



THE MULESKINNER

"No Task Too Large"



13 Dec 07
Issue 5

Changing Times in Iraq

By LTC David Lowe

The Muleskinners of the Missouri National Guard's 35th Engineer Brigade are making significant strides and are now at the mid-way point of their deployment.

The mission in Iraq continues to evolve for coalition forces. It is now clear the "surge" of U.S. forces has had a positive impact on security and stability in Iraq for both the military and civilians.

A tribal initiative by the U.S. military in Iraq has generated around 60,000 volunteer local fighters - 12,000 of those in Baghdad alone - to police their own neighborhoods. These volunteers, including tribes and former Sunni insurgents, have also made a tremendous difference. Despite a government dominated by Shiites, most of these neighborhood watch-style groups are made up of Sunnis who are tired of the senseless violence carried out by the al-Qaida insurgency.

Working under the Iraqi military, the volunteer militiamen helping patrol the Baghdad area are expected to grow to 45,000 by next year. As a result of these initiatives, as well as the increased effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces, the violence in Iraq has decreased 60 percent

in the past six months to the lowest level in two years.

The decrease in violence has led to unprecedented numbers of Iraqis returning to their homes from foreign countries. Additionally schools, businesses, and markets are being reopened, and people of all ages returning to the streets of Baghdad. The citizens of Baghdad are elated to return to a more normal lifestyle.

The U.S. military is now focusing more on restoring public services than when it was primarily fighting the al-Qaida insurgents. Many U.S. Army units and their Soldiers are transitioning to work with the civilian population by helping restore essential services such as water, electricity and sewage.

As this progress continues, the need for engineer units and their specific skills will be in even greater demand. In the midst of these changes, the 35th Engineer Brigade finds itself in the unique position of being able to provide essential services at a crucial time in this war.

This month, the MULESKINNER continues its tradition of focusing on different sections within the brigade by taking a close look at the S3 or Operations Section.

S3 Section: The 35th Engineer Brigade Tactical Operations Center

By LTC David Lowe

The Tactical Operation Center (TOC) is the tactical and operational hub of the brigade. In accordance with the Brigade Commander's intent, all tactical orders, guidance, decision-making, battle tracking, and operational reporting are conducted by the Soldiers in the S3 (Operations) Section.

The Operations Section is the staff proponent for all taskings and publication of operations orders. An operations order (OPORD) is a written or verbal order that details the five W's of a mission: who, what, where, when, and why.



LTC John Oberkirsch



SGM Chad Craft



**Front: MAJ Paul Tague; MAJ Chris Mickan
Back: MAJ David Goodwin; LTC Andy Rogers**

“We chose the title ‘Build and Protect’ for our OPORD because it best describes what the Engineers attached to Multi-National Division – Baghdad (MND-B) do on a daily basis,” explained the head of the Operations Section, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) John Oberkirsch. “Our two battalions are doing just that - the 769th Engineer Battalion is ‘building’ through construction of coalition outposts, street repairs, and improvements to existing facilities, while the 107th Engineer Battalion is ‘protecting’ the Soldiers of the MND-B by going out every day to find roadside bombs and render them harmless.”

The Operations Section is comprised of 21 Soldiers ranging in rank from Specialist to Lieutenant Colonel, and also includes Lieutenant Commander Michael Smith, a US Navy Electronic Warfare Officer. The section is led by LTC Oberkirsch and Sergeant Major (SGM) Chad Craft.

“I couldn’t ask for a better team of Soldiers,” remarked SGM Craft. “We have people from all walks of life and different skill sets - we have an auto body worker, a prison guard, a police detective and published author, two National Guard recruiters, a college student, a geospatial analyst, an elementary principal, a military instructor from Fort Leavenworth, several Active Guard Reservists (full-time Soldiers), a computer guru, etc... and they all have gelled together to accomplish the mission.”

The Operations Section runs 24 hours a day and makes decisions that have a direct impact on the Soldiers who are fighting this war. For example, when the Radio Transmitter Operator takes a call about incoming mortars or rockets at a mission site, he must accurately record and disseminate that information. In a different situation, the same Soldier is responsible to use a secure phone to speak with a Brigade Combat Team Operations Officer about a roadside bomb that one of our route clearance teams have

located. Based upon the operational tempo, it is not uncommon to see Soldiers working 15 hour days in the TOC.

“The pace of the battle requires these Soldiers to be sharp, and to operate with tremendous autonomy,” explained SGM Craft. “Each Soldier, regardless of rank, must be proficient and competent, and they’ve got to be able to make good, quick decisions which have a direct impact on Soldiers who are on the battlefield.”

The TOC is responsible for planning and tracking various missions from route clearance (roadside bomb hunters), construction, specialized search dogs, and ground penetrating radar. In order to accomplish these tasks, the Operations Section is subdivided into two groups – Plans and Operations.

Plans - A Look into Future Operations

The Plans Section runs two 12-hour shifts and is responsible for receiving and planning future missions. LTC Andrew Rogers, an elementary school principal in Jackson, heads up Plans. His team includes Major (MAJ) David Goodwin, a police detective at Washington University, MAJ Jay Gann, a Warehouse Supervisor for A.W.G. Foods in Springfield, and MAJ Paul Tague, the Day Senior Computer Operator for Enterprise Rent A Car in St. Louis.

“We’ve cut nearly 100 fragmentary orders to date,” explained MAJ David Goodwin, the Muleskinner’s Assistant Plans Officer. “We’ve planned everything from the new construction of coalition outposts to the simple task of installing a water heater to make Soldiers’ lives a little better.”

LTC Rogers added, “You know, it’s humbling to be a part of the turning point of this war. Things are better, and we are a major part of that change.”

Operations –Tracking of Construction and Security Missions

The Muleskinners’ Operations Officer is MAJ Chris Mickan, an Active Guard Reserve Soldier who serves full-time in the same position at the brigade on Fort Leonard Wood. As the Operations Officer, MAJ Mickan is responsible for taking plans provided by the Plans Section and putting them into action. Assisting MAJ Mickan is the newest member of the Operations Section, SFC Patrick Wilkinson.

“Our daily operations include coordinating the details of the construction missions between the Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) throughout Baghdad and our subordinate battalions”, MAJ Mickan said. “Our subordinate battalions perform the critical missions of route clearance, route sanitation, route crater repair, barrier emplacement

for force protection, and living area improvements for the BCTs who live within the Baghdad area.”

The Operations Section coordinates all missions “outside the wire” whether they are by air movement or ground assault convoys. Operations track each one of the brigade’s 1,200 Soldiers when they head out on a mission and, on a moments notice, must be prepared to accurately report the status of a current mission. They also maintain tactical control of the Muleskinner’s Personnel Security Detachment who is responsible to transport and provide security for the brigade’s leadership in and around Baghdad.



SFC Jared Pruitt



MAJ Jay Gann



SFC Patrick Wilkinson



LTCDR Michael Smith

The remaining battle staff is comprised of eight non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and two junior enlisted Soldiers. While they are often involved in much of the preparation and coordination in the hours leading up to a mission, their real work begins when the mission actually begins. These Soldiers are responsible for maintaining communications with the missioned units from start to finish. They pass along “real time” intelligence as it is received through radio transmissions and other means. If necessary, these Soldiers must be prepared to call in air weapons teams and medical evacuations.

Specialist (SPC) Jeff Meyer, who has five family members in the Missouri National Guard, serves as a Radio Transmitter Operator in the TOC. He also serves as an alternate on the Brigade’s PSD team. “I’ve



enjoyed this assignment,” said SPC Meyer. “I get to see the big picture. As a part of the Operations Section, I get to see how everything comes together.”

A Day in the Life of a Radio Transmitter Operator (RTO)

At age 19, SPC Johnathan Etheridge is the youngest Muleskinner. He gets up at 4:30 a.m. and is at the gym by 5:00 a.m. After working out and eating breakfast, SPC Etheridge arrives at work at 6:45 a.m. where he receives a shift change briefing.

“The shift change briefing is comprised of finding out what has occurred in the previous two shifts like whether or not we had any IEDs, accidents, or anything else that might have an effect on operations such as safety, intelligence updates, and review the communication logs,” explained SPC Etheridge. “My work consists of tracking troops and compiling and forwarding various reports from our higher headquarters, adjacent units, and subordinate battalions. I monitor, receive, and transmit messages over the secure radio, Blue Force Tracker, secret computer, Command Post of the Future (CPOF) computer, and secure telephone.”

About 2:45 p.m., SPC Etheridge gives a shift change briefing and then goes to his trailer where he relaxes and uses the internet to instant message his girlfriend.

A Day in the Life of a Shift Leader

The Tactical Operations Center battle NCOs operate 24 hours each day and run a three-shift schedule. The morning shift consists of MSG Brian Graves, SSG Robert Farnsworth, and SPC Johnathan Etheridge. The evening shift consists of SFC Dewayne Griffin, SFC Paul Frey, and SPC Jeff Meyer. The night shift consists of SFC Jared Pruitt, SFC Marcus Keeling, and SFC Randy Mayfield.

MAJ Tague, who is the Night Battle Major, commented, “I have seen the night shift staff develop into a highly professional team capable of handling all situations that develop in the brigade’s area of operations.”



MSG Brian Graves; SSG Robert Farnsworth; SPC Johnathan Etheridge

Combat Engineers Help Keep Roads Clear of Roadside Bombs

By LTC David Lowe

MSG Graves gets up about 6:30 a.m. and goes to work just in time for the shift change at 7:00 a.m. MSG Graves supervises Etheridge and SSG Farnsworth who do most of the technical work. "The first priority of work is to get situational awareness of past, current, and upcoming missions," stated MSG Graves. "After that we make sure that all reports have been finalized and sent to the appropriate people. Throughout the day, we continue to monitor ongoing missions and work with the subordinate battalions on any issues that may arise."

The day shift ends at 3:00 p.m. by updating all the reports and handing off any related taskers to the second shift. "After my shift ends, I try to call home and talk to my wife before she goes to work," MSG Graves said. "I then leave and head to the gym for a workout and after that I eat dinner and go back to my room to watch TV or a movie."

Muleskinners Making a Difference

The Muleskinners find themselves at the mid-way point of their deployment as they play a key role in the positive developments in Iraq. "The Engineers in our subordinate battalions are where the rubber meets the road - they put their lives on the line every day and some have paid the ultimate price to preserve freedom," LTC Oberkirsch added. "They are the true heroes that have enabled the BCTs to bring improved security to the Iraqi people." There's no doubt the Soldiers in the Operations Section are doing an extraordinary job serving and supporting the troops on the ground and are an integral part of the Muleskinners' success.



SSG Tony Goth; CPT Brian Sayer; SGT Marvin Locklear; MSG Richard Chappell

Since 2003, roadside bombs have posed a dire threat to coalition forces in Iraq. Now, the Missouri National Guard's 35th Engineer Brigade is leading the way in combating them.

Route clearance is an extremely important part of the war effort being waged by U.S. forces in Iraq and the Muleskinners play a key role in that fight. As a subordinate battalion of the 35th Engineer Brigade, the combat engineers from the 107th Engineer Battalion are on the job every day keeping the highways and back roads clear of roadside bombs. These Soldiers roll out from Camp Liberty every day on their route clearance missions in their specially designed tactical vehicles and drive at slow speeds for hours looking closely for roadside bombs.

Captain (CPT) Brian Sayer, a middle school math teacher in Laquey, heads Task Force Iron Claw Academy. His team includes Master Sergeant (MSG) Richard Chappell from Farmington, Staff Sergeant (SSG) Tony Goth from Harrisonville, Sergeant (SGT) Melvin Locklear of Lumberton, NC, and SGT Christopher Dunshee of Parkton, NC. This Task Force is responsible for oversight and planning of the Muleskinners' route clearance missions in the Baghdad area of operations. The route clearance mission is designed to locate and destroy roadside bombs, also known as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

"MSG Chappell is the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) and SGT Marvin Locklear is the primary instructor of the Task Force Iron Claw Academy where we train Soldiers who'll be doing the route clearance mission in Baghdad," said CPT Sayer. "SSG Goth and I work the nuts

Left: SFC Randy Mayfield



Right: SFC Paul Frey



Left: SFC Marcus Keeling



Right: SFC Dewayne Griffin



and bolts of the mission. We coordinate with all the Brigade Combat Teams, and do our best to assist their units in keeping the roads free of IEDs.”

Task Force Iron Claw

Task Force Iron Claw (TFIC) is the name for all route clearance efforts that take place throughout Iraq. TFIC is the acronym for the organization in charge of route clearance in the Baghdad area of operations.

“The Muleskinners’ job begins with receiving guidance from 1st Cavalry Division (soon to be 4th Infantry Division) who sends a prioritization schedule in which they define priorities for route clearance efforts for the next week or two,” explained CPT Sayer. “After analyzing the division’s priorities, we hold a meeting of key personnel including the Operations Officers and Intelligence Officers within the brigade. At this meeting, we go over the threat for the Baghdad area and any targets we see as an emerging threat or targets which have gone inactive.” This data is used to determine how many and where the route clearance missions are going to be directed within Baghdad for the next week. CPT Sayer added, “We also talk about what times we need to be in certain areas so we can try to find the IEDs either while or shortly after they are emplaced.”

There is also a great deal of coordination with the other route clearance teams throughout Baghdad and the surrounding area. “There are currently seven Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) or ‘Land-Owners’ which fall under 1st Cavalry Division,” CPT Sayer said. “All but one of these BCTs has their own route clearance teams and the TFIC works with these BCTs to ensure their route clearance efforts are synchronized with the 35th Engineer Brigade. We use special computers called ‘Command Post of the Future’ that have three screens so we can all look at the same presentation.” This specialized computer system allows battle planners in four different locations to hold a meeting that would not otherwise be possible.

Although route clearance is a dangerous mission, safety of the route clearance teams is a top priority. There are Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, which are remote control airplanes with cameras on them, and Attack Aviation Helicopters used to support many of the route clearance missions.

Those missions are carried out by soldiers from the 107th Engineer Battalion. These IED hunters, as they’re called, scour the streets of Iraq in specially designed vehicles at speeds averaging six to 12 miles per hour. Concrete blocks, trash, and dead animals are just some

of the objects that earn the IED hunters’ attention.

The IED hunters travel in heavily armored vehicles including the RG-31, Husky and the Buffalo, a large vehicle with a robotic arm used to “interrogate” suspected roadside bombs.

Task Force Iron Claw Academy

Task Force Iron Claw Academy (TFICA) is the school where Soldiers assigned to route clearance teams are taught the tactics, techniques, and procedures of how to hunt IEDs. “The school begins with five days of classroom instruction, beginning with an introduction to the special route clearance vehicles and covering everything from vehicle formations, movements, and hopefully a never-used technique of casualty evacuation,” stated CPT Sayer. “We have many guest instructors who come to teach the IED Hunters such as those specializing in collecting evidence; a Naval Officer who teaches us about electronic warfare and countermeasures; and even our own JAG Officer, LTC Lowe, who teaches the Soldiers Rules of Engagement and Law of Armed Conflict.”

The NCOIC of TFICA, MSG Richard Chappell, relies on his experience received in two prior deployments involving route clearance in Iraq. “Since assuming the duties as senior instructor on September 1st, more than 600 coalition forces and civilians have been trained at TFICA,” MSG Chappell said. “Route clearance is a tedious job that requires well-trained Soldiers to locate IEDs, which saves the lives of other people.”

Changes in the environment encountered in Iraq provide a continuing challenge for route clearance Soldiers. “The enemies’ tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) are constantly changing, which requires us to develop new countermeasures for coalition forces,” explained TFICA’s primary instructor, SGT Locklear. “As we educate and train the Soldiers who graduate from TFICA, their survivability rate greatly increases as they go on route clearance missions.”

After four days of classroom instruction, the Soldiers put on their body armor and load up in the route clearance vehicles. The instructors conduct a training scenario where one of the Soldiers is identified as a casualty who the students are required to evacuate from a route clearance vehicle. “It doesn’t sound difficult until you attempt to haul a Soldier who weighs 200 pounds out the back door of the vehicle with his body armor on,” commented CPT Sayer. “With all of his protective gear, that same Soldier can weigh close to 300 pounds when he is unconscious.” The students then move onto the IED training lane which has many hidden training IEDs. Some of the IEDs are easy to identify while others are almost impossible. This is the final requirement to graduate from TFICA.

Some of the Soldiers then perform actual route clearance missions by riding along with route clearance teams. "If a Soldier completes Task Force Iron Claw Academy and goes on five route clearance missions, he is considered an IED hunter by his peers," added CPT Sayer. These IED hunters perform a critical mission that save lives throughout Iraq. TFIC and TFICA are an integral part of the overall efforts by the Muleskinners to provide protection and security for coalition forces and civilians in Iraq.

Medical Section: Taking Care of Soldiers

By CPT Kelly Parker

From treating the common cold to severe battlefield injuries, the Muleskinner Medical Section stands ready to meet Soldiers' needs. The 35th Engineer Brigade Medical Section provides the primary medical and preventative care for Soldiers within the 35th Engineer Brigade. In addition, the Section offers medical coverage at the Wittmer Troop Medical Command (TMC), supports the medical needs of PSD missions "outside the wire," offers Combat Lifesaver (CLS) training, and serves as the medical records custodian.

CPT Jeffrey Blue of West Plains leads the Medical Section. CPT Blue is a licensed Physician Assistant and has a great deal of experience in rural healthcare. He plans to transition back to emergency medicine following this deployment. With over 20 years of military experience and one prior deployment to Kuwait in 2005-2006, CPT Blue brings a wealth of practical experience to the Medical Section.

According to CPT Blue, "Clinical care of Soldiers and support personnel, training and supervising medics in clinical and field medicine, and providing medical support for the PSD on their missions 'outside the wire,'" are his primary duties. "I've seen progress and professional performance by the medics," CPT Blue said. "They have a strong willingness to learn."

The Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of the Medical Section is SSG Robert Kattich of Rolla. SSG Kattich has 12 years of military experience and one prior deployment to Iraq in 2003-2004. "I'm in charge of the medics," SSG Kattich said. "I assign the TMC duties and PSD missions for all of us medics. I'm also in charge of the immunization program."



SPC Nicholas Zamniak of Cassville serves as a medic in the Medical Section. SPC Zamniak has over 10 years of active duty and two years National Guard experience. He has one prior deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In addition to his regular medical duties, SPC Zamniak says, "I help CPT Blue write FRAGOs [military operations orders] and I do most of the computer work for the office."

Also serving as a medic is SPC Cassandra Leach of St. James. SPC Leach has over two years of military experience. According to SPC Leach, in addition to her regular medical duties, she also does "the medical supply" duties. SPC Leach said, "medical supply has been a challenge because you have to start from scratch...and the reports have been a challenge as well."

Although each member of the Medical Section shares in providing medical services, they each have their own area of responsibility. Through effective leadership and the professionalism of everyone in the section, the Medical Section is critical to the overall accomplishment of the military mission.

Considering the varied duties of his section, CPT Blue aptly boiled down the Medical Section mission when he said, "our first priority in the Medical Section is taking care of our Soldiers; everything else is secondary." Adding to this sentiment, SPC Leach stated, "We take care of Soldiers when they're hurting."

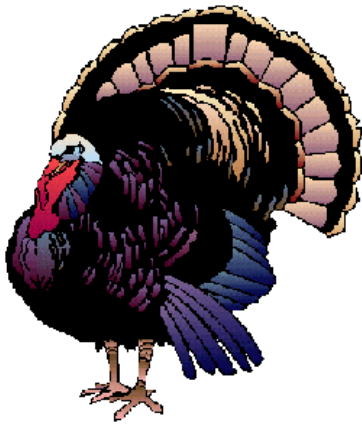
The members of the 35th Engineer Brigade can ask for nothing greater. We thank the dedicated Soldiers in the Medical Section for their professionalism, compassion, and for taking care of Soldiers.

MULESKINNER LEADERS SERVE THANKSGIVING DINNER



BG Pace, where is your paper chef's hat???

Left to Right: BG Michael Pace, SGM Will Pierce, LTC David Lowe, LTC James Branson, LTC John Akers, and MAJ Scott Zimmerman



Left to Right: LTC Bobby Jones, LTC John Oberkirsch, LTC Andy Rogers, LTC Bill Ward, and SGM Chad Craft



Left to Right: LTC (Chaplain) Gary Gilmore, CSM Ray Harding, 1LT Maureen Wells, SGM William Porter, 1SG Kyle Stephens, and LTC Greg Mason

The Hajj: A Spiritual Journey

By SGT Jake Boswell

This month is a very special month for the Islamic faith; it is the month in which tens of thousands of Muslims from all over the world will begin their Hajj. The Hajj or pilgrimage is a journey to Mecca, a holy town in Saudi Arabia, where Muslims join together in thousands at the Kaaba to pray.

This pilgrimage is the last of the five pillars which are rites that all Muslims must complete. These rites include profession of faith (Shahadah), ritual prayer five times a day (Salah), charity (Zakah), fasting (Sawm, which they fulfilled by practicing Ramadan), and the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). The Hajj is only a requirement for those who can afford to travel to Mecca.

During the Hajj there are eight individual rites that must be performed. These rituals require the pilgrim to walk or run seven times around the Kaaba (the large black stone cube in Mecca) and back and forth between the hills, Safa and Marwah, seven times. They are also required to throw stones, symbolizing the stoning of the devil, and sacrifice an animal, which is representative of Abraham sacrificing the ram in place of his son, Isaac. These rites are performed in three towns including Mecca, Mina, and Muzdalifah. This pilgrimage takes place over fourteen days and the pilgrim makes a circuit through the towns returning him to Mecca on the fourteenth day. Many times after the Hajj, pilgrims will make a special trip to Medina to visit the tomb of Mohammed and his daughter Fatimah.¹ This is but one of the fascinating traditions that makes the Islamic faith so unique.



¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/hajj>



Muleskinners enjoy a traditional Iraqi meal consisting of lamb and chicken kabobs, assorted vegetables, flatbread, and other delicious condiments.

Chaplain's Corner

By LTC (Chaplain) Gary Gilmore



It's Not What You Say, but How You Say It!

One of the key factors in Long Distance Relationships (LDR's) is the WAY you talk to your partner while you're apart. Many times we have a telephone conversation or chat online and get many things said, but walk away still feeling that something isn't quite right. Here are three suggestions that will keep your communications clear and enjoyable.

1. Share your emotions as well as information.

Experts tell us that most of communication is non-verbal, like the facial expressions, hand gestures, and nuances that accompany what is said. But if you're on the phone or looking at a computer screen during a chat, NONE of those cues are available. In fact, the largest portion of the communication process is missing-- but we just keep talking and typing! Our listener is quietly asking, "So what? How do you feel about that?"

So the biggest way to help our long-distance conversations is to deliberately "add in" some emotions and other cues to *let our partner know our feelings about what we are saying!* This is where emoticons came from (a combination of the words "emotion" and "icon" as in computer symbols or icons that express a feeling). Emoticons began as combined keystrokes that made a symbol, but now they can even be animated pictures that convey your mood!¹ And if you're still not sure how somebody feels about what was said, just ask them! Don't sign off and wonder!

2. Tell it like it is. Avoid using exaggeration or sarcasm in your conversation. If it's easy for your listener to misunderstand your PLAIN message, then it's even easier to misunderstand a subtle or clever message! Simply say, "I think that's a GREAT idea!" when you REALLY MEAN that it's a great idea-- not when you think it's the silliest thing you've ever heard of! Without those nonverbal cues (like rolling your eyes or shaking your head) your listener can easily get the wrong idea and think you really meant it! Implied meanings don't work well when you are using only one sensory method of communication. Just say what you mean and mean what you say!

3. Meta-Talk. Talk about how you talk! The word "meta" referred to a special column or post set out in the middle of an ancient Roman racetrack that told the competitors when to turn a corner.

They had to think about HOW they were racing while they were racing! The prefix "meta" also means "beyond" or "a level higher."² Meta-talk refers to talking about how you are talking!

Before you hang up or sign off take just a minute to throw out the question, "Have we spent enough time talking about the things that are important to you? Is there a different set of topics we need to discuss next time? Are we clear on what we said and what we mean by it?"³ By talking about the way you communicate (meta-talk) you'll know when to "turn the corner" in your next conversation-- and where you stand after this one!

The content of our conversations can be enhanced by paying a little extra attention to the process. And when you're talking to the people you love in a Long Distance Relationship, it's worth it!

May your conversations with loved ones— whether in person or over long distances-- be filled with clear and meaningful words that enrich your relationship!

¹ <http://smiley.smileycentral.com/>

² <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/meta>

³ Guldner, Gregory T. Long Distance Relationships: The Complete Guide. (JF Milne Publications: Corona, CA), 2006



MULESKINNER MUSINGS



Well, I guess we left him!

Upon returning from a trip to Taji in Iraq, LTC Ward exited the Blackhawk Helicopter, looked around and asked, "Has anybody seen Major Bach?" When everyone present replied that they had not seen him, LTC Ward grinned and said, "Well, I guess we left him!" MAJ Bach managed to find his way home later that day; no thanks to his leader, LTC Ward.



SPC Meyer takes his first trip "Outside the Wire"



SGM Craft can even sleep while serving Thanksgiving dinner.



MULESKINNER AWARDS AND ACOLADES



CPT Scott Zimmerman was promoted to Major in November. Congratulations MAJ Zimmerman!



SPC Jeffery Meyer reenlisted in the Missouri National Guard for six years!



SGT John Blair receives the Sapper Award which is given for outstanding service as an Engineer Soldier.



CPT Brian Sayer receives the Sapper Award for outstanding service as an Engineer Soldier.



On December 10th, LTC David Lowe earned bragging rights by catching the biggest fish in the brigade. LTC Lowe claims this “Saddam Bass” weighed six pounds, which he believed to be a “conservative estimate.” Without a scale we can’t be certain he is telling the truth.

Someone please catch a bigger fish so we don’t have to hear his big fish story any more.



SGT Larry Mills reenlisted for another six years!



BG Michael Pace



CSM Ray Harding

HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM OUR BRIGADE COMMANDER

To all the spouses, children, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, and friends of our Soldiers of the 35th Engineer Brigade currently are serving in Iraq:

Greetings!! During this holiday season, I wanted to use this venue to thank all of you for sharing your Soldiers with us. Each of the soldiers is performing valiantly here in theater and certainly accomplishing their mission in a positive manner - in a way all of you can and should be very proud! Our military and coalition forces are truly making a difference in assisting our Iraqi partners with the establishment and institution of a fledgling government.

I know the separation from loved ones can be difficult, especially during this time of the year. You should find solace, however, by knowing your soldiers are taken care of mentally, physically, and spiritually. We are extremely blessed in the 35th Engineer Brigade to have some of the finest leaders I have had the opportunity to serve with.

My sincere wish is that all of you will enjoy this Christmas and New Year the best you can under the circumstances, and that we all have a joyous reunion when we return home to our loved ones next year!!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

Michael B. Pace

Brigadier General Michael (Mike) B. Pace

HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM OUR BRIGADE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the 35th Engineer Brigade family and friends! As we approach this holiday season, we are reminded how tough it is to be away from everyone we love. We can certainly see and feel how special our loved ones and friends are, and how supportive they have been. We know that we will be fine this holiday season since we know our families and friends are there for us.

Through the Family Readiness Group, our families have bonded to show their support, not only to us, but to each other. They have produced a constant flow of love and support throughout the fall and winter with letters and packages, culminating with the stockings they sent.

Companies, organizations, and individuals too numerous to name have shown a tremendous amount of support with gifts, candy, and personal items. We have received cards, letters, and care packages from schools across the state of Missouri. We have received so many items, that we are able to pass some of these items along to Iraqi school children.

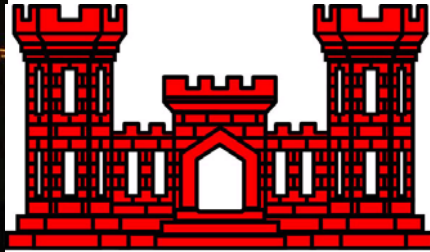
I want to thank everyone for their tremendous support and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Please be safe this holiday season. My thoughts and prayers are always with our Soldiers, their families, and all of our friends.

Merry Christmas,

Ray Harding

Command Sergeant Major Ray Harding

MULESKINNERS HOST SAPPER CALL ON NOVEMBER 30th



Photographs submitted by SSG Chambers

MULESKINNER PHOTO PAGE



SGT Sheryl Burrus

A special thanks goes out to our Company and S1 Staff who pick up and distribute mail every day. You do a tremendous service for all the Muleskinners and are sincerely appreciated!!!



SGT Reinaldo Colon-Burgos, SGT Maria Witt, and SFC Robert Gooch










BG Pace visits MSG Roger Morff and SSG Lisa Linthicum at the DeFluery Dining Facility

The Muleskinners who work at the "Goathouse" gather round the fireplace for a yuletide family photo



Baghdad Weather for the Week of December 13th, 2007

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						
Hi: 66 Low: 45	Hi: 70 Low: 48	Hi: 71 Low: 45	Hi: 72 Low: 46	Hi: 74 Low: 49	Hi: 75 Low: 54	Hi: 70 Low: 53

35th Engineer Brigade

UNIT# 43472093
APO, AE 09344

E-MAIL:

35thmuleskinner@gmail.com

MULESKINNER STAFF

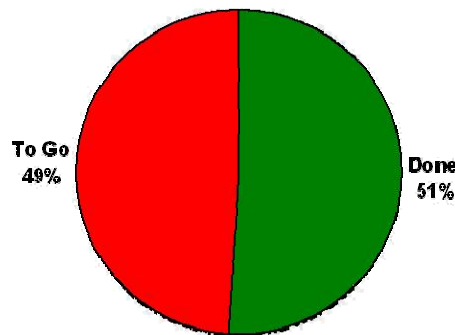
© LTC David Lowe

© CPT Kelly Parker

© SGT Jake Boswell

(Who cares about
Copyright in Baghdad ☺)

Deployment Countdown



The numbers are in
and the Muleskinners
are officially over the
hill and on the downhill
side. Hang in there –
we'll be home before
you know it!!!



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE MULESKINNER STAFF

'Twas the night before deadline, and the Muleskinner Elves,
Were finishing the Muleskinner, and trimming themselves;

A Merry Christmas greeting, they wish to send,

To all our loved ones, family and friends;

So to all who support, and who love and who pray,

We say Merry Christmas, in our Muleskinner way;

Three Muleskinner Elves, we say with much cheer,

Merry Christmas to all, and happy New Year!

"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 will lend his technical assistance by overseeing the layout and design. It is our genuine desire to provide timely, insightful, and entertaining information to our readers.