



THE MULESKINNER

Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09
"No Task Too Large"



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Issue 9

Inside this Issue:

Maintenance Section	3
Liaison Officer	3
Chaplain's Corner	4
St. Baldrick's Day	5
Muleskinner "Players of the Day"	6
Muleskinner Musings	7
Muleskinners Remember	8
Muleskinner Fun	10
Muleskinner Accomplishments	11
Iraqi Culture	12

"Cyber Warriors" have important role in 35th Engineer Brigade's Iraq mission

By Lt. Col. David Lowe



Back Row (Left to Right): Sgt. Ron Smith, Lt. Col. Jim Branson, Spc. Aaron Stout; Front Row: Spc. Juanita Ybarra, Staff Sgt. Dennis Chambers, and Sgt. Jeffrey Hoffman

The 35th Engineer Brigade's communications section is responsible for the brigade's communications, telephone systems, computers and networking.

The section's organizational structure includes computer support and infrastructure, tactical communications and administration. Computer support installs, operates, and maintains three separate networks in which the computers and printers are attached.

The "Cyber Warriors" as they are sometimes called, have encountered a number of significant challenges and have focused their efforts on updating older equipment since arriving on Sept. 1 of last year.

"We have replaced hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment with the latest technologies, which gives the soldiers on the battlefield the best advantage over the enemy," said Lt. Col. Jim Branson, the section's leader. "Electronic devices do not stand up to the harsh environments of Baghdad. The extreme heat, dust, and moisture during the raining season keep us very busy with preventative maintenance."

Branson, a signal corps officer from Jefferson City, previously deployed to support relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina. Back home in Missouri, Branson is an information technology manager for the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

The Cyber Warriors' accomplishments in Baghdad include requisitioning a signal tower, extending the optic fiber on Camp Liberty, and replacing computers and printers. In one of their major projects, they combined efforts with the 769th Engineers to orchestrate the "Big Dig" where 6,600 feet of conduit and fiber was buried in the ground to provide high speed communications to both subordinate engineer battalions.

Master Sgt. Paul Booth, of Jefferson City, is the noncommissioned officer in charge of the communication section. Booth was previously deployed to Bosnia and works fulltime as a technician systems administrator.



Master Sgt. Paul Booth

“Our operations mission consists of supporting the end user in the areas of voice and data services, which include laptop support and limited file server security,” Booth said. “Our projects have ranged from establishing printer connectivity to installing a ten meter communications tower to extending our tactical operations capability.”

Sgt. Ron Smith, of St. Charles, owns his own business where he is an information systems consultant. As the Cyber Warriors’ information management specialist and telecommunications noncommissioned officer, his duties include managing the secure, non-secure and satellite telephone systems.

“My responsibilities include managing the brigade’s telephone resources and facilitating both secure video teleconferences and non-secure video teleconferences for soldiers to talk with their families,” Smith said. “Upon getting the video teleconference connection established the first soldier was a young man that got to see his wife and their new child for the first time. Seeing both young parents light up made the extended hours and long weeks all worth while.”

Spc. Juanita Ybarra, of Richland, is on her second deployment to Iraq. Ybarra works as a Department of Defense security officer at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. As the signal information system specialist, she plays a vital role in ensuring the Muleskinners are ready for any mission.

“My job here consists of maintaining our radio transmitter, Blue Force Tracker, communications security and land owner’s frequencies,” Ybarra said. “Whether we are required to maintain communications in the personnel security detail vehicles or inside the tactical operations center, we are always ready to support the mission.”

Spc. Aaron Stout, of Lebanon, is, among other things, a forklift driver for Regal Beloit, Inc. in Missouri. Now on his second Iraq deployment, Stout is the Muleskinners’ signal information system specialist.

“I recently reenlisted in the Missouri Army National Guard for another six years,” Stout said. “I assist Spc. Ybarra in maintaining radio transmitters and the Blue Force Tracker for the tactical operations center and the personnel security detail, as well as perform other duties within our section.”

Sgt. Jeffrey “JD” Hoffman, of Saint James, is the chief technology coordinator for the Licking R-VIII School District. He has two previous deployments, including one to Iraq. As the Muleskinners’ local area network specialist, he has completely rewired the headquarters building and provided expert guidance, implementing, maintaining, and troubleshooting the network infrastructure. Hoffman says he has learned a great deal about working with Microsoft Active Directory and Microsoft Exchange Server with the brigade.

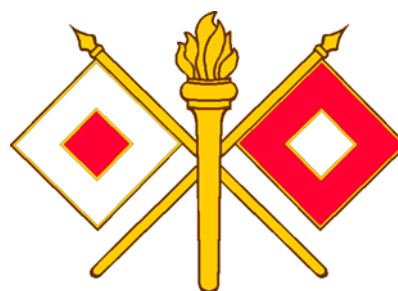
“This deployment, and my entire career in the military, has been a great experience for me and will help greatly when I return to my civilian job,” Hoffman said. “Although I will be leaving the service after this tour is over, I feel privileged to have worked alongside of and become good friends with the soldiers I have been deployed with.”

Staff Sgt. Dennis Chambers, of Nixa, works as an Active Guard Reserve field information management technician for the Missouri National Guard. On his second deployment to Iraq, Staff Sgt. Chambers is in charge of operations as the section’s assistant noncommissioned officer in charge.

As the section’s chief technician and with more than 17 years of automation experience, he processes work requests, prioritizes work loads, and manages the projects within the communications section.

“This deployment has been very easy, thanks to having one of the most knowledgeable and self-driven crews in theater working for me,” Chambers said. “Every moment in our lives is an opportunity for learning.”

The Muleskinners are thankful for the tremendous expertise and support the Cyber Warriors have provided during this deployment. Their abilities in helping the brigade maintain excellent communications have been without a doubt a key to the overall success of our mission in Baghdad.



Maintenance Section: Fixing What's Broken

By Capt. Kelly Parker

The availability of properly functioning vehicles is essential to the success of the 35th Engineer Brigade. Ensuring all HHC, 35th Engineer Brigade vehicles are maintained and operational is the mission of the 35th Engineer Brigade Maintenance Section.

The four soldiers of the Maintenance Section are humble men of few words. Rather than speak about themselves, each seem to prefer allowing the quality of their work to speak for them.



Left to Right: Spc. Mark Antoninka, Spc. Wendell Lowe, Spc. James Wilson, and Staff Sgt. Bryan Graham

Staff Sgt. Bryan Graham of Jefferson City heads up the Maintenance Section as the Motor Sergeant. When not deployed, Staff Sgt. Graham is a Federal Technician for the Missouri Army National Guard. This current deployment is the second for Staff Sgt. Graham.

"Making everybody happy and getting parts to keep everything up and running," expressed Staff Sgt. Graham, has been his biggest challenge this deployment. "It's harder over here to get parts than it is back home."

Spc. Wendell Lowe of Desloge agrees the biggest challenge is "getting parts." Spc. Lowe currently serves as a Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic and works as a diesel mechanic in his civilian occupation. Spc. Lowe states simply of his duties, "They break it...we fix it."

That sentiment was echoed by Spc. Mark Antoninka of Jefferson City. A Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic and also a Federal Technician for the Missouri Army National Guard, Spc. Antoninka stated, "If something breaks, I fix it."

Rounding out the Maintenance Section is Spc. James Wilson of Lebanon. Spc. Wilson is a Construction Equipment Repairer who has served one prior deployment. When he returns home, he will be employed as a Federal Technician for the Missouri Army National Guard. Commenting on his time in Iraq, Spc. Wilson said, "I've met some good people during this deployment."

Though they are modest men who lack the inclination to boast, the soldiers of the Maintenance Section have every right to be boastful about the great work they have been doing to ensure mission success. The Muleskinners thank the Maintenance Section for keeping our vehicles and missions rolling.

Coordinating to Ensure Soldiers Arrive in Iraq

By Capt. Kelly Parker



Second Lt. Christa Nieland

Movement of fresh troops into the Iraq theater of operations is essential to the continuing mission of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Coordination of these troops is the job of each unit's Liaison Officer (LNO). The 35th Engineer Brigade LNO is Second Lt. Christa Nieland of Saint Robert.

Second Lt. Nieland has been employed in an Active Duty, Special Work status and has completed one prior deployment to Bosnia. Serving at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Second Lt. Nieland works to ensure replacement Soldiers and those deploying later than their parent unit are properly processed through Kuwait to fill their respective slots within the 35th Engineer Brigade.

"Coordination and keeping communication lines steady between the different offices to ensure the soldiers have the proper equipment and training prior to moving up north," has been a difficult challenge, said Second Lt. Nieland. "This aspect of my deployment has been a great learning experience, giving me a taste of all the challenges involved in moving soldiers from one location to another."

Like all Muleskinners, Second Lt. Nieland is looking forward to going home. She commented, "I'm ready to receive and send our replacements up north." The Muleskinners stand ready to greet and train the 926th Engineers to begin the process of going home. We thank Second Lt. Nieland for her great work to ensure this process proceeds without delay.

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Gary D. Gilmore

In previous issues of the Muleskinner it's been my intent to share some "tried and true" methods of keeping family relationships strong while separated. This concept of "**Long Distance Relationships**" (or LDR's) is fairly new in the business world (where one partner will take a job in one city but not move the family!) but it's "old hat" in the military (even if its been new to us!).

But this article may contain the most important information yet!

And here's why: "**If we're not careful, we can get blindsided by reunion!**" That may sound crazy at first glance, but it's very true. In all our excitement about coming home and getting back together, it is possible to set ourselves up for some serious issues. You've heard it before, "If you fail to plan... you plan to fail!"

Here's the danger: It's easy to look at reunion and reintegration as an event rather than a process! But **a process it is... made up of many events!** The welcome home ceremony is just the first! But other events that follow include:

"Making space again" for another person back in the day to day routines of the family.

Renegotiating responsibilities-- everything from who pays the bills or fills the gas tank to who takes out the trash.

Re-establishing relationships and deepening levels of communication with partners and children.

Merging together our sets of "stories" about what each member of the family accomplished during the past year-- and moving ahead to one shared story again!

And there are many more!

Here's how to succeed in the Reunion Process!

Start talking NOW about your expectations.

Open up a conversation about what you'd like to do when your soldier arrives at home. Agree on a basic expectation that is **SHARED** and **MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL**.

Build some balance into your plans. It's natural to want to "catch up" with family, friends and activities... but you can't be gone all the time and you don't want to spend your way into troubles by celebrating! Take a step back and make sure there's "couple-time," "parent-time," "friend-time" and "down-time" built into your plans.

Plan on negotiating shared agreements.

You will bump into somebody's expectation that is truly important to them, as they will bump into yours! But by taking the time to understand the issues and appreciate the different perspectives you can decide what is best for "US!"

One idea I recommend is to write down a basic plan-- use a calendar or a notepad or whatever works for you. But write down not only **WHAT** you'd like to do during the first month home, but **HOW** you'd like to see it done. It's not enough to say, "I'd like to see my friends." Go a step further and say, "I'd be happy to go out to dinner with two couples." That's very different from your partners' intention to throw a surprise tailgate party before a Cardinals game!

Many of us got a "taste" of reunion and reintegration on our R&R. And about the time everybody got back into the routine, it was time to return to duty! Many of those same issues will be there, but this time the process will have a very different focus and be ongoing. Good communication and flexibility are tools that will make these days sweet!

Don't be afraid of reunion, but **DO** set the conditions for success right now! I wish you all the best!



Muleskinners Participate in St. Baldrick's Day Festivities to Raise Money For Cancer Research



Muleskinner "Players of the Day"



Spc. Jeff Meyer shows off his certificate after being recognized as "Player of the Day" on March 13, 2008. Spc. Meyer was presented "The Player of the Day" award for his outstanding work in the 35th Engineer Brigade Tactical Operations Center.

Spc. Peter Wansing, pictured right with Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, Commander of the 4th Infantry Division, was "The Player of the Day" on February 19, 2008. He was awarded the Player of the Day for volunteering his carpentry skills to improve the 35th Engineer Brigade MWR Tent.



Congratulations to Staff Sgt. Anthony Goth for receiving the "Player of the Day" Award for his efforts in support of Task Force Iron Claw. Brig. Gen. Michael Pace awarded Staff Sgt. Goth with a Certificate of Appreciation for being chosen as 4th Infantry Division "Player of the Day."

Spc. Jonathan McNeil was awarded the "Player of the Day" award from Maj. Gen. Jeff Hammond for his outstanding work in the HHC supply room. He is pictured here with Brig. Gen. Pace receiving a Certificate of Appreciation.



Muleskinner Musings



Maj. Scott Zimmerman attempts to convince a Military Police Officer that a whitetail deer suddenly jumped from the brush and attacked the rear quarter panel of the Supply Section truck. The last thing he was reported to say as he was taken away was, "Are handcuffs really necessary?"



Staff Sgt. Bryan Graham (Top Left) and Spc. Mark Antonnika (left) give a new meaning to the phrase "Dead tired." The two fell asleep on the road outside of the barracks at Ft. McCoy after a hard day of training in the field. Luckily, there was no traffic through this area.

While out in the field at Ft. McCoy, Maj. Jay "The Hulk" Gann told a 1st Army trainer, "Don't make me mad. You won't like me when I'm mad!" Unfortunately, the 1st Army trainer was unable to keep the "Hulk" happy and was forced to dodge the flying barrier when Maj. Gann "Hulked Out."



In Honor of our Fallen Heroes



Sept. 27, 1969—Mar. 30, 2008

Sergeant Terrell Wayne Gilmore was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on 27 September 1969. He graduated in 1988 from Glen Oaks High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Sergeant Gilmore joined the military on 17 June 1988 and attended the Subsistence Supply Course in 1988. He served two tours in USAREUR from 20 March 1990 thru December 14 1990 and 8 May 1991 through 9 December 1991. He also served in Operation Desert Storm from 15 December 1990 thru 7 May 1991. Sergeant Gilmore was assigned to the 769th Engineer Battalion, Louisiana Army National Guard (LAARNG) on 17 June 2002 where he was assigned to the Forward Support Company as a heavy transport operator.

During Sergeant Gilmore's deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, he drove more than 1,000 miles on dangerous routes throughout the Multi-National Division—Baghdad area of operations. Sergeant Gilmore's decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Action Badge, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal w/ Bronze Service Star, Iraqi Campaign Medal, Global War on Terror Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" device, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Southwest Asia Service Medal w/ 3rd Bronze Service Star, Kuwait Liberation Medal, Army Lapel Button, Louisiana Emergency Service Ribbon, Louisiana General Excellence Ribbon, and the Louisiana Longevity Ribbon.



Sergeant Gilmore is survived by his wife, Billy J. Gilmore; daughter, Kacey T. Gilmore; son, Terrell W. Gilmore Jr.; and his parents Truman Gilmore and Nancy Lawson.



In Honor of our Fallen Heroes



Nov. 16, 1984—Apr. 6, 2008

Staff Sergeant Jeremiah Emmanuel McNeal was born on November 16, 1984 in Norfolk, Virginia. He earned his high school diploma from Booker T. Washington High School and enlisted in the Virginia National Guard on August 22, 2002. He attended Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Upon completion of his training, he was awarded the Primary Military Occupational Specialty of 21B and assigned to Charlie Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, at West Point, Virginia. During his time with the 276th, Staff Sergeant McNeal was ordered to Active Duty on December 18, 2003 and deployed in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2004 to 2005, serving as a Combat Engineer. In 2006, he was reassigned to the 237th Engineer Company from West Point, Virginia where he served as a Team Leader for a Combat Engineer section. He attended the Warrior Leader Course the same year and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant on May 1, 2006. Staff Sergeant McNeal was ordered to active duty with the 237th on June 8, 2007 and deployed again in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Staff Sergeant McNeal's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal w/ "M" device, the Combat Action Badge, and the Drivers Badge (Wheeled Vehicle).

Staff Sergeant McNeal's contributions to his unit and platoon exceeded those expected of his position, his time in service and his superiors. He was a model of selfless service, a stalwart family man and outstanding Soldier. He was a very spiritual man. He embraced his faith and lived his life in Christ's image. His faith kept him and his Soldiers together and they were able to face any challenges that came their way. He was dedicated to taking care of Soldiers whether or not they fell in his direct line of supervision. There was nothing Staff Sergeant McNeal would not do for the health and welfare of the Soldiers in his unit. He will be remembered by his platoon as a mentor and brother who emulated every aspect of the Army values.

Staff Sergeant Jeremiah McNeal is survived by his wife Nikita and his son Jordien Elijah McNeal (4), who reside in Norfolk, Virginia, his father Malcolm McNeal of Fayetteville, North Carolina and mother Pamela Gaynor who also resides in Norfolk, Virginia.



Muleskinner Fun



Sgt. 1st Class Shelby Morrow does his best to drive the ball across Z Lake, but it always seems to fall short

Master Sgt. Roger Morff and Staff Sgt. Lisa Linthicum serve "near beer" as part of the St. Patrick's Day festivities at the DeFluery Dining Facility



Lt. Col. Bobby Jones plays "Ol' Susanna" on the Harmonica for anyone who will listen or has spare change

Muleskinners Accomplishments



Staff Sgt. Lisa Linthicum and Sgt. Sean Bonney, were confirmed in the Catholic Church after taking classes given to them by their sponsor, First Sgt. Patrick Stephens. They were confirmed on Veteran's Day and also received their first communion together the same day.



Spc. Mario Campa was promoted to Sgt. on March 20, 2008. Chief Warrant Officer Three Steve Markway pins on Sgt Campa's new rank.



Brig. Gen. Michael Pace congratulates Spc. Travis Earley upon his reenlistment for another three years. Congratulations Spc. Earley!!



These 769th Engineers were awarded impact Bronze Star Medals by Maj. Gen. Jeff Hammond (center) on April 12 for their extraordinary efforts and courage in construction of a sniper screen at Joint Security Station Ur.

Iraqi Culture: Flag of Iraq



The flag of Iraq has had five different designs (the 2004 change was to simply change the text to the traditional stylized Kufic script) since Iraq was established in 1921. The current flag was adopted on January 22, 2008 for a one year period and is intended to be an interim measure until a permanent solution to the flag issue is found. Note that, as with other flags inscribed with Arabic script — in this case *Allahu Akbar* ("God is great") — the hoist is to the right of the front of the flag.

PREVIOUS IRAQI FLAGS:



2004-2008



1991-2004



1963-1991



1959-1963



1921-1959

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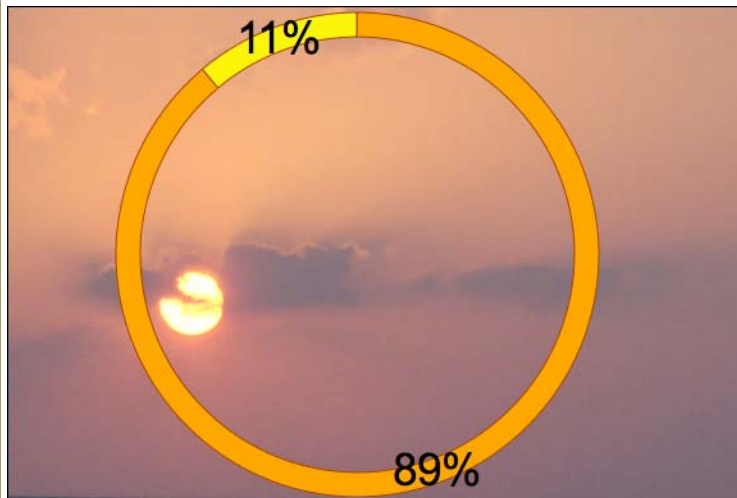
"THE MULESKINNER" is a publication focused on the Soldiers of the 35th Engineer Brigade (a.k.a. Muleskinners) and its engineer mission while deployed to Iraq in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The purpose of this publication is to keep our loved ones and friends at home informed about the Muleskinners in a combat environment. THE MULESKINNER will be produced exclusively by Muleskinner Soldiers to ensure accurate reporting and authentic information.

"THE MULESKINNER" is organized and edited by the Muleskinner's Command Judge Advocate, LTC David Lowe, and his cohort in crime, fellow Judge Advocate, CPT Kelly Parker. Paralegal SGT Jake Boswell provides technical assistance by overseeing the layout and design. It is our genuine desire to provide timely, insightful, and entertaining information to our readers.

Baghdad Weather for the Week of April 14, 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						
Hi: 93 Low: 76	Hi: 100 Low: 78	Hi: 97 Low: 74	Hi: 90 Low: 63	Hi: 90 Low: 67	Hi: 95 Low: 70	Hi: 98 Low: 71

Deployment Countdown



The Muleskinners have completed 89 percent of their deployment. We're anxiously awaiting our replacements (926th Engineer Brigade) from Montgomery, Alabama!!

March Madness Bragging Rights

Congratulations Spc. Jamie Bax for winning the "just for fun" NCAA Men's Basketball bracket tournament!!

Accumulated Points		Most Wins	
1	BAX, JAMIE P.	1	BAX, JAMIE P.
2	CHAPPELL, RICHARD	2	ZIMMERMAN, THOMAS S
3	ZIMMERMAN, THOMAS S	3	CHAPPELL, RICHARD
4	BOSWELL, JAKE W	4	HARDING, RAY D
5	HARDING, RAY D	5	BOSWELL, JAKE W
6	PASSINI, MITCHELL G	6	CRANE, JEFFREY L.
7	CRANE, JEFFREY L.	7	LOWE, DAVID M
8	PIERCE, WILL E	8	RICHARDS, JAMES C.
9	MORROW, SHELBY W.	9	PASSINI, MITCHELL G
10	RICHARDS, JAMES C.	10	KATTICH, ROBERT A.
11	LOWE, DAVID M	11	MICKAN, CHRISTOPHER
12	KATTICH, ROBERT A.	12	MORROW, SHELBY W.
13	MICKAN, CHRISTOPHER	13	PIERCE, WILL E
14	SCHILL, CHRISTOPHER	14	SCHILL, CHRISTOPHER
15	ADRIAN, ANTHONY H	15	ADRIAN, ANTHONY H

"FREEDOM ISN'T FREE"