



The command teams of 3-3 ADA and 5-5 ADA exchange salutes during the RIP/TOA ceremony held at the Al Fawl Palace, Camp Victory Iraq

The “I STRIKE” Battalion hands over the Iron Shield to the Dragon Slayers of 5-5 ADA

Story by CPT Amanda Parker /3rd Battalion, 3rd Air Defense Artillery /Courtesy Photo

CAMP VICTORY- Baghdad, Iraq – The Soldiers and Sailors of Task Force 3-3 ADA (I STRIKE) come to the end of a successful year long deployment in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. The battalion deployed to Iraq last March to provide Counter-Rocket Artillery and Mortar (C-RAM) protection for coalition forces throughout the Iraq area of operation. During their mission the I STRIKE battalion provided various degrees of C-RAM capability to over 15 separate FOBs which spanned from as far north as Mosul to the southern portion of Basrah.

The Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority (RIP/TOA) ceremony represents the end of the mission for one unit and the beginning for another unit. TF 3-3 ADA will case their colors which symbolically close a chapter in the unit's history and marks the end of their combat mission. The incoming unit, TF 5-5 ADA (DRAGON SLAYERS) will unfurl their colors to represent the unit's mission assumption from the outgoing unit.

The Relief in Place Ceremony was held in the historic Al Faw palace, once home to the former dictator Saddam Hussein, which was captured in 2003 at the onset of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. The commander of the 561st Regional Support Group, Colonel Arlan DeBlicek

presided over the ceremony. Prior to the RIP/TOA ceremony COL DeBlieck awarded the Bronze Star Medal to LTC Randy McIntire and Command Sergeant Major Paris Williams for their steadfast dedication, leadership and performance of the I STRIKE Battalion in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.

“Today’s transfer of authority marks a milestone event in the history of the Department of Defense, the Navy and the Army. This ceremony honors the Soldiers and Sailors of Task Force 3-3 ADA, it is the culmination of a remarkable team effort to protect our forces downrange from the threat of rocket and mortar attacks. This joint team has taken this unique capability to new heights and has improved the force protection of Iraq and the members of the Task Force C-RAM should leave theater being justifiably proud of their accomplishments knowing that they’ve made a difference on their watch. Thank you and God Bless you in all future endeavors” said Col Arlan DeBlieck.

LTC Randy McIntire said “ it’s been a pleasure serving with this magnificent group of professionals, I will always treasure my time spent with the Soldiers and Sailors of this Task Force and remember the great Americans that I had the fortune of leading for brief time in this unit’s proud history. Our mission is complete and I feel very comfortable turning over the mission to TF 5-5 ADA, as they’ve come ready to fight and are eager to get started”.

“I am very proud of these Air Defender’s they are nothing short of a military miracle. Almost 18 months ago the “Imperial” Brigade built this battalion from ground zero and then deployed it to war six months later. If that isn’t impressive enough these Soldiers have endured enemy hostile fire and separation from their families while saving coalition lives in Iraq. Our families are the true unsung heroes of this mission and because of their sacrifices we were able to focus on our critical mission” said Command Sergeant Major Paris Williams, Battalion Command Sergeant Major