson, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. "We get the faces to go with the names."

At the end of the IPC, commands from each unit presented questions and issues to the Joint Thunder coordinating staff. Over the year, the staff then works each issue, participating in video teleconferences with 107th Corps Support Group, until the Final Planning Conference in April.

Details concerning each unit's training requirements are finalized at this conference, and it is the last time the unit representatives will come together prior to the actual training event.

A new training scenario discussed at this year's IPC will involve a Receiving, Stationing, Onward Movement and

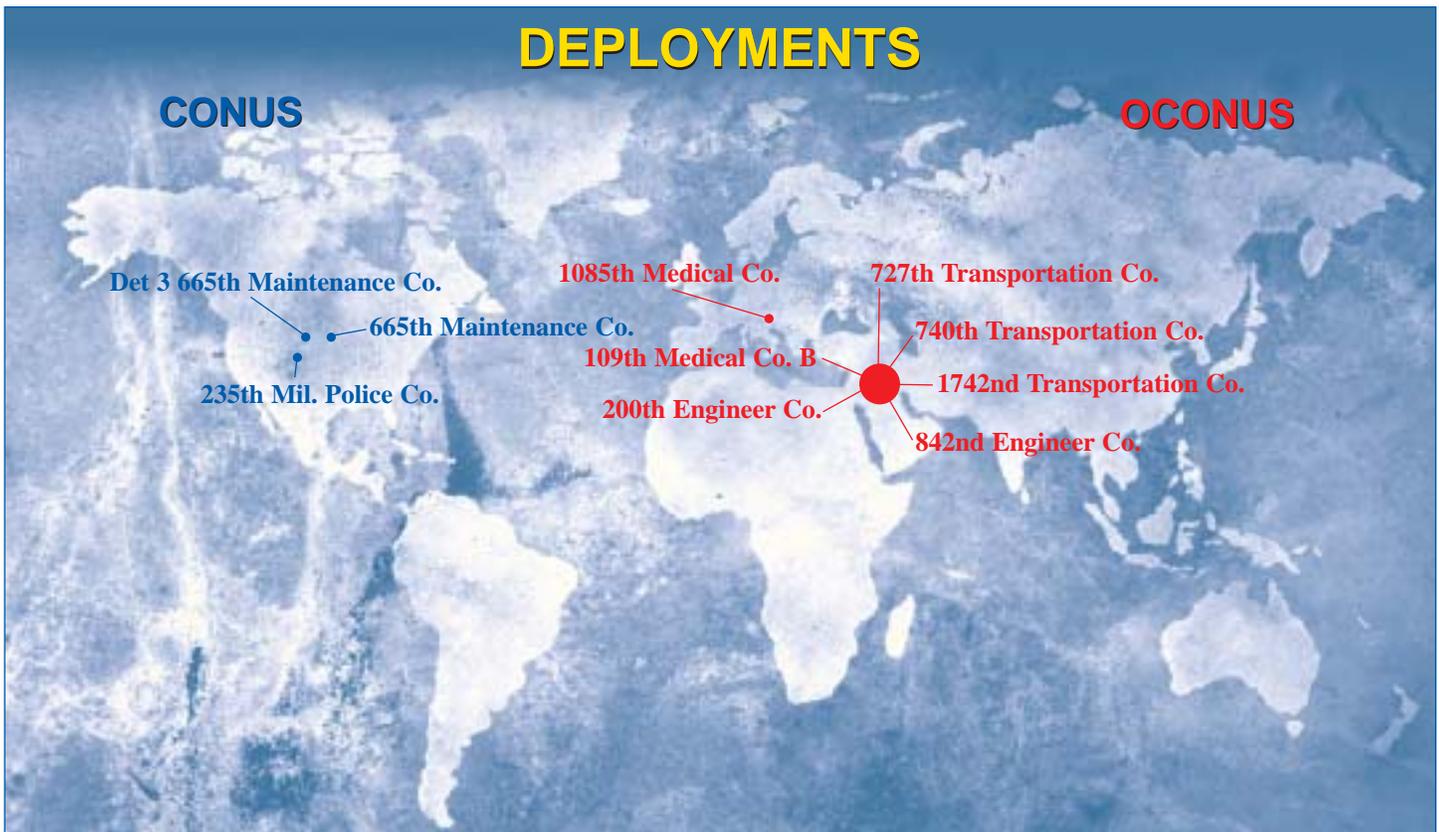
Integration area, which is a location where units get things finalized before going downrange. Units deployed to Iraq have encountered RSOIs where it was necessary to perform pre-combat checks, receive briefings and assemble equipment and supplies prior to movement into forward areas, said Col. Tim Reisch, Commander of the Operations Group for the Joint Thunder exercise.

"I visited with soldiers who returned from Iraq, and they explained how they had to go through RSOIs to get from Kuwait to Iraq," Johnson said. "We want to integrate that into the Joint Thunder Exercise as real world training so the soldiers will know what to expect if they are deployed."

"We have not typically done that training at Joint Thunder," Reisch said. "We want to try to do it here so the soldiers can become familiarized with the process."

The effect of deployments on the exercise was also discussed at the IPC. Reisch explained that there were only 1,400 soldiers who attended Joint Thunder in 2003 as a result of deployments to Iraq. More than 4,200 are currently projected for the exercise in June.

"We are currently planning for all the units to attend, but knowing well that more units will be called up for deployments," Johnson said. "We anticipate that it may be a smaller training exercise this year, but the important part is not the numbers, but the quality of the training. Quality training is the key thing."



Engineers support fellow soldiers in Iraq

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By March 22, the unit convoyed to Camp Yo-Yo, which stood for "You're on Your Own" and just one day later the advanced party crossed the border and convoyed into Iraq. The advanced party was headed to Tallil Air Force Base where they set-up and waited for the main body of the unit.

Johnson said the scariest part of crossing the border was, "You didn't know who the enemy was and where they were going to be."

The advanced party didn't run into any hostile enemies, but the convoy north was no easy task. The convoy ran into many other convoys of fuel tankers, tanks and Bradleys that were traveling into and out of Iraq.

On one occasion this proved to be a life threatening altercation. On their way up, the convoy almost ran head-on into a convoy of fuel tankers. With all the dust and traffic it was hard to see and a fanned out convoy of fuel tankers was heading straight for the 109th advanced party convoy.

At the last second, one of the fuel tankers swerved to miss the 109th three-vehicle convoy and the life-threatening incident turned into a near miss.

The main body of the 109th headed north after it was pummeled by one of the worst sandstorms Kuwait has seen in a century. The sandstorm blew many tents down and some of the tents were lost in the storm, but not even the worst sandstorm in the last century was going to stop the 109th soldiers from accomplishing their mission.

The main body moved out after the advance party, but with

such a large element, they had to make sure that there were no booby-traps, mines or unexploded ordinances. This caused the main body convoy to move a lot slower, but nonetheless it arrived on time and unscathed.

They arrived at Tallil Air Force Base on March 26 just one day after the sandstorm. Tallil provided the soldiers with a secure place to set up and begin their mission. Once there, the unit provided fuel, dining facilities and showers for all of those soldiers and airmen who didn't have these accommodations, because in the beginning of the war, it was, as Johnson said, "One team, one fight."

At Tallil, the unit was a command and control headquarters and had two combat support equipment units underneath them. Collectively, the units completed more than 250 engineer projects and helped out in the hospitals.

"We worked closely with 86th CSH personnel to ensure that its hospital bed down area was constructed quickly," said Johnson. "The hospital didn't have sufficient personnel to handle the large amount of casualties that were arriving by ground and air, so the unit was broken into four-person teams to assist moving patients to the hospital. "That day brought the reality of war to the eyes of our soldiers."

The 109th was in Tallil for about 13 and a half weeks and was activated for more than five months. After defending their country in its time of need, the 109th soldiers returned to South Dakota on July 26th to a hometown salute – a parade down the streets of Sturgis.

109th Engineers command changes hands

By Sgt. Matthew J. Johnson

S.D. Public Affairs Office

The 40 members of the 109th Engineer Battalion bid farewell to their commander, Lt. Col. Craig D. Johnson, as he passed the colors to Lt. Col. Terry G. Krsnak in Sturgis Oct. 4.

"Change is good. Change is inevitable," Johnson said. "It's tough because you build up the camaraderie with the team you've worked so closely with, but other officers deserve the opportunity to lead an outstanding unit such as the 109th. Change helps revitalize units with new ideas under new leadership."

And Johnson is leaving the battalion in

good hands. Krsnak brings a wealth of leadership experience to the engineer headquarters unit, as a decorated veteran of Desert Storm.

"Terry will bring in his ideas and experiences from Desert Storm when he was with the 109th Engineer Group," Johnson said. "He'll do an excellent job."

After 31 months in command, Johnson has nothing but praise for the soldiers of the 109th.

"The noncommissioned officers are top of the line. They are extremely professional, proactive—the best of the best," Johnson said. "They maintain a can-do attitude on every mission, and they are

not afraid to step out of the box to get the mission done.

"And the officers are of equal caliber. They work well as a team to accomplish the mission and hold each other accountable for doing an outstanding job," Johnson added. "I'm proud to have been a part of carrying on the fine tradition of the 109th Engineer Battalion."

Krsnak is also looking forward to carrying on the heritage of the 109th.

"I'm thrilled," he said. "As commanders, we all look for the opportunity to serve our country with a great bunch of people and a great unit like the 109th."

South Dakota Guard ranks first in recruiting

Associated Press

The South Dakota Army National Guard's top recruiter says young people signing up for the Guard place more of a value these days on duty, honor and selfless service. Lt. Col. Tracy Settle says it stems from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Settle says people are still signing up, knowing they could be activated and sent to Iraq. He says young people entering the military today want to make a difference.

Settle says the South Dakota Guard exceeded its goal of a full complement of

3,410 soldiers for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2003. The Guard says 750 of them are serving in Iraq. Settle says the South Dakota Army National Guard is number one in the nation for recruiting, retention and attrition management.

Some high school guidance counselors say they've noticed patriotism increase among young people interested in military service. They say world events are confirming the reasons they already had for considering the military.

Doctor returns

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internationally known Iraqi doctor. "I went to the doctor's office and knocked on his door and asked him what kind of TB do you have," said Kumar. "And he didn't say anything for almost 30 minutes and now he is my friend and I am still in contact with him."

That doctor hooked-up the technicians from Company B with the local lab. They trained the technicians how to do TB stains and they gave the unit supplies too. With that training the unit could diagnose TB and later the lab helped the soldiers diagnose malaria.

"It was a wonderful cooperation between local doctors and our military," said Kumar. "That was the only way we could survive and do things."

To get into the city Kumar would have three armed military police Humvees escort him. They would drive swiftly through the city without stopping for traffic lights and other obstacles. Even the Iraqi police would stop traffic for the military vehicles.

Kumar said, "The soldiers showed no fear and they were very professional."

Working with the soldiers in the streets and seeing how they operate brought a new understanding for Kumar and he said, "I have a new understanding for veterans after my experience in Iraq."

The soldiers of Company B are still in Iraq saving lives and caring for the wounded, but for Kumar his 90 days of Iraq are over, for now.

Commander's Corner

AG Comments

As the Secretary of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and on behalf of all the citizens of South Dakota, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the men and women from our great state who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces during this time of crisis. We want you to know that you are performing the highest civic duty of citizenship and that your service is sincerely appreciated and treasured by all.

In an effort to ensure that you are aware of all the veterans' benefits available and specifically the ones for which you may be eligible, we are encouraging you to contact either your local County/Tribal Veterans Service Office or the South Dakota Division of Veterans Affairs upon your



return or discharge. Remember, veterans benefits are benefits "earned" by virtue of your service in the Armed Forces of the United States. You are our new generation of South Dakota Veterans, our Guardians of

Liberty of whom we are very proud and thankful.

Your dedication and sacrifices are truly the fabric of democracy and a free nation. Thank you!

Michael A. Gorman
MG, SDNG
The Adjutant General

SCSM Comments

For many of you, the 2003 holiday season will be one you and your families will always remember. Who could have known, this time last year, that so many of you would be on active duty or awaiting activation and separated from your family and friends?

The holidays will bring about different emotions for all of you. Those of you who are able to spend time with family and friends need to cherish it. Those of you who are away need to do all you can to make the best of it and look to the future when you will be home with your family and friends.

I personally do not remember all of my Christmases but the ones in 1967 and 1968 stand out very clearly in my mind. Those were the years I spent Christmas in Vietnam during the war. It was a very difficult time.

I remember a lot of homesickness and heartache.



Based upon my own experiences, the best piece of advice I can share with you is to take the time to tell your families and friends you miss them and love them. Let them know you appreciate the support

they are giving you and thank them for all they have done and continue to do for you.

Sarah and I want to wish all of you the very best throughout the 2003 holiday season. We appreciate the sacrifices you are making and thank you for your service to this great nation. We are looking forward to the day when we have the opportunity to welcome you home and thank you in person. Be careful and come home safely.

Michael L. Birnbaum
CSM, SDARNG
State Command Sergeant Major