

Soldiers from Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery, load cargo on their trucks in preparation for an upcoming mission at the Camp Taji Central Receiving and Shipping Point on 11 March 2006.



ADA Unit Assumes Operation Iraqi Freedom Transportation Mission

by Staff Sergeant Monika Comeaux

CAMP TAJI, IRAQ—When Air Defense Artillery Soldiers from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, were told that they were deploying to Iraq in lieu of a medium truck company and would have a transportation mission, their first reaction was, “Are they crazy?”

A year later, as Soldiers of Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery, 101st Airborne Division, were preparing to redeploy back to the United States, they viewed the mission and their time spent in Iraq in a slightly different light.

“The battery had to go through significant changes to fulfill their new mission,” said Captain Christopher D. Brough, battery commander. Their battalion shifted some personnel around and doubled the number of Soldiers in the battery. They even received some individual augmentees.

The unit received a two-week crash course on the equipment before they arrived in theater. “We took over from a transportation unit,” said Specialist William M. Horgus. He performed duties in his assigned military occupational specialty as an Avenger crew member during his first tour in Iraq, but became a truck driver for his second tour. “It was a little bumpy at the beginning, but it has been a fun deployment ever since,” he said.

The battery arrived at Camp Taji on 12 May 2005, taking possession of 180 pieces of rolling stock. During its year in Iraq, the battery carried out 150 missions, log-

ging almost three-quarters of a million miles. They transported ammunition, vehicles, and 20- and 40-foot containers. During several missions, they even moved Iraqi Army equipment. No matter what the mission, the battery was ready. “They call, we haul,” Captain Brough said proudly.

“It is all about getting the mission completed,” said Staff Sergeant Michael E. McKie-Smith, an automated logistics specialist with C/2-44 ADA, who is one of the battery’s individual augmentees. He was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for only four months when he learned he was being deployed with a unit from Fort Campbell. Initially, he was a little skeptical about becoming a truck driver with Soldiers he had never met before. But now, he feels like they are one big family.

“This is one of the best units I have ever been in,” said Staff Sergeant McKie-Smith. “First Platoon, ‘Death Dealers,’ is the cream of the crop. If I could stay with these guys [after redeployment], I would.”

The Soldiers have all learned new skills and will redeploy with a lot of memorable experiences.

“We really explored a lot of Iraq that I didn’t get to see the first time I was over here,” said Specialist Horgus.

Others, like Staff Sergeant Dustin R. Woodcock, also an Avenger crew member, learned how to work and interact with Soldiers in non-combat military occupational specialties, civilians, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen.



Specialist Kenneth J. Scarlett, an Avenger crew member with Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery, secures a cargo strap on a trailer at the Camp Taji Central Receiving and Shipping Point on 11 March 2006.

“You have to have a lot of patience,” Staff Sergeant Woodcock said. “You have to be versatile with the people you work with.”

Staff Sergeant Woodcock misses all the physical activity associated with the everyday work of an air defense artillery battery. “I miss being able to walk and ruck ... I like to be out there doing some land navigation and training with my Joes,” he said.

Captain Brough misses the upfront combat action he and his Soldiers would have experienced in their traditional role as an Avenger battery. However, he is very pleased with how well they adapted to their new mission.

“I am just filled with pride to be the commander of the Hellfighters,” he said. “It was a mission we did not ask for, that we didn’t know anything about, but in less than 120 days we came together. I wake up every day thanking God that I am a part of this team.”



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SCANNING

1-7 ADA Patriot Fire Units Down Surrogate Cruise Missile Target

A Patriot Guidance Enhanced Missile (GEM) launched by a 1st Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery, fire unit downed a surrogate cruise missile target during a second consecutive successful test flight at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. The second consecutive successful flight test of the next evolution of the Patriot Advanced Capabilities-2 (PAC-2) GEM missile was the second of four development flight tests conducted by the Patriot Lower Tier Project Office using Raytheon's newly-developed Patriot system post deployment build-6 (PDB-6) software.

During the May 2006 test, three Patriot Configuration-3 fire units in a battalion configuration using PDB-6 software engaged a surrogate cruise missile flying at a low altitude to simulate an attack on one of the Patriot fire units. A GEM-T missile with improved capabilities was successfully launched and destroyed the target.

The capabilities incorporated into PDB-6 are the next step in the evolving growth for Patriot. This update is composed of user-requested improvements, planned performance improvements, and improvements that had resulted out of lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Patriot Configuration-3 fire units, consisting of the Patriot launchers, engagement control stations, and Patriot radar systems, provided the battle management, command, control, and communications to ensure the Configuration-3 system achieved test objectives. Test data indicated that seamless communication and data transfer between the Patriot radar, engagement control station, and Patriot launcher enabled the Patriot missile to destroy the target. All tactical hardware for the missions was manned and operated by 1-7 ADA Soldiers.

“This flight test builds on the success of the previous PAC-2 test, and the outstanding results validate we're on track to ensure the Patriot system remains an affordable, premier air defense solution for our warfighters,” said Rick Yuse, Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems' Integrated Air Defense vice president. “As in the previous test, this equipment demonstrated the Configuration-3/PDB-6 system's capability to search, detect, track, classify, engage, and eliminate the threat with no-doubt mission assurance.”

Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems is the prime contractor for the Patriot system and the system integrator for the Configuration-3 system that includes the GEM missile. As the system integrator, it ensures that all Patriot system components provide the warfighter a reliable and lethal capability to defeat the threats in current and future combat environments.