1/34th Red Bulls Ready for Deployment

With completion of its official departure ceremony May 22, the 1st Brigade Combat Team has cleared one more milestone on its way to mobilization and deployment to Operation New Dawn, the military operation in support of Iraq drawdown operations.

The brigade held the ceremony at historic Fort Snelling, on the parade field within the original lower post, before an audience of almost 200 family members and supporters.

“The families are eager to see their troops in this important, historic environment,” said Maj. Blane Iffert, who is deploying with the brigade and has previously served as Minnesota National Guard command historian. “This is one of the last opportunities for friends and family to gather.”

Fort Snelling dates back to the 1820s. Troops joining the Union Army mustered at Fort Snelling in 1861, and the post was also used in 1941 to process service members for World War II.

The departure ceremony “commemorates not only the First Minnesota, leaving 150 years ago for the Civil War, but the 1st Brigade, whose lineage is traced back to the First Minnesota,” said Iffert.

This will be the second deployment for the Brigade in the past six years. Prior to this, the Brigade was mobilized from September 2005 to July 2007, almost 22 months, a record for the current war.

Pvt. Brandon Huynh, of the 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery, a former Marine going on his first deployment, said the training has been good and his unit is ready. “It will be a good experience,” said Huynh.

During the year long deployment, Huynh plans to communicate back home with his wife via Skype, Facebook, or any other means possible.

A driving rain began to fall about midway through the ceremony, but that did not deter either the soldiers in formation, the guest speakers, or the sequence of events. Gov. Mark Dayton, for his part, refused an umbrella when offered and made his remarks as planned.

“If the soldiers can stand out there and take the rain, so can I,” said Dayton.

“We’re just honored to be in their presence,” Dayton continued afterwards. “They are true American heroes, and their families as well are making the sacrifice.”

“Godspeed to all of them. They’re going to come home safe.”
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THE RED BULL EXPRESS

1st Brigade Combat Team
34th Red Bull Infantry Division
Public Affairs Office

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1/34th Brigade Special Troops Battalion
1st Combined Arms Battalion, 194th Armor
2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 136 Infantry
1st Squadron, 94th Cavalry
2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry

CAPTION:
Sgt. Christopher J. Ambuehl of Co C 1-194 AR (CAB) hooks up a tow rope to a downed vehicle in his convoy at Fort McCoy WI, June 25, 2011. His Platoon is conducting convoy escort security training before heading overseas to assist in Operation New Dawn – the drawdown of American troops and equipment out of Iraq.
A good friend of mine has a daughter who wrote from Africa where she worked in orphanages and child care centers. She blogged about a shy little boy who followed her around all day but stayed just out of reach. Every time she turned around, there he was.

She eventually was able to coax him into her arms and he promptly fell fast asleep. In her writing, she said, “After holding this little boy, I realized how many kids long to find rest. At home (if they even have a home) these kids might not be able to sleep because they don’t have a bed, or they don’t have anybody to hold them when they cry out for love and care.

While holding this baby, I prayed that God could give him rest at home and for somebody to hold him.” She quoted this verse from the Psalmist: “Though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.” -Psalm 37:24

If you’re a soldier, if you love a soldier, or if you feel weary today, Rest in the Lord.

~ Chaplain Buddy Winn, 1/34th BCT

A VISIT OF FAITH

Soldiers from battalions across the 1st Brigade Combat Team (1st BCT) had the opportunity to increase their spiritual resiliency on June 10, during the Commander’s Prayer Breakfast at McCoy’s Restaurant on Fort McCoy, Wisc.

The event’s keynote speaker was Chaplain (Brig. Gen.) Patrick Dolan, a native of Clementsville, Kent., who serves as the National Guard Assistant to the Chief of Chaplains.

Chaplain Dolan assists the Chief of Army Chaplains with strategic issues and responsibilities, such as deployments and how those factors impact National Guard members.

When Chaplain Dolan is not serving as a Soldier he serves with two Catholic parishes as a pastor back home in Kentucky.

After speaking at the Commander’s breakfast, 1st BCT Commander Col. Eric Kerska presented Chaplain Dolan with a miniature flag of the Brigade’s colors as a gesture of gratitude for visiting the 1st BCT.

Chaplain Dolan then joined 1st BCT Chaplain (Maj.) Buddy Winn for a tour of the 1st BCT’s training activities on Fort McCoy as well as a meet and greet with Soldiers from the 1-94 Cavalry and the 1-125’s Charlie Battery.

One of the purposes for Chaplain Dolan’s visit was to offer positive reinforcement to the Soldiers he met.

“Soldiers need to know what they do is important and it matters in the big picture, someone with Chaplain Dolan’s experience and position can bring a timely word of encouragement.” Chaplain Winn said.

Along with encouragement Chaplains also serve as problem solvers, though it is often the Soldier that figures it out themselves.

Chaplain Dolan said, “When people talk to someone else, especially if they’ve got problems of any kind, they’re not asking the other person to solve their problems, they’re often solving their own problems, but they need someone to listen to them empathetically to be able to do that.”

Chaplain Dolan closed out his busy day Fort McCoy’s Catholic chapel, where he offered confession and presided over mass.

Sgt. Erin Cochran, a Human Resource Specialist and native of Forest Lake, Minn., noted Chaplain Dolan’s transition from Soldier to Priest was almost seamless.

“I went to confession before mass and it didn’t feel like I was talking to a one star General, he was a priest to me,” Sgt. Cochran said.

Hopefully Chaplain Dolan’s visit will serve the 1st BCT well, as they prepare to deploy to Kuwait later this summer for a year.

Chaplain (Brig. Gen.) Patrick Dolan, a native of Clementsville, Kent., who serves as the National Guard Assistant to the Chief of Chaplains.prays with a soldier from the 1/34th BCT during his visit.

Chaplain (MAJ) Buddy Winn
Greetings from the Red Bull Safety Office! The mission of our office is to enable the BCT to accomplish its mission while minimizing the potential for disruption to the mission, death or injury of personnel, or damage to Army equipment. Rephrased, that means we seek to help you accomplish your missions and come home.

The following personnel work in the Red Bull Safety Office:

Me.

....But that works out just fine. The rest of the BCT Staff works closely with me. Your Battalion or Squadrons commanders, CSMs, and staffs are all dedicated to risk management, and you all have Battalion Safety Officers. Your COs, 1SGs and Company Safety Officers are also committed to managing the risks we face. So are your Platoon Leaders & Sergeants, Squad Leaders, Team Leaders, Vehicle commanders, and everyone else. In other words, we’re all together on this. We need everyone’s help to figure out what can go wrong, what we’re going to do about it, how we’ll do it, and who should be responsible for it.

Some of you have heard of the “top 5 list.”

These are the top 5 mistakes that have contributed to fatal Army accidents in Iraq and Kuwait over the last 5 years.

I urge you to learn these, and make sure you’re not making these mistakes and (if you are a leader) your Soldiers aren’t making them.

1) **Inadequate Planning.** To prevent this, ask yourself: do I understand what I am supposed to do? Have I and my Soldiers been trained to do this right?

2) **Failure to use required safety equipment** such as seat belts and gunners restraints. Ask yourself: do I always buckle up before the vehicle starts moving? Do I check my buddies? Do I and my fellow Soldiers always wear the right uniform and equipment?

3) **Knowingly allowing an equipment operator to violate procedures.** Ask yourself: if I see someone doing something incorrect, do I stop and correct him? If you are a leader, do you correct your Soldiers? Are you disciplined in what you do?

4) **Excessive speed.** Do I know what the speed limits are? Do I slow down when conditions get worse? Do I know where the hazards are on my route?

5) **Failure to pay attention.** Do I drive while I’m fatigued? Am I getting enough rest? Do I focus on the road or do I let things distract me?

Avoiding these five mistakes, and fixing them when they occur, will allow us to accomplish our mission, uphold the great reputation of our Brigade and Division, and bring every Soldier home at the end of our deployment. Thanks for your support so far, and remember, we’re in this together. Attack!
CENTCOM

General Order #1

Overview

As the brigade’s time at Fort McCoy, Wisc., draws to a close, it is time to ensure that all Soldiers understand the new policies we will fall under once we arrive in Kuwait. US Central Command (USCENTCOM) published General Number 1 (GO 1) to identify prohibited activities for all US military personnel, and civilian personnel serving with US military forces, within the USCENTCOM area of operation. This order is necessary to identify actions that local laws and customs may prohibit which are generally permissible in western societies.

Capt. Shane Myre
Trial Council Lawyer

Maj. Matthew Christian
Brigade Judge Advocate

Anyone found violating GO 1 can be prosecuted under Article 92, UCMJ; Failure to Obey a Lawful Order. The following actions are prohibited by GO 1:

1. The introduction, purchase, possession, use, or sale of privately owned weapons, ammunition, or explosives.
2. The introduction, purchase, possession, sale, transfer, manufacture or consumption of alcoholic beverages.
3. The introduction, purchase, possession, sale, transfer, manufacture or consumption of controlled substances.
4. The introduction, purchase, possession, transfer, sale, creation, or display of any pornographic or sexually explicit photograph, video, movie, drawing, book, magazine, or similar representation.
5. Photographing or filming of detainees or human casualties, as well as the possession, distribution, transfer or posting, whether electronically or physically, of visual images depicting detainees or human casualties, except as required for official duties.
6. Gambling of any kind.
7. Entrance into a Mosque or other Islamic religious site unless directed to by military authorities.
8. Removing, possessing, selling, defacing or destroying archeological artifacts or national treasures.
9. Selling, bartering or exchanging any currency other than at the official host-nation exchange rate.
10. Adopting pets or mascots, caring for or feeding any type of domestic or wild animal.
11. Taking or retaining of any public or private property to include: War Souvenirs or private property lawfully seized during military operations.
Training for Deployment

The soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry (2-135 IN) have been working hard to prepare for their upcoming deployment to Kuwait, which will happen this summer. About five hundred soldiers from the battalion have received their orders under Operation New Dawn.

Operation New Dawn is the drawdown phase for United States military in Iraq. In support of this operation, almost two thousand five hundred soldiers from all over Minnesota have been ordered to their mobilization, which is Fort McCoy, Wisc. Soldiers from the 2-135 IN have been doing a number of different training exercises including Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT).

On June 26 and 27, Soldiers from the 2-135 IN went to MOUT South at Fort McCoy. While there, they performed such training exercises as moving from roads into villages, taking cover from different types of enemy fire and clearing buildings of enemies so that U.S. military can provide security and cover of other forces.

According to Sgt. David W. KirkPatrick, Infantryman, C Company, 2nd Battalion, 135 Infantry, this training helped soldiers react to real life scenarios in country. Sgt. KirkPatrick has been in the Minnesota National Guard for eight years and resides in Faribault, Minn.

He was on the twenty-two month deployment with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division. “This is good company level, mission oriented training,” said Sgt. KirkPatrick.

Other soldiers thought the same thing when asked the question, “How do you feel about this training and if it is dedicated to mission oriented training?” Private Andrew J. Sierzant, Infantryman, C company, 2nd Battalion, 135 Infantry, expressed, “I feel a lot better prepared to go overseas to conduct any mission that my company is given.” Private Sierzant resides in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

For over sixty percent of soldiers in the 2-135 IN, this will be their first deployment. For four soldiers, this will be their sixth deployment. The youngest soldier in the battalion is eighteen, the oldest is fifty-two.

Throughout the battalion, there is great leadership in all of the companies, excellent experience and a great amount of youth.

One won’t work without the other and to complete the mission this battalion has been given, it will take the leadership, experience and the youth to pull together to complete any mission that is given to them.
‘Simply Perfection’ for C Co Soldiers

Setting the standard is something that Charlie Company Earthpigs 1-94 Cavalry always try to do, but a first platoon second squad gun truck team went one step further, and achieved perfection on a machine gun gunnery range.

Members of Charlie Company “Earthpigs” shot a perfect score. During gunner table qualifications, the three man truck team qualified with a perfect score of 1000 points on the day and night course of the M2 caliber .50 (.50 cal.) live fire exercise.

Spc. Mark Needham, Spc. Paul Warmbold, and Spc. Adam Petersen of second squad, first platoon worked in perfect sync. “We all knew our jobs and what each of us had accomplished in order to have a good run on the range.” Truck Commander (TC) Spc. Mark Needham said.

They prepared for the range like most soldiers do, they did there equipment checks, ran through the battle drills, and made sure they were ready to go. “It was nothing special; it was just another day at the range for us.” Gunner Spc. Adam Petersen said.

The gunnery tables are used to train and evaluate a single firing crew. In order for the teams to be successful each team must be proficient in individual and crew tasks. Each vehicle team must positively identify the targets, the vehicle commander and gunner must complete a series of fire commands to in order to engage the targets, and the driver must maintain proper vehicle defilade to protect the team’s tactical position. The gunner must acquire, engage and destroy stationary and moving targets both day and night.

This gun crew does have something special about unlike most gun truck crews in the fact that all three members are the same rank. In some cases this would lead to conflict in the crew but with this crew it was an advantage.

“It felt like we were equals. All our decisions were that of a team and not of single individual.” Driver Paul Warmbold said. Spc. Needham also agreed on this sentiment by saying “All of us being E-4s made us put more trust in each other to come through successful on our individual levels and to come through successful as a team.”

The crew also had some extra incentive to shoot perfect. It was a simple bet if the crew would shoot perfect Spc. Needham would have to shave his mustache and keep it off for the whole deployment or if the crew shot below 100 Spc. Warmbold and Spc. Petersen would have to grow and keep a mustache for the whole upcoming deployment. Spc. Needham said “It was worth shaving my mustache to see our crew succeed the way we did.”

A ceremony was held where each team member was presented a Army Commendation Medal. The medal may be presented to those who distinguish themselves by an act of heroism, extraordinary achievement or meritorious service.

The crew was awarded the Army Commendation Medal by Col. Eric Kerska, 1st Brigade Combat Team Commander. He stopped by to personally thank and present the award to each soldier during the ceremony for achieving perfection on Gunnery Table 5.
It has been some long days of training for the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment (Co C, 1-194 AR CAB). They have definitely been tested on their warrior tasks and battle drills at Fort McCoy recently by conducting convoy escort security lanes out at Contingency Operating Location (COL) Liberty. The Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRE) kicked off on May 18 and ended the morning of Jun 28. Company C ran 24 hour operations for ten days in order to better prepare for their upcoming deployment.

“It’s similar to what we will be facing when we are in-country,” said Sgt. Christopher J. Ambuehl, a truck commander for 2nd Platoon. “Right now we are running three to four hour missions but over in Iraq it will be a lot longer than that.”

The Soldiers conducted convoy escort security missions in high mobility multipurpose (HMMWVs) and mine resistant ambush protected (MRAPs) vehicles. The platoon faced many different types of simulated threats and enemy attacks played out by civilian and First Army actors.

Not all of the crew members in 2nd Platoon come from a combat arms military occupation specialty (MOS), but that doesn’t mean they haven’t been training for the fight.

“My primary MOS is 91A. I originally went to AIT (advanced individual training) to be a tank mechanic for 16 weeks but here I am escorting convoys,” said Spc. Kyle J. Swedziak, truck gunner. “We’ve been training quite extensively during the past year and I believe we’re ready.”

For driver Pfc. Keith E. Brooks, Operation New Dawn will be his first deployment and he believes he has what it takes to complete the job on the road.

“When you’re “outside the wire” things can happen that will make you feel overwhelmed,” said Pfc. Keith E. Brooks. “It’s all about taking a deep breath and adjusting to what you are facing. I’ve been doing that recently. Eventually I will just react without hesitation – it’s the reason we train.”

The morning of June 25, a Convoy Escort Team (CET) from 2nd platoon who I will call “Blue 5-0” awoke from their tents at 3:30 a.m. to prepare for their final mission out at COL Liberty.

“We started by prepping the trucks down in the motor pool,” said Sgt. Ambuehl. “We need about 30 minutes to load up our weapons and equipment and another 30 minutes to conduct Preventative Maintenance Checks and Services (PMCS) on the vehicles.”

PMCS is completed to ensure that the crew’s gear and trucks are fully mission capable (FMC) before they pass through the gates.

Once 2nd Platoon’s “Blue 5-0” finished PMCS, they headed for the dining facility (DFAC) to get some morning chow. On the menu: a choice of scrambled eggs or ham and cheese omelettes, hash browns, pancakes, cereal and a variety of fruit. “Not a bad way to start off the day,” said Sgt. Ambuehl.

By 7:00 a.m., Blue 5-0 met for their convoy brief with their Platoon Leader, 1st Lt. Mitchell Goenner.

“Today’s mission, convoy escort security,” said 1st Lt. Goenner. “Think on your feet when we’re out there this morning. They may try to throw a lot at us since this is our final MRE training scenario. Be ready for anything.”

After going over the route, Blue 5-0 mounted the trucks and prepared for departure. The trucks drove five minutes away from COL Liberty and stopped for 30 minutes at a Movement Control Point (MCP) to simulate where they would be leaving Kuwait to enter into Iraq.

By 10:00 a.m., the patrol rolled out the gate and began their mission on time.

One important battle drill for a CET is vehicle recovery for breakdowns or damage caused by enemy contact. This battle drill was tested within an hour of Blue 5-0 beginning their mission.

“IED!” exclaimed Sgt. Ambuehl. “Watch out for any secondary devices or SAF (small arms fire)!”
**REHEARSAL COMPLETE (CONT)**

The second truck in the convoy had been hit by an explosively formed penetrator (EFP). Once the area was secured, a second truck moved up to provide recovery to the disabled vehicle. At the same time, a third gun truck, the scout vehicle in front transitioned back to pick up personnel from the disabled truck. The crew did not sustain any casualties during this enemy attack.

Shortly after the incident a civilian ran up to the rear truck and tossed an anti-tank grenade (RKG). Fortunately, the RKG missed.

"By the time I noticed the RKG was in the air and I wasn’t able to get a good positive identification (PID) on the individual who threw it, said the gunner of the last truck.” “The insurgent ran off into the woods before I could shoot and I did not want to just spray and pray with my crew served weapon.”

Once the convoy re-located to a secure area they transferred the Soldiers of the damaged truck back into their original vehicle. After this was complete they were back on the road for another two hours. Eventually Blue 5-0 made it to the cantonment area where they simulated their rest-over night (RON) starting at 12:00 a.m.

As pristine as could be, Blue 5-0 downloaded their gear and secured all their sensitive items from the trucks. Eight hours later this convoy escort team awoke and was back on the trucks at 8:00 p.m. They now had to begin their return route back to COL Liberty and the CET had to leave by 10:00 p.m. Moving out of cantonment and back on the route of return, all truck gunners switched their crew serve weapon status from green to amber.

As the convoy made their way back they came upon several civilians on the side of the road with no incidents. Shortly after the civilian dismounted congestion, a civilian truck entered into the lane swerving in and out of the convoy.

“They seem to be testing our escalation of force,” said Sgt. Ambuehl.”

Follow the announcement by Ambuehl, Blue 3’s gunner began motioning the civilian vehicle to leave the convoy. Eventually the truck turned off the route and waited for the convoy to pass through.

Within ten minutes of the event 1st Lt. Goenner, the Convoy Commander was told by an Observer Controller (OC) that their vehicle was to simulate a fluid leakage failure. The truck came to a halt and radioed the rest of the convoy.

“Blue 1 this is Blue 3 over,” said Sgt. Ambuehl.

“Go ahead Blue 3,” said 1st Lt. Goenner.

“Blue 1, we’re experiencing a system failure,” said Sgt. Ambuehl. “Our truck is leaking fluid and has come to a halt near checkpoint 14, send recovery.”

The crew of Blue 3 proceeded to get out of their HMMWV to pull security until the other vehicles arrived to add the additional coverage. Time moved by fast and it took the Platoon only a minute to get the failed vehicle towed strapped hook up to Blue 4’s truck. At the same time, Truck Blue 2 (scout truck) backed up to pick up additional personnel from Blue 3.

Once the recovery scenario was finished, Blue 4 unloaded Blue 3 Soldiers back into their vehicle after the OC stated the vehicle was good to go. Soon after, the convoy arrived back at COL Liberty successfully without receiving any casualties.

It was a long day for the 2nd PLT and the crew inside Blue 3, but they accomplished their mission and became better trained on their warrior tasks and battle drills.

“The OC thought we did a great job out there as a team,” said Sgt. Ambuehl. “He said we had great radio communication back and forth to one another and we allowed each other to do our jobs. I’m proud of the way my crew handled the situations we were put in – the whole Platoon did great.”

As the mission rehearsal exercise come to an end, Blue 3 and the rest of Company C did not get much of a break. The unit transitioned into three days of individual weapons qualification ranges which will be followed by the mounted truck gunnery portion of their mobilization training here at Fort McCoy. There is little down time for the Soldiers of Company C since they will be deploying to Kuwait to assist with the drawdown of American troops in Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn.
The lights dimmed, the music raised, and Soldier-performers took the stage. “The Best Show in Town,” The 2011 U.S. Army Soldier Show came to Fort McCoy, Wis. on Saturday, June 25.

Approximately 50 Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery took a break from their mobilization training to attend the 90 minute show.

The theme of the show was, “Carnival – A Traveling Thank You.” The show explored a wide variety of music including California Gurls, by Katy Perry; The Devil Went Down to Georgia, by The Charlie Daniels Band; Bad Romance, by Lady Gaga; Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue, by Toby Keith; and selections from various cultures around the world.

The show is tagged as “For the Soldier, By the Soldier.” Each performer is an Army Soldier from various units around the world. They are selected specifically for the show, tour for nearly one year, and put on more than 100 performances, said Sgt. Nessor Delica, performer and Army bandsman, 434th Signal Corp Band.

The cast and crew are responsible for transportation, loading and unloading, set-up, recovery, and maintenance of more than 70,000 pounds of equipment required for production. The Soldiers routinely work 14 hour days and must maintain their military proficiency throughout the tour, according to J. C. Abney, deputy chief of staff for family and MWR (morale, welfare, and recreation) programs.

The show was open to the public with free admission. The event organizers were able to set aside three rows specifically for Soldiers from the Battalion. Soldiers purchased popcorn and beverages, took their seats, and were noticeably excited for a change of pace. “It was very well done. [There was] good choreography, a great atmosphere, and I think all the Soldiers enjoyed themselves,” said 1st Sgt. James Bentson, first sergeant of the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery (HHB), 1st Bn., 125th FA.

For this performance, Soldiers from the maintenance section of HHB helped with the set-up and tear down, easing the workload for the performers.

 “[The best part is] the end—seeing the smiles we produce for the Soldiers and families. It is nice knowing we impacted them in a positive way,” said Sgt. Delica.
The 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division (1/34th BCT) is ramping for a deployment in support of Operation New Dawn. Over 2,000 Soldiers are at Ft. McCoy, Wisc. are participating a variety of events and required training tasks which will prepare them for their mission to Kuwait.

From being proficient with tasks in the field, such as manning an entry point, first aid, convoy security and vehicle and personnel searches the citizen-soldiers of the 1st BCT are getting adjusted to the challenges the next year may bring.

“For the average person here, the physical, professional and personal adjustments from going from citizen to soldier has been demanding,” said Sgt. 1st Class Donald Klick, Senior Paralegal Noncommissioned Officer, 1st BCT, Headquarters Company “the ability to focus on the mission has helped with the adjustment of becoming a active duty Soldier.”
BSB STRESS FIRE RANGE DAY

Caption: Brigade Support Battalion conducts a stress fire range on Ft. McCoy, Wisc.

All photos by Chief Warrant Officer Daniel McGowan, 1/34th BSB UPAR.
Have a Photo?

Help us tell the story of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division to everyone!

If you have a photo that shows what you and your unit is up to, please send it to Lynette.R.Hoke@us.army.mil