



An Echo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, Patriot radar in position at Camp El Paso, Kuwait, in early March 2003. The power generating facility smokestacks in the background are commonly referred to as the “Scud Goalposts” in Operation Iraqi Freedom lore.

The First PAC-3 Engagement

Patriot Intercept Credited With Saving Vital Operation Iraqi Freedom Headquarters from Destruction

by Captain Joseph C. Scott

The Iraqi tactical ballistic missile attack on the Combined Forces Land Component Commander’s (CFLCC) headquarters on 20 March 2003 provided one of Operation Iraqi Freedom’s most dramatic moments. A CNN camera crew was filming inside the CFLCC tactical operation center when warning sirens announced the approach of an incoming tactical ballistic missile. The camera crew continued shooting as CFLCC personnel inside the tactical operational center, including Lieutenant General David D. McKiernan, the CFLCC commander, who has since been promoted to general, donned their protective masks.

The stakes were enormous. A direct hit on the CFLCC could have “decapitated” the command responsible for U.S. and coalition forces driving on Baghdad. However, we will never know if the inbound missile would have scored a direct hit. A Patriot Advanced Capabilities-3 (PAC-3) missile launched by my unit, Echo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, scored a direct hit on the Iraqi Ababil-100 missile just seconds away from the intended target.

The intercept, which marked the first combat target kill by a PAC-3 missile, won accolades for the Patriot system and for Air Defense Artillery. “Had it hit, American

and British commanders of the land war may well have perished. This crucial coalition headquarters could have been wiped out,” reported a Fox News journalist. “We understood perfectly that Patriot had thwarted what might have been a crippling blow.”¹

The 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command chief of staff, Colonel Charles C. Anderson, who has since been promoted to brigadier general, described the scene inside CFLCC headquarters. “The CG—I’m talking about Lieutenant General McKiernan—said ‘everybody put their mask on,’” recalled Anderson, “and they sat there, and they continued with the BUA [battle update assessment briefing]. There was so much confidence in the weapon system [Patriot] that nobody moved. Then suddenly, you heard the walls rumble, and you heard the sound of those missiles take off, and there it went, two more missiles in the air. Then you heard a loud explosion. This time pieces of metal actually fell on the roof of our headquarters. That was a high-five moment.”²

During the opening hours of Operation Iraqi Freedom, our battery, part of Task Force 2-1 ADA, was positioned just south of Camp Doha, Kuwait, providing Patriot defense for CFLCC headquarters at Camp Doha, and the I

¹“Operation Iraqi Freedom: ADA Soldiers Encounter Triumph and Tragedy on the Road to Baghdad,” *Air Defense Artillery Yearbook 2003*, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery School, Fort Bliss, Texas, page 4.

²*On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Office of the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., 2004, page 98.



At left, the Echo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, command post at Camp El Paso, Kuwait. At right, from left to right, Sergeant Theron Bostick, Sergeant Donald Spicer and First Lieutenant Joseph Scott in the Echo Battery engagement control station a few days before the 20 March 2003 intercept.

Marine Expeditionary Force headquarters at Camp Commando. Our battery was organically part of the 108th ADA Brigade, but had been placed under operational control of the 11th ADA Brigade.

On 20 March 2003, Echo Battery was undergoing scheduled maintenance downtime when we received word on the net that a missile was inbound from Iraq. At 1030Z the air and missile defense work station (AMDWS) had picked up an Iraqi launch of an Ababil-100 missile from just south of Al Basrah. Indications showed Camp Commando and Camp Doha as the intended targets.³

My crew of outstanding noncommissioned officers instantly leapt into action. My tactical control assistant, Sergeant Theron Bostick, who has since been promoted to staff sergeant, booted up the operational software and our communications operator, Sergeant Donald Spicer, informed the battery that a missile had been fired. The launcher crew hurried downrange to bring the launchers into ready-to-fire status, and the rest of the unit donned their chemical protective gear and headed for the bunkers. However, this inbound missile's target was the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) tactical assembly area at Camp Thunder, which was defended by Delta Battery, 5th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery. Delta Battery unleashed a salvo of three Patriot guidance-enhanced missiles, scoring a direct hit.

A reporter, who was on the scene, wrote that the soldiers of the 159th Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), gave the Patriot soldiers a standing ovation.⁴ Major General David Petraeus, the division's commander, who has since been promoted to lieutenant general, later stated, "Patriot saved the 101st!"⁵

About an hour later, a second missile was fired at our defended asset. When our radar picked up the inbound

missile, it was still in boost phase and climbing. Then the system showed the track was beginning its final descent right towards Camp Doha and Camp Commando.

The tactical ballistic missile continued its descent until the Patriot system indicated that the target was eligible for engagement. Our launchers were in operational status, and in accordance with Patriot engagement doctrine, we waited a few seconds for the system to automatically engage. These few seconds seemed to stretch forever, and the system had still not engaged.

Sergeant Bostick said, "I ain't going to wait all [expletive deleted] day on this thing here," and I ordered him to engage the track manually.

Seconds later we had two missiles away from our Launcher No. 8. We tracked the outbound missiles while I hard-copied all of our system information on the track. Less than a minute later, the system indicated a probable kill, followed seconds later by the track dropping off our scope.

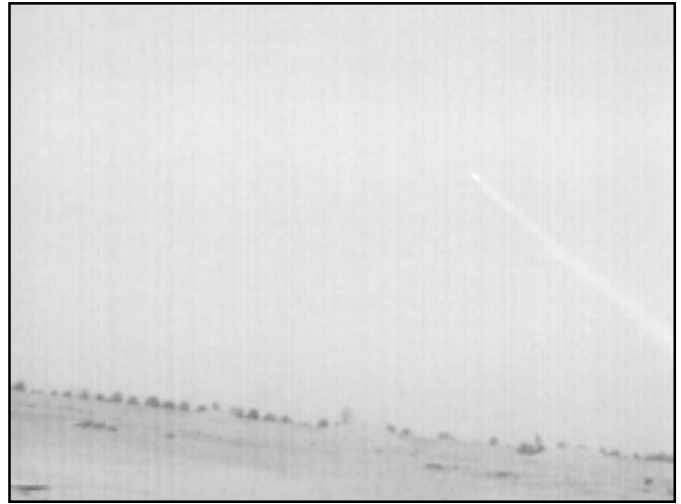
Sergeant Bostick informed the information coordination central of our confirmed kill, while Sergeant Spicer excitedly reported to our battery command post that we had destroyed the missile at an altitude of 12 kilometers, 20 kilometers away from our position. The engagement control station was temporarily filled with cheering while I tracked the debris from the engagement.

Brigadier General Howard B. Bromberg, now a major general, exercised responsibility for air and missile defense throughout the theater of operations as the commanding general of the 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command. He hurried to our site to inform us that ours had been the first combat engagement using PAC-3 missiles, and that we had destroyed an Iraqi Ababil-100. Then, we were on CNN, the end of a very busy day.

³Operation Iraqi Freedom: Theater Air and Missile Defense, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, Fort Bliss, Texas, September 2003, page 48.

⁴"Operation Iraqi Freedom: ADA Soldiers Encounter Triumph and Tragedy on the Road to Baghdad," Air Defense Artillery Yearbook 2003, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery School, Fort Bliss, Texas, page 2.

⁵On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Office of the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., 2004, page 97.



At left, the E/2-43 ADA “Big Four” (antenna mast group, radar, engagement control station and electric power plant) at Camp El Paso Kuwait. At right, the missile launched by Echo Battery streaks toward its intercept point in the historic first PAC-3 combat engagement. (Photo by Staff Sergeant Anthony Wiley)

“These guys made it happen. We fight as a unit and could not have done it without everybody there—everyone from the launcher guys going down range to put the launchers in operation, to the maintenance guys who take care of the equipment—anytime anything goes down, they’re on it—to the fire control crews,” said Captain Aaron Montgomery, our battery commander. “It also includes everyone from the signal node centers that were there to help provide additional forms of communication to higher so that we could receive early warning, to 3rd Platoon, Bravo

Company, 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, [Oklahoma Army National Guard], which provided security for our site.”⁶



Captain Joseph C. Scott, then a first lieutenant, served as a tactical control officer assigned to Echo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He now serves as assistant operations officer for the 108th Air Defense Artillery Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas.

⁶Operation Iraqi Freedom: Theater Air and Missile Defense, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, Fort Bliss, Texas, September 2003, page 48.

SCANNING

Army Deployment Excellence Award

The Army’s 2007 Deployment Excellence Award competition is now open for active, Reserve or National Guard units and installations. To participate in the Deployment Excellence Award (DEA) program, a unit is required to have executed or supported a training or contingency deployment during the competition year.

The competition year begins on 1 Dec 05 and will run through 30 Nov 06. All units and installations are encouraged to plan now to compete in this elite competition.

What’s the prize? Two representatives in each winning and runner up units in each category will receive an all expense paid four-day trip to the Washington, D.C., area to accept the unit’s award (trip includes travel, per diem, lodging, ground transportation, time for shopping, tours of the Washington area and a photo with the Army’s chief of staff).

Significant dates for 2007 competition are:

- Competition year - 1 Dec through 30 Nov - Submit packets through command channels
- 31 Jan 07 - Major commands’ nomination packets are due to the DEA evaluation board
- 5-16 Feb 07 - DEA board screens major commands’ unit packets to select semifinalists
- 1-25 Mar 07 - DEA teams visits selected semifinalists and conducts on-site observation of deployment practices
- 9 Apr 07 - Army G-4 selects and announces winners via HQDA message
- 17 May 07 - DEA awards presented at the Chief of Staff Army Combined Logistics Excellence Award Ceremony/Banquet

Deployment Excellence Award guidance and evaluation criteria can be found on the Deployment Process Modernization Office web page at <http://www.deploy.eustis.army.mil>.