

1-62 Air Defense Artillery Writes Final Chapter of Its History

A Maneuver Air and Missile Defense Battalion Deploys to Iraq and Afghanistan

Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, January 2005—As Air and Missile Defense (AMD) Transformation gathers momentum, the 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, will inactivate and, along with other maneuver air and missile defense battalions, will merge with Patriot batteries to form composite AMD battalions. As the inactivation date approaches, Soldiers of the "Aim High" battalion are writing the final chapter of 1-62 ADA's history with simultaneous deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.



An Avenger from 1st Platoon, A/1-62 ADA, provides security at a patrol base guarding the route to Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan. Photo by 1LT Jeff Hazard.

commanded by LTC Stephen M. Christian, would be an integral member of the division's combined arms team as it conducted full-spectrum operations in Afghanistan and Iran.

The battalion staff began planning for separate operational deployments, training and preparing Soldiers for two different theaters of war. Soon, 1-62 ADA Soldiers were fully engaged in the Global War on Terror, combating Taliban rebels in Afghanistan and, at the same time, battling insurgents in Iraq.

This was the first time the entire division had deployed since Vietnam...

In July 2003, the Tropic Lightning Division was notified to prepare for a year-long deployment to Afghanistan. Initially, each of the division's two brigades were scheduled to conduct six-month rotations in Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom, but in early August, 2003, the division was alerted to send a brigade combat team to Iraq. This would be the first time the entire division had deployed since the Vietnam War, and 1-62 ADA,

Bravo Battery in Iraq

After a stopover in Kuwait for intensive training in force-protection, rules of engagement, and convoy security, Bravo Battery, commanded by CPT Winston Matthew Marbella, quickly established itself at Forward Operating Base Warrior. Until its redeployment in February 2005, Bravo Battery's Avengers, reconfigured Stinger humvees, and Stinger trucks roved military supply routes throughout Iraq, conducting combat patrols with their maneuver brethren. Bravo Battery's headquarters platoon spearheaded Forward Operating Base Warrior's third country national escort mission, providing access gate security, screening third country nationals reporting for work, and escorting the foreign nationals to job sites.

1-62 ADA Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom Deployments

18 January 2004

Bravo Battery and a detachment from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery deploy with the 25th Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, first to Kuwait and then to Kirkuk, Iraq, to relieve the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

12 February 2004

A detachment consisting of 14 members from the 1-62 ADA battalion staff, augmented by 36 non-ADA Soldiers from across the division and 45th Corps Support Group, deploys to Kabul, Afghanistan. The detachment's mission is to enhance the small Combat Forces Command-Afghanistan staff.

April 2004

Alpha Battery and Headquarters and Headquarters Battery deploy to Afghanistan with the 25th Infantry's Division 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

During their extended tour of duty in Iraq, Bravo Battery Soldiers met every challenge mounted by Iraqi insurgents and a harsh desert environment. Creating and refining tactics, techniques, and procedures, they left behind a legacy of lessons learned for the Soldiers who took their places in the Global War on Terrorism. (See "A Maneuver Air and Missile Defense Battery Adjusts to Ground Combat in Iraq," page 31)

1-62 ADA in Afghanistan

The arrival and integration of the headquarters detachment commanded by LTC Christian doubled the size of the small Combat Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) staff in Kabul. The Soldiers assigned to the detachment immersed themselves into their new roles as members of an operational-level headquarters, a dramatic change of pace for ADA Soldiers accustomed to working in a tactical headquarters in charge of three air defense batteries. They quickly grasped their new responsibilities and began to make a difference in the coalition's planning and execution of operations across the Combined Joint Operational Area-Afghanistan. The job requires daily interaction with the Afghan government and its ministries; planning and coordination with subordinate commands, including Combined Joint Task Force 76; and constant interface and coordination with U.S. Central Command and the Department of Defense.

Alpha Battery arrived in Kandahar while elements of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery landed at Bagram and Kandahar as the 25th Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team replaced the 10th Mountain Division. Alpha Battery quickly established itself with platoons in Orgun-e, Qalat, and Ghazn, providing convoy security and perimeter defense, and sending out Soldiers on mounted and dismounted patrols.

Lieutenant Colonel Christian and the battalion staff at CFC-A in Kabul remain intimately involved in every aspect of operations in Afghanistan. Aim High Soldiers have become integral members of an expanded CFC-A staff, assuming enormous responsibilities for planning, coordinating and directing various command and control functions. Working directly with senior Afghan leaders, the U.S. Embassy and Central Command, the staff helped develop strategic plans for a free and democratic Afghanistan. Once the groundwork for democracy had been laid, staff members worked with NATO and the UN to coordinate a national election. Given a chance to cast ballots in

a fair election, Afghan voters turned out in numbers that exceeded even optimistic projections and placed a truly representative government in power in Kabul.

ADA Soldiers Operating Out of the Box

Alpha Battery Soldiers quickly grew accustomed to executing non-traditional ADA missions in support of stability operations. In Afghanistan, where the air threat was negligible, operating out of your mission profile was the rule, not the exception, and ADA Soldiers like Alpha Battery's Specialist Antonio Arciga rose to the challenge.

SPC Arciga is an expert rifleman and one of three ADA Soldiers issued M-14 sniper rifles and missioned to serve as snipers in support of their Infantry task force. On one

mission, as SPC Arciga's platoon moved along its exfiltration route, it came under enemy fire. The platoon leader immediately initiated a react to contact drill, directing a flanking movement to close with and destroy the enemy forces, which by then were in full retreat.

As SPC Arciga listened to the reports on the radio and followed the directions of his

section sergeant, he found a comfortable position on the ground and began to track fleeing Taliban rebels at a range of about 1,000 meters. He was ordered to fire a warning shot. The shot landed near the fleeing Taliban, spraying them with rocks and dust as they continued to run. Specialist Arciga was ordered to fire another shot; this shot dropped one of the enemy to the ground. This engagement by a skilled ADA Soldier set a record in the 3rd Brigade Combat Team for the longest engagement with an M14 sniper rifle.

Today, Alpha Battery's Soldiers are engaged daily in a variety of different missions, including liaison work with French Special Forces and the UN Assistance Mission-Afghanistan. They serve as battle captains and battle NCOs in the forward command posts of maneuver task forces and execute specialized security details.

Disguised as Afghan civilians and mounted in sport utility vehicles, Alpha Battery Soldiers also provide security for tactical human intelligence teams (THTs). "Our day starts like it does for most of 1-62 ADA Soldiers," said one Soldier assigned to guard a THT. "We wake up about 0600, have breakfast, do some quick maintenance on our SUVs, and that's where the similarities end. After we comb our beards and put on our T-shirts and jeans, we



1-62 ADA Soldiers dress in Afghan clothing to guard tactical human intelligence teams in Afghanistan. Photo by CPT Todd Schmidt.

strap on our lightweight bulletproof vests and hip holsters and get ready to roll into the local community.

"In unmarked, unarmored and—we hope—unrecognized trucks, we act as guards while the THTs meet with local government officials, tribal leaders, town elders, army generals, and even warlords—whoever is willing to provide information," he continued. "We are always on our toes. No one knows when the next suicide bomber or Taliban spy will appear. We have to make decisions on possible threats that range from small children—who run up to us wanting candy—to locals watching us from the corner. We keep doing it because risking our lives is a small price to pay for all the lives that can be saved with the information that's gathered."

Another, uniquely Afghan experience for Aim High Soldiers in Headquarters and Headquarters Battery was manning the Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment (RAID) systems. The

aerostats was a rapid fielding initiative developed by the Program Manager-Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Elevated Netted Sensor (JLENS) to provide coalition bases an around-the-clock, long-endurance, long-range, surveillance capability to counter Taliban infiltration and harassment operations. Under the direction of CW3 Todd Piret and SFC Jeff James, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery personnel manned RAID systems throughout Afghanistan.



A Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment aerostat floats over Afghanistan. The aerostats provide commanders a "persistent stare" capability over their areas of operation.

Avenger Operations

Alpha Battery's Avengers also proved to be highly effective in performing convoy security missions in the Uruzgan Province. While the Stinger missile is normally its primary weapon in air defense, the Avenger's secondary weapon—the M3P .50-caliber machine gun—is its bread and butter in Afghanistan. The M3P's longer barrel gives it increased range and the Avenger's ability to traverse, elevate, and depress its lethal fires have proven to be invaluable in Afghanistan where dry streambeds, winding through deep canyons, sometime serve as roads. A forward-looking infrared (FLIR) system coupled with a laser range finder greatly enhances the Avenger's target

acquisition capabilities, which are far superior to other convoy escort vehicles. Additionally, the FLIR has proven to be of great use during inclement weather, especially during the frequent dust storms that mask other optics.

"Since day one we have been providing security and maneuvering with the infantry," said 1LT. Tim

Bible, an Alpha Battery Avenger platoon leader. "But this was no surprise to us. The M3P has many advantages over not only the M-2 .50-caliber machine gun, but over many of the crew-served weapons mounted on top of vehicles. The primary use for the Avenger has been perimeter security, and we use it in blocking procedures during cordon and search operations. With the Avenger, we make sure nobody enters an area of operations and nobody leaves."

According to CPT Todd Schmidt, the Alpha Battery commander, the Avenger's fearsome appearance also has a psychological effect on the enemy. "The psychological



Sergeant Kinney San Nicholas, with his B/1-62 ADA Avenger section, defends a traffic control point at Kirkuk, Iraq.

GA Omar Bradley Chapter Best Chapter 2004



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impact of seeing a weapon like the Avenger is enough to deter some attacks," CPT Schmidt said.

In a defining incident, SSG Jon Shafer, SPC Daryll Thornton, and SPC Paul Meith of Alpha Battery were pulling rear security in their Avenger as the convoy they escorted moved through a steep valley in the vicinity of Tarin Kowt. Reports of Taliban forces operating in the area required all elements of the convoy to stay fully alert for explosives and ambushes. As the convoy rounded a bend in a dry riverbed that served as a road, enemy forces engaged SPC Meith's Avenger. The team chief and section sergeant, SSG Jon Shafer, immediately ordered SPC



At center, CPT Todd Schmidt, A/1-62 ADA commander, and members of his staff confer with village elders.

Meith to engage the enemy, while simultaneously reporting the contact to the convoy commander. SPC Meith acquired targets with his Avenger's M3P Machine Gun and engaged, devastating the enemy while the convoy executed a react to contact drill. All elements of the convoy began to return fire and push through the kill zone. Close air support was called in and destroyed the remaining enemy elements. If not for the vigilance of SPC Meith, the convoy may never have escaped from the kill zone.

Airspace Management — Sentinel Operations

As the brigade combat team expanded its reach in southern Afghanistan, Sentinel radar teams repositioned to provide air surveillance at a remote airfield built in July of 2004. The Sentinel's high reliability and accurate air picture provided the 2-5 Infantry commander a clear picture of operations in the battlefield's third dimension.

The battalion also deployed two separate Sentinel sections to support the division's Aviation task forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. "The Sentinel radar teams are being deployed to bases that have an increased amount of air traffic, but don't have a control tower," said CPT Schmidt. "It is an invaluable tool for unit commanders to effect local airspace command and control."

In a final note of innovation or "transformation-on-the-fly," Headquarters and Headquarters Battery embedded pseudo air defense and airspace management (ADAM) cells with 1-25 Aviation in Iraq and with Task Force Wings (the Aviation Brigade) in Afghanistan, to enhance their clarity of the air picture and assist in airspace command and control. Personnel in these cells were responsible for airspace management and airspace deconfliction, as well as serving as battle captains and battle NCOs. They also participated in the planning and execution of Task Force Wings' many humanitarian assistance missions. Their contributions greatly enhanced the effectiveness, efficiency

and safety of aviation operations in both AORs.

Aim High Soldiers have made significant contributions to mission accomplishment during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Soldiers and leaders have performed remarkably well under adverse conditions, achieving amazing results for the benefit of Iraqis and Afghans alike. The Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom deployments have been a learning experience that can't be duplicated at any training center. They demonstrate how U.S. military forces, working with coalition partners, can fight the Global War on Terrorism while laying the foundations for nation

building. They also have demonstrated the resourcefulness, flexibility, and versatility of the ADA Soldiers. Each Aim High Soldier continues to contribute to these missions and make a difference through their incredible efforts. It has been an exciting time for our unit, and there are many things still to accomplish.

...we will leave a little bit of ourselves...

We have been apart of history and have demonstrated U.S. resolve in the Global War on Terrorism. Upon our redeployment to Schofield Barracks, we will leave a little bit of ourselves and a little bit of America behind in Iraq's deserts and Afghanistan's mountains.



MAJ Mike Stevens, MAJ Mark Emmer, MAJ Edward O'Neill, CPT Bob Gambrell, CPT Winston Marbella and CPT Todd Schmidt of 1-62 ADA contributed to this article, as did SGT. Frank Magni of the U.S. Army 17th Public Affairs Detachment.

SCANNING

Hero's Welcome Home

"My little boys were there with signs, waiting for me. When we left, everybody was so amazed to see all the townspeople out there. Coming back, we didn't think there'd be anybody out there with all the snow. And there were all kinds of people and signs. It was great," he added. —SGT Dan Jackson, Battery G, 202nd ADA, Morris Daily Herald, 22 January 2005