

The Soldiers of the I STRIKE Battalion bid fair well to their United States Navy Sailors as their joint mission comes to an end in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

Story by Lieutenant Tom Murray / United States Navy / 3rd Battalion, 3rd Air Defense Artillery / Courtesy Photo



1LT Jake Wade prepares to off load a new Ground based Phalanx Weapon system from a C-5 Galaxy transport aircraft

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq-TF 3-3 ADA (C-RAM), currently deployed to fifteen different FOB's in the Iraq Theater of Operations, is actively preparing for its transition with 5-5 ADA. For the Soldiers and Sailors of the I STRIKE Battalion, this means one thing, there is light at the end of the tunnel. HHB/5-5 and C-RAM 8 will be arriving at BIAP soon, and the Relief-in-Place (RIP) will begin. We have much to share with the Soldiers and Sailors who will be relieving us, and we are determined to provide them with as many lessons learned, best practices, and points of contact as we can.

Within 48 hours of arriving, our reliefs will be assimilated into our battle rhythm and preparing to assume the mission and you can be assured that 3-3 ADA and C-RAM 7 will be smiling throughout as they count down the days to their return to American soil.

But it won't be all celebration for the Soldiers and sailors of this Task Force. The end of the deployment also marks the end of new friendships that have crossed service boundaries and the end of a truly memorable, joint tour. We know that Soldiers and Sailors work side-by-side everyday to accomplish the mission of providing Counter-Rocket, Artillery and Mortar protection for Coalition Forces on this FOB. We know that neither service can carry out this mission alone, but together we complete the mission exceptionally. And we are all better for having worked with another service – both personally and professionally. Soldiers know the difference between a Fire Controlman and an Operations Specialist, and Sailors know the difference between a 14J and a 52D. We've swapped some sea stories and have come to appreciate the stories of "Joe", which has given us a much greater appreciation for how another service operates.

We've certainly come a long way. To think, just a few months ago, I heard a Second Class Petty Officer asking why, when he addressed a "Sergeant," four Soldiers of different ranks turned around. In hindsight, when he said "Sergeant," he wanted to talk to a SGT, but the SGT was standing with a "Sergeant" (SSG), a "Sergeant" (SFC), and a "Sergeant" (MSG). I also remember a Corporal asking me why everyone calls me "Lieutenant" if I'm wearing Captain's bars. And to be quite honest, I haven't yet discovered all of the possible meanings of "Hooah" (apparently there are many).

I know I speak for all of the Soldiers and Sailors of Task Force 3-3 ADA when I say we've enjoyed working with one another, we are better for this experience, and we're proud to have been part of this vitally important mission! Hooyah!



Soldiers and Sailors of Task Force 3-3 ADA pose in front of Gun "Maximus" following a successful engagement of an enemy rocket over Camp Victory Iraq.