



Serving the Soldiers and Civilians of the 7th Signal Brigade

the Desert Wire

Volume I, No. 5

“Voice of Freedom”

June 2004

Tall order

319th provides phone lines to Bucca’s observation posts

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Fitzgerald

7th Signal Brigade Public Affairs Office

CAMP BUCCA, Iraq – As Iraq moved toward sovereignty, Soldiers at Camp Bucca moved behind the scenes to make sure they were prepared for any eventuality. The 319th Signal Battalion, in particular, was called on to help improve the communications infrastructure at the camp, which is just north of the Kuwaiti border in Southern Iraq.

“Our mission was to get phone lines out to the observation posts on Bucca,” said Staff Sgt. Fred Jones, cable team chief, B Company, 319th Signal Battalion.

With the June handover of sovereignty to Iraq, the installation of



Spc. Joel Santiago splices cable along the Camp Bucca perimeter.



Working together, Spc. Pedro Ortiz (left) and Spc. Joel Santiago run telephone lines to one of Camp Bucca’s observation posts.

telephone lines was part of a call for overall communications improvements to enhance the responsiveness of Camp Bucca. To soldiers in the observation posts, such improvements bring added security.

“We’re responsible for force protection at Camp Bucca. Should something happen, we can communicate with several different elements using these lines,” said Sgt. Jeffrey Prince, military police Soldier, 172nd Field Artillery (Forward).

Prince mans one of Camp Bucca’s towering observation posts and said he was glad to have dedicated phone lines out to his position. Before the installation, radios were the only means of communication. With the new phone lines, Soldiers no longer have to rely solely on radios, which have limited range and battery life.

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Inside...



Command Sgt. Maj. Donna Mitchell pays visit, page 4.



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Photo of the month



Brigade vehicles on their way back from Camp Buehring roll toward Kuwait City.
Photo by 1st Lt. John Garceau, HHC, 7th Signal Brigade.



Col. Jennifer Napper
Commander



Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Williams
Command Sergeant Major

the Desert Wire

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Word on the street ...

A look at what Soldiers on deployment are saying

The question: What do you think of the handover of sovereignty to Iraq?

By Spc. William Garreans



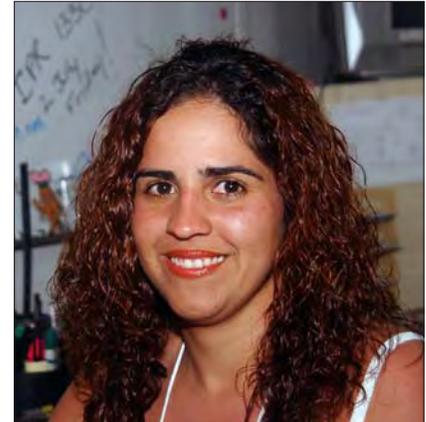
"I think it's a good idea. I just wish it could have been sooner."

Sgt. Charles Davis
C Company, 67th Signal Battalion



"I think it's a good thing. I think it will bring their country together."

Spc. Bonnie Leksrisawat
HHC, 72nd Signal Battalion



"I believe it is good that they can start managing their own country and start having equal rights for everybody."

1st Lt. Edneris Aponte
HHC, 319th Signal Battalion



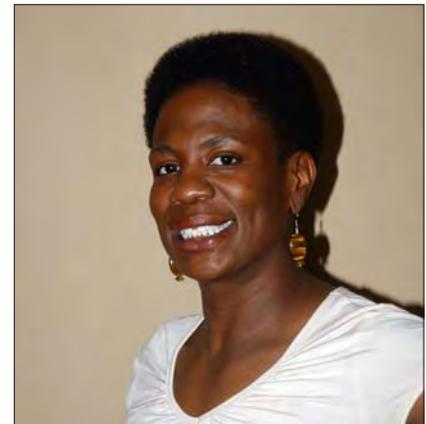
"I feel great about it. It shows the Iraqis that we do have a democratic process."

Staff Sgt. Anthony Gillus
301st Signal Company



"I think it's good. It was quicker than anticipated and it gives them a chance to stand on their own two feet."

Spc. Dustin Newborn
235th Signal Company



"I feel that it is the first step to the completion of our mission."

Sgt. 1st Class Roxanne Lee
HHC, 7th Signal Brigade

Top NCO from 5th Signal visits troops

□ Senior leader tours camps, praises work of NCOs

By Staff Sgt. Peter Fitzgerald
7th Signal Brigade Public Affairs Office

CAMP DOHA, Kuwait – Command Sgt. Maj. Donna Mitchell's goal was to see every deployed 7th Signal Brigade Soldier during her visit to theater this June. The one thing about visiting signal troops serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, she discovered, is that it's difficult to get to them all.

"They're everywhere," said Mitchell, who is the senior noncommissioned officer for 5th Signal Command, the brigade's higher command in Mannheim, Germany.

Brigade Soldiers are performing the signal mission all throughout the theater, in Iraq and Kuwait. Despite her best intentions, time restraints and travel restrictions prevented a more extensive tour for Mitchell. Still, she was able to see much of the brigade's operations in Kuwait and meet with many Soldiers.

"I feel good about what's going on here," she said. "I wanted to come and check on their morale, see their living conditions. I see that morale is high because Soldiers are actually doing their mission, what they were trained for. That's a good thing."

Mitchell also attributed high morale to good leadership – leadership that creates a positive atmosphere and gets Soldiers to re-enlist.

"The NCOs are awesome," she said. "They're the ones who make it happen. Soldiers in the brigade have the highest re-enlistment rates in the command."

"Also, there are no heat casualties here, despite the 120-degree weather. That's NCOs doing their job," Mitchell added.

On the visit, Mitchell also had the chance to meet with fellow signal troops serving with 7th Signal Brigade Soldiers. She said she was impressed with the performance of National



Photos by Sgt. Karen Derrickson
Sgt. 1st Class Arthur Whiteside welcomes Command Sgt. Maj. Donna Mitchell to 72nd Signal Battalion's command post in Kuwait.



Command Sgt. Maj. Donna Mitchell meets with 1st Sgt. Joseph Harbolt and Staff Sgt. Angela White-Givens during her visit to Camp Buehring.

Guard and reserve Soldiers like troops from the 319th Signal Battalion, a reserve unit from Sacramento, Calif., and the 143rd Signal Company, a National Guard unit from Junction City, Colo.

"You can't tell the difference among National Guard, reserve or active duty Soldiers. They're all professionals," she added.

On her way back to Germany, Mitchell was already thinking about another trip to meet with Soldiers.

"It's been a great visit," she said. "I want to make it back here soon. I want to thank all the Soldiers for the job they're doing. They're really taking care of this mission."

Rolling right along

□67th logistics team keeps battalion moving

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Fitzgerald

7th Signal Brigade Public Affairs Office

CAMP DOHA, Kuwait – Success in this theater requires the efforts of several different entities, all contributing to one mission. No one knows that better than the 67th Signal Battalion logistics team at Camp Doha.

"We keep the mission going. That's what we do," says Sgt. Keith Jackson, automated logistics specialist, A Company, 67th Signal Battalion.

Jackson and his colleagues work to keep the battalion supplied and equipped as it performs its signal mission in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 67th Signal Battalion has elements in various locations, including Camp Buehring, Kuwait, and Taillil, Iraq.

"They're a critical link in our operations, and they do an excellent job in providing timely logistical support," says Maj. James Young, battalion executive officer.

The logistics team is made up of a consolidated pool of specialists with representatives from each of the battalion's companies. They are part of a 12-Soldier task force at Camp Doha that also includes personnel specialists. Together, they work as a centralized point for the battalion's logistics and administrative issues.

"We're the liaison to ensure the battalion has what it needs," says Sgt. 1st Class Larry Hill, battalion maintenance supervisor, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 67th Signal Battalion.

Hill heads the logistics team at Camp Doha. He says having a consolidated logistics pool has helped the battalion mission run more smoothly, though it took a lot of work in the beginning. Arriving at Camp Doha in January, the team did not have any vehicles for two months. They had to track down equipment, parts and supplies all over Doha on foot, walking several miles every day. Still, the early experience was not without benefit.

"It was a difficult start," recalls Hill. "But we learned where everything was, made contacts and became more proficient."



The logistics team makes daily runs to warehouses on Camp Doha to check on supplies and equipment.



Sgt. Keith Jackson (left) and Sgt. Walter Glover work together to get equipment out to the battalion.

Though they belong to different companies, Hill says his Soldiers have learned to work together for the mission.

"They're all outstanding. It doesn't matter what the task is, they're ready to get it done as a team," he says.

In their daily runs to the warehouses on Camp Doha, the team members keep track of equipment and supplies for their specific units. They log the items that come in and prepare them for convoys. The Soldiers are responsible to their individual units, but all work together to complete the whole mission of the battalion.

"We're not in the same company, but we rely on each other because of the job we do," adds Jackson.

Sgt. Errol Boxtton, automated logistics specialist, C Company, 67th Signal Battalion, finds the work rewarding in a number of ways.

"For me, this is an opportunity to work with fellow logistics specialists and get to know them as Soldiers. It's also fulfilling to know my company is getting the supplies they need," he says.

From securing pens and pencils to locating and delivering automotive parts, Hill says his team is there to play its part in ensuring the success of the battalion mission.

"We feel pride in making sure they're fully mission capable," he says. "Anything they need, we'll get to keep them rolling right along."



Camp Doha is now the scene of many travellers going on R&R.

APOD comes to Doha

□ Move brings hundreds of R&R travellers daily

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Jason Johnson
HHC, 7th Signal Brigade

CAMP DOHA, Kuwait – Army Pfc. Ted Hurst, a cable installation and maintenance technician, from A Company, 67th Signal Battalion, reports to the 7th Signal Brigade personnel section along with three other Soldiers June 30. He is beginning a two day process that will ultimately land him in Fort Gordon, Ga., for brief but needed Rest and Recuperation (R&R) from a 12-month deployment.

"I'm going to spend time with my wife and kids, and prepare for one other birth," said Hurst.

Before Hurst and other service members can enjoy their R&R, they must first go through processing at the Aerial Port of Debarkation (APOD) at Camp Doha. In June the APOD was relocated here from Camp Wolverine, Kuwait, in a planned temporary move while a new facility is being built. The APOD is where service members from all branches complete their paperwork, get plane tickets and are transported to their flights. Between 500 and 600 service members go through Camp Doha each day on their way to R&R.

Every service member deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom is authorized up to two weeks of R&R leave with an all-expense-paid flight to a location of their choice. Service members are first flown out of Kuwait by Air Mobility Command (AMC) to one of three international locations – Atlanta, Dallas or Frankfurt – and then make connecting flights to their final destinations. Handling the travel arrangements is Sato Travel, an agency contracted by the military for the R&R program. Once a service member checks in with Sato at the APOD, the agency issues a follow-



Service members receive an orientation briefing.

on ticket that gets the service member to the airport closest to their leave address.

"Soldiers are very enthused because Sato is the final hurdle to reach home," said Charles Pinho, a Sato Travel consultant.

Before they fly, however, service members must attend several briefings at the APOD, including a "Welcome to Camp Doha" orientation briefing. A customs brief informs them of items they cannot take with them, like sand from the Middle East, certain Iraqi artifacts and non-prepackaged foods. Service members also receive a briefing to make sure their leave form is properly filled out.

Once their briefings are complete, they're loaded onto buses, which take them to the Kuwait International Airport to board the AMC flight. All service members must wear the Desert Combat Uniform (DCU) during travel.

As Army 1st Lt. Scott Kelly, company commander, 235th Signal Company, waits at the APOD, he is thinking about the plans he has for his loved ones in Augusta, Ga.

"I'll give my whole family a big hug and kiss" he said.

Rocky Mountain Signal takes on desert mission

□ Colorado National Guard company joins OIF mission

By 1st Lt. Ryan Richard

143rd Signal Company

Since early March 2004, Army National Guard soldiers from the Rocky Mountain state of Colorado have been in Iraq and Kuwait supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. Posted to Camp Buerhing, the 143rd Signal Company (Heavy Troop), from Grand Junction, has been providing Echelon-Above-Corps (EAC) signal support in Kuwait and southern Iraq.

Normally accustomed to seeing mesas, mountains and snow, "the landscape and weather have taken some getting used to," says Spc. Jeffrey Cook.

The local wildlife has been the subject of numerous pictures sent to friends and family back home. "Working force-protection duty gives you the opportunity to see quite a lot of the local animals. I have very good pictures of camels, lizards, snakes and scorpions. I still do not have a good picture of a hedge hog, though," says Cook. With a laugh, he adds, "We are in country for one year, so I guess I have nine more months to get one."

Morale has been excellent during the deployment. "As a National Guard unit we have strong ties to our hometown and local community in Colorado," says Capt. Brad Rhodes, company commander. "Community groups such as Home Front Heroes and retired National Guard members have been helping out the spouses at home with things such as home and car repairs – not to mention the care packages local community groups are sending."

The unit also appreciates the efforts of the Colorado National Guard State Headquarters back in Denver. According to the maintenance noncommissioned officer, Staff Sgt. Hartzel, "Our State Headquarters went to great lengths to ensure this unit



The heavy troop of 143rd Signal Company in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of 143rd Signal Company

deployed well-equipped. Maintenance-wise, the unit deployed with enough Primary Load List (PLL) parts and Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) to keep the unit self-sufficient until we were able to get the supply chain working for us. State Headquarters even provided Morale, Welfare and Recreation items for the soldiers such as board games, sports items, TVs and DVD players."

While in Kuwait, the 143rd has been attached to the 72nd Signal Battalion, an EAC signal battalion from Manheim, Germany. The 143rd has been tasked with operating a signal shot linking the northern Kuwait desert camps to southern Iraq. Another platoon is tasked with refurbishing and rebuilding several TRC-170(V)2 heavy troop shelters belonging to the 385th Signal Company, an active duty unit posted at Camp Doha, Kuwait.

To accomplish its mission, the unit has dual 9.5 foot tripod mounted antennas and TRC-170(V)2 troposcatter systems. With one shelter and dual antenna system at each end, the unit can provide long distance communication links in support of theater/corps/division level functions

including command, control, intelligence, fire support and combat service support.

The 143rd also has new LMTV series vehicles in its inventory. The LMTVs arrived prior to mobilization as replacements for older 2 ½-ton vehicles the unit had for many years. "It is not often National Guard units field new equipment before active duty units," says company 1st Sgt. Tim Smith. "While the soldiers were enthusiastic about the vehicles to begin with, they have seen active duty units in Kuwait and Iraq with older 2 ½ ton vehicles. After seeing that, I think they appreciate the LMTVs even more."

With three months of a 12-month tour completed, Rhodes feels positive of his company's accomplishments. "Working with the active duty has been beneficial for everyone. We've had the opportunity to observe the differences and similarities between the active and reserve components. The company has shown they can mobilize, deploy and perform as well, if not better, than their active-duty counterparts. I am very proud of this company and our soldiers."

School's in session

VFU opens its doors in ARCENT building

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Fitzgerald
7th Signal Brigade Public Affairs Office

CAMP DOHA, Kuwait – Certain opportunities are difficult to come by here in this desert place. That's why, when the 7th Signal Brigade recently began offering computer courses at its "Voice of Freedom University," word quickly spread.

"The interest has been overwhelming. We have more applicants than we have seats available," says Capt. Brion Johnson, network operations officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 7th Signal Brigade.

Johnson and his team of computer and network specialists are the ones behind the "Voice of Freedom University" concept at Camp Doha. VFU is actually a collection of courses taught by Soldiers of the 7th Signal Brigade. The instruction ranges from basic user training to advanced network engineering. Students have the opportunity to learn everything from file management to running a data package at a technical control facility. VFU



Students get instruction from Staff Sgt. Rebecca Busacker.

also offers leadership training for management of network teams.

Located in the former Armed Forces Central Command – Kuwait operations center at Camp Doha, VFU has been in development for some time. Only last month, however, did the right combination of resources and location fall into place. When space became available in the ARCENT building, the team of Soldiers quickly reacted. They cleaned out the old



(From left) Spc. Jonathan Crouse, Spc. Jonathan Comeaux, Pvt 2 Jesus Wang and Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey McClendon attend a VFU class.

operations center, repainted the walls, and moved in tables and computers. VFU was open for its first class June 28.

"This was the culmination of a lot of work by a lot of people," Johnson says. "From securing the facility, painting it, developing the course content, to teaching, it's been a group effort."

Staff Sgt. Rebecca Busacker, brigade automation noncommissioned officer, teaches the Basic User Course at VFU. Her students learn about managing Microsoft Outlook, network security and basic troubleshooting. She says she enjoys teaching because she's "helping people help themselves."

"A lot of people are afraid of computers," Busacker explains. "I teach them things they can do on their own so they'll feel more confident. I want them to be more comfortable around computers. It's exciting to see people learning something they didn't know."

VFU student Spc. Jonathan Crouse, a senior radio technician with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 72nd Signal Battalion, was surprised to get computer training on deployment.

"I didn't think I'd have the opportunity here," he says. "But I heard about the courses and I wanted to take them. I'm a computer junkie. I love to play with computers and I wanted to learn how to help others."

As technology marches on, the staff members at VFU hope to expand the curriculum to help Soldiers keep up with the rapidly changing world of network operations.

"VFU is about preparing for that change," says Johnson. "We want them to get a better understanding of where network operations is going. The stuff we're teaching represents the future. I hope soldiers get excited about that."

For more information on VFU courses, please call DSN 438-6784/5.



Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Jones lends a hand in repainting the walls at VFU.

Chaplain's Corner ...

By Chaplain (Maj.) Steven Eddy
319th Signal Battalion Chaplain's Office

Hello to all of you in the 7th Signal Brigade. This is my first experience writing for the *Desert Wire* and it is my privilege to do so. I have met so many wonderful people throughout the brigade headquarters and in each of the battalions. We as chaplains are in the people business, which always makes for an exciting adventure.

It never ceases to amaze me when I encounter Soldiers. I love to ask them where they come from, to listen to what they talk about, their upbringing and their education and why they joined. It's a huge part of what enriches us in the U.S. Army to work with people we would have never met otherwise.

So here we are, forward deployed in the region of the Persian Gulf. It has been fascinating for me to experience first hand what I call "life on life" relationships. When we go places like this where we live together "24/7" as we say, one's character, habits, patterns and all those wonderful peculiarities that make us who we are come out. Isn't it interesting!

I like to order my thoughts according to the teachings of the Bible along with various sayings. I collect them along the way like treasured pieces one would gather in one's travels. Here are two sayings I often come back to.

"The leader in God's kingdom doesn't use people to get work done but uses work to get people done." How often I turn to that saying when I get frustrated with having to do something I really don't want to do. Perhaps you too find an assignment or task that is either something way out of your comfort zone or rather displeasing otherwise. When I get into circumstances that I especially don't understand, I look to the Lord for strength and try to visualize the outcome.



In the Kuwaiti desert Chaplain (Maj.) Steven Eddy finds a place to worship among the camels.

It never ceases to amaze me when I just do it with a smile that I am better for it.

The second saying goes something like this: the meaning of intimacy can be understood as "into-me-see." I use that a lot in my counseling when I start and sense the person I am speaking to being really tentative and withdrawn.

The Bible tells the story of a relationship between two men – David and Jonathan. It was Jonathan's father Saul who was filled with jealousy for David, and attempted to drive a wedge between the two young men. Through war and death, the Bible records their love this way: *"I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful ... How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"*

(2 Samuel 1:26-27 from New International Version)

Aren't those powerful words? It is my experience that this kind of intimacy makes us stronger Soldiers when we find friends like Jonathan to share this incredible deployment journey.

Tell your story to the *Desert Wire*



Every soldier has a story to tell, and the DESERT WIRE is looking for yours. We are looking for submissions to include in the monthly brigade newsletter.

Stories can be about missions, the work you and your Soldiers do, life on deployment, local sights and attractions, or just about anything of interest to Soldiers and their loved ones. Pictures are also encouraged. If you have nice, high-resolution digital images, please feel free to send them in as well.

As a signal unit, we are scattered throughout the theater of operations. This is a great way to let others know what you're doing. For leaders, it's also a good way to

give your Soldiers some recognition for the hard work they're doing.

Submissions can be delivered to the 7th Signal Brigade Public Affairs Office, located in the S1/S4 trailer on Camp Doha. Or they can be sent by e-mail directly to: peter.fitzgerald@kuwait.army.mil. Content must be submitted by the first week of every month to be considered for publication in that month. For any inquiries, please call DSN 318-438-3407. We look forward to your submissions.

Visit the 7th Signal Brigade (FWD) website at:
<https://www.7sigbde.arcent.army.mil/>

Bucca

From page 1

"The phone lines were necessary," added Prince. "This is a more reliable means of communication."

Getting the observation posts wired was the responsibility of B Company's wire systems installers. Jones and his team of "Cable Dawgs" ran nearly two miles of phone lines to four different observation posts. They worked alongside other cable teams from B Company in blistering heat and high winds to ensure all the posts surrounding the facility had phone lines.

"It's pretty demanding work," said Spc. Pedro Ortiz, wire systems installer, B Company, 319th Signal Battalion. "You have to deal with the heat, the wind and the dust."

Ortiz added that he and his team members, Spc. Joel Santiago and Spc. Elizabeth Pabon, enjoy being "Cable Dawgs" because of the teamwork they've developed.

"It's about teams working together," he explained. "You can't go out there by yourself and run cable."

As team chief, Jones said his Soldiers make his job easy because they care about the work they do.

"All I need to do is tell them the mission and they get it done," he said.

With the handover of sovereignty now complete, the B Company Soldiers find satisfaction in knowing their work helped bring a greater sense of security to the guards in the towers.

"The most important thing is that we accomplished the mission and they have their communications," said Santiago.



In the hot Iraqi sun, "Cable Dawg" Spc. Pedro Ortiz works on connecting telephone lines at Camp Bucca.



Spc. Pedro Ortiz (left) and Staff Sgt. Fred Jones check the phone lines leading to the patch panel.

Equal Opportunity Watch ...

By Sgt. 1st Class Michael Gibson

HHC, 7th Signal Brigade

We have a very diverse organization in which we depend on everyone equally to accomplish the mission. During the past several months we have experienced cultural, racial, gender and ethical diversity in celebrating national observances. Events included Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Days of Remembrance and Asian-Pacific Heritage Month. Brigade participation reached record numbers and several more events are scheduled to ensure the brigade remains vigilant in the EO Program.

The second Equal Opportunity Representative course is scheduled for Aug. 9-15. The facilitator workshop is scheduled for July 26-29. This training will ensure battalions and companies have certified trainers to facilitate EO and Consideration of Others training throughout the redeployment and transition of personnel. Staff-assisted



Sgt. 1st Class Michael Gibson arrives at the airfield in Basrah, Iraq, on a visit to meet with Soldiers. Gibson is the brigade equal opportunity advisor.

assessment visits are scheduled for 319th Signal Battalion (July 5-9), 72nd Signal Battalion (July 12-16) and 67th Signal Battalion (July 19-23), to ensure the battalion and company EO programs continue to operate in accordance with the Department of The Army standards.

Journey to FOB Duke

□ Platoon leader recounts mission north into Iraq

By 1st Lt. Scott McCarthy
C Company, 72nd Signal Battalion

PART I

I sometimes feel guilty when I hear from civilians in The States who tell me that we're all great heroes here, and they are so proud of us. (This actually happens quite often.) My guys haven't fought gun battles to liberate city police stations, or punched through big ambushes. They've spent much of their time in relative safety, and by chance or providence, none have been seriously injured.

After three and a half months of fun in the sun in Kuwait, I was told to prepare a team to go north into Iraq. Some guy name Al Sadr was causing problems, and the 1st Armor Division got extended. That left tens of thousands more troops in Iraq than planned, and they needed some long haul communications assets and additional telephone switches to help out the existing communications network. It had been pretty quiet in Iraq for the preceding six months, but the recent uprisings in Najaf and Fallujah had changed that. The thought of driving through ambushes and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) was a bit disconcerting to many of the soldiers, myself included.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Fitzgerald

Iraqi villagers observe a passing convoy moving toward Babylon.

We trained up on battle drills, and scavenged for any piece of metal or Kevlar we could find to put between our vital organs and the bad guys. By the time we were ready to roll, our vehicles looked like something out of "Mad Max," with metal, Kevlar blankets, and sandbags welded, bolted, tied down or strapped all over the trucks. When we hit the border, we found that no other convoys had been across the border since it had been reopened. Apparently, they had closed the border to convoys the week before due to the increased enemy activity. We were to be the first convoy in a week. I'd heard rumors that there had been no supply convoys for a while. As a result, we brought about a month's

worth of MREs. So, 72nd Signal Battalion would be the guinea pigs to see if the route was clear.

It turned out that southern Iraq was pretty peaceful. We made our way up to Scania, a forward operating base (FOB) south of Babylon, without any incidents. It was there that I was to break off one of my tactical satellite teams to join 1st Armor Division somewhere around Babylon. Somehow, though, that all had changed in the preceding two days, so I got new instructions from battalion on where to send my guys. I met up with a major from 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, who coordinated an escort for them. When I came back to brief my guys, I told them that I had good news for them. The escort to their new home included seven gun trucks and two attack helicopters. They thought that the fact that they needed all that firepower was actually bad news, but they agreed that it was better to have it than not have it.

We all made it to our respective destinations safely. Their trip ended at FOB Duke. This base consisted of one building out in the middle of the Iraqi desert, 30 kilometers from anything resembling civilization. Even the mud huts that are prevalent along the highways in the southern part of the country don't crop up until the outskirts of Najaf.



Two Iraqi boys take to the streets on the outskirts of Baghdad.

PART II in next month's Desert Wire

B Company changes hands

A change of command ceremony was held at Camp Buehring June 17 for B Company, 72nd Signal Battalion. Attendees gathered in a hangar on the camp's airfield to wish a farewell to Capt. Ann Marie LaRoque, the outgoing commander, and welcome Capt. Thomas Hooper to the company. Hooper comes to the unit from the network operations section, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 7th Signal Brigade. LaRoque joins the HHC personnel and administrative section.



Capt. Thomas Hooper takes the B Company guidon from his new battalion commander, Lt. Col. Jeannie Tibbetts.



Capt. Thomas Hooper addresses his new company.



Attendees observe the traditional military ceremony at Camp Buehring.



Capt. Ann Marie LaRoque bids a fond farewell to B Company.

Desert Wire picture pages ...

The deployment in photos



Photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Fitzgerald

Sgt. Nick Marriott takes a Blackhawk flight back to Camp Doha after completing a mission in Basrah, Iraq.



A redeployment ceremony is held at Camp Doha for certain members of 7th Signal Brigade. The Soldiers are returning to Germany to establish a rear detachment for the eventual redeployment of the entire brigade.



A statue stands outside Basrah's International Airport in Iraq.



1st Lt. Gemma Ferrick makes her way to the roof of Saddam's palace in Baghdad.



Col. Jennifer Napper and Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Williams welcome CENTCOM's Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Foley to Camp Doha.



Sgt. Eslyn Williams receives a warm farewell as she sets to redeploy back to Germany.



Sgt. 1st Class William Reid helps set the 7th Signal Brigade painted barrier in place. The artwork was done by Spc. James Clark.



Spc. Darren Shreck's view of the Iraqi countryside during a convoy to Basrah.



Sgt. Leta Scott puts her foot down during motor maintenance.