



C17 Flight to Iraq

TASK FORCE TRAILBLAZER NEWSLETTER

Vengeance: The Town Formerly Known as Badgerville



Inside this issue:

<i>Inauguration in Iraq</i>	2
<i>Chaplain's Message</i>	3
<i>Picture Gallery</i>	3-6
<i>Historical Housing</i>	7
<i>Commander's Corner</i>	8

"When you're safe at home you wish you were having an adventure; when you're having an adventure you wish you were safe at home."

- Thornton Wilder



This is the flashy front entrance to the Town of Vengeance that faces the main road that cuts through Speicher.

By 1LT Miguel Lima

Welcome to The Town of Vengeance! This is the dramatic entrance the main body

of the 65th entered within an hour after landing in Iraq. In actuality, this is only home to the HHC, 65th but it is a

common area for all Soldiers of the 65th. Included in these walls are the Containerized Housing Units (CHUs) and offices of the battalion staff and command team. In addition to the living and working space, previous engineer units have set us up with an MWR building, Layman Hall, battalion classroom, small gym, internet café and a screened patio area with a BBQ pit. Right now, it's good to be an engineer. Originally, the town was called Badgerville. I don't know exactly why it was called this but I'm assuming it had to do with the first unit to inhabit this place. We'll be the ninth unit to inhabit the "town". Originally, this was a higher headquarters for the engineers and usually housed a brigade headquarters. During 326th's deployment, 18th EN BDE moved elsewhere and 326th took over Badgerville. Soon thereafter, it was renamed the Town of Vengeance while 326th was here.

There is a story of historical significance behind the name change, though. MAJ Paul Madden, 326th S4, was able to shed some insight as to how they came to change the name
VENGEANCE continued on page 2

Vengeance: An Engineer's Home

VENGEANCE from page 1

of the town. It was from this picture of WWII 101st Airborne insignia, that the 326th's idea of Vengeance was sown. And so, here we are in the Town of Vengeance. We've already started to make it our own. C CO, 84th will be reconstructing portions of the offices to meet our battalion's configuration and mission priorities. They are also building the FSC TOC just outside from the BN HQ.

Ah, but what's in a name? For the battalion staff, Vengeance is home and at the end of the day, that's what matters.



Right: WWII 101st Airborne Insignia including 326th's found in the center on the right.
Left: The 326th's rendition of their old insignia graces the entrance to Vengeance.



Above: A panoramic view of the entrance to the Town of Vengeance. The white walls to the right of the entrance is a running tally of all the units that have occupied the Town of Vengeance and the phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

A Different Type of Inauguration



A full room of Soldiers from the 65th and 326th watch the Presidential Inauguration. Every TV in the battalion area was tuned in to the historical event.

By 1LT Miguel Lima

There is no doubt that this year is going to be different for all of us. As I watched the AFN (stands for Army Forces Network and it's unfortunately the only TV we have over here) coverage of the presidential inauguration, it was a sublime type of feeling that overtook me. Yes, it was history in the making as the first black President was sworn in as our Commander in Chief. It wasn't until they cut to other groups of folks also watching the same event that I really started to feel awestruck. Thankfully, some thoughtful producer

included a shot of Soldiers in Baghdad watching the same event as we were. It was eight o'clock at night over here. We adjourned a meeting early to allow everyone to watch it (and for anyone that really knows this battalion, that is a BIG deal). I sat with Soldiers of different ethnicities and beliefs; Soldiers from different units and ranks. Together, we watched history in a foreign land. It was really something else. I couldn't help but smile as I thought, "This is what I'll remember when someone asks me where I was when President-elect Barack Obama was sworn in as our President."

Chaplain's Message

By SPC Amanda Conway

Greetings to all from your Unit Ministry Team! After a slightly extended stay in Kuwait, we have finally made it to our destination and have begun the process of getting settled into our work here in Iraq. We have travelled as Abraham did, by faith that God would bring us to our final destination safely and that he would provide for us in the mission to which he has called us. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place...By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a

foreign land, living in tents...for he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:8-10). We have received many blessings here especially with the newly built Lahmann Hall that will serve primarily as the battalion chapel, and the wonderful introduction to the COB and our work here from Chaplain (CPT) Hill, the 326 Battalion Chaplain. We look forward to serving the battalion over this next year in all the ways that we can!

Right: Chaplain Keith Ferrell and SPC Amanda Conway, the Chaplain's Assistant, in Kuwait.



Picture Gallery



Of Vengeance

Clockwise from above: MSG Gary Montano explains the rules of COB Speicher to the main body; SGT Strietzel poses in her office; SFC Henderson pulls the last of his stuff through thick gravel; SFC Lynch and CPT Biggerstaff travel by helicopter; CPT Kubar leads the way into Town of Vengeance; while unloading bags, SGT Washington, SPC Filmore, PVT Bertling and SGT Hernandez pose for a picture; Chief Davis and some Soldiers from 65th and 326th clap as Barack Obama is sworn in as President.



2 page spread starting at top left: 1SG George with her platoon sergeants; 2LT Vassar and 1LT Etter discover reading is fundamental; a blast wall reminds us of home; CSM Morse listens to his counterpart CSM Hart; welcome sign for COB Speicher; SGT Hubbard dismounts as Buffalo vehicle drivers training ends; Soldiers from the Wolfpack listen to the welcome brief; (center) CPT Amsdell hefts a bag onto a vehicle while 1LT Coe struggles to get it up; the Workhorse officers are BA; the entire FSC, 65th Workhorse company picture...where's 2LT Bruzek?





The battalion spent this past week working hard to establish our reputation as committed and professional members of the 25th Infantry Division team. Our route clearance teams (Wolfpack and Reapers) have already surpassed the performance standards for IED's discovered in the first week on the roads! Our construction company, Charlie Rock, is currently working nine separate construction projects across the

our area of operations for three separate command elements. When I see those soldiers, they are usually covered in dirt but wear big smiles all the same. Few things are as satisfying as completing a project that directly contributes to the well being of other Soldiers. Keep your eye on the horizon and your finger on the trigger.

-MAJ Dale Snider, Battalion S-3





Clockwise from below: A pallet with 95th's duffle bags just delivered from Kuwait; a view of a "crack house" with old water heaters strewn on the "lawn"; two 95th Soldiers guard the bulk of the baggage; SSG McCarty carts all of his bags all at once as he moves into his new abode; weathering a chilly afternoon, SPC Chiu carries his belongings to his room; an intersection in the Historical Housing district boasts street signs labeled after famous generals; SFC Freitas uses his laptop to look up where each Soldier of the Wolfpack will live as others await their rooming assignments



95th Moves Into the Historical District

The 95th Engineer Company has arrived in Iraq and has occupied two blocks of the historical housing district. These houses, more affectionately known as the “Crack Houses” are indicative of typical Iraqi single family dwellings. Originally built to billet Soviet Officers and their families as part of an Iraqi-Soviet Air Force program to train MiG pilots, they now serve as US troop barracks. Each single story concrete house has a flat roof with staircase access and several different sized rooms on the ground floor. These houses billet a Sapper squad in ‘relative’ comfort. Yards are devoid of grass but some have been modified with makeshift volleyball courts and other interesting recreation features. Several of the lucky Sappers live in the ‘wet’ block; this means they have running water, showers, and functional porcelain in the house. The ‘dry’ block has a series of latrine trainers and showers as the plumbing was irreparably damaged during the initial invasion into Iraq in 2003. The yards are separated by six foot concrete walls which helped coin the unofficial the name given to this district within the Contingency Operating Base (COB). Regardless of their name, the ‘Crack Houses’ are an outstanding facility to billet soldiers. They allow the 95th Soldiers to build unit cohesion by squad and serve as suitable staging base to execute their respective missions.

- MAJ Aaron Dorf, BN XO



The day grows long as 95th finishes moving into their new accommodations and SGT Dustin Hughes watches a battle buddy's gear as he moves in.

65th Engineer Battalion, US ARMY

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Editor's Notes

Well friends, we're getting set in our work rhythm. Part of that is a departure from our original goal of a once a week publication. But don't fret dear reader, it just means that we will have twice the content per issue as we publish one issue every two weeks. There is seldom a day where I don't take pictures of the Trailblazer team. I feel like Ralphie from "The Christmas Story" movie in all this gear but even so, I am always sure to that I take my camera with me whenever I move with the troops. While not every picture is a masterpiece, it does tell a piece of the story that is our deployment. I hope that you are enjoying the picture galleries. I try to get around to all the companies which is a task because we have five different companies in different areas. We'll have some from the 511th and C/84th soon. Ma'a salaameh (with peace).

- 1LT Miguel Lima



Commander's Corner



Hello Again Families and Friends,

The past two weeks have been incredibly busy across Task Force Trailblazer. The 326th Engineer Battalion's Sapper Eagles have been superb hosts in ensuring that we learn our lessons from them instead of the school of hard knocks. After their 15 months in the desert, they are clearly anxious to return home, but their competence and professionalism continued throughout the transition. They have made some tremendous gains in training our Iraqi Army partners, and we will continue to improve their capabilities through partnership. Almost every Soldier in the 65th has benefitted from their knowledge and received the state of the art equipment to perform our missions. I can tell all of you that everything is on track,

and I continue to be extremely proud of our Soldiers and Leaders.

Today, I attended the graduation of some Iraqi Sappers that the 326th trained. I know that our Soldiers looked on curiously and hope to continue to see the pride in the graduates eyes' -- knowing that they've learned valuable skills, worked hard to get there, and are eager to contribute to a safer Iraq. The ceremony was short, but the pride those Soldiers felt was clear.

As I write this from our command post, the 95th is preparing to destroy two improvised explosive devices (roadside bombs) that they found on one of the routes they are tasked to keep clear. This is actually the first night that our Soldiers are in the lead, and it's clearly evident that their training is paying off. Keep-

ing the routes safe for US forces and the Iraqi population is one of the most important things we do, and the Wolf-pack proved themselves on the first night.

Last but not least, C Company, 84th Engineer Battalion is running full stride providing construction support and training for Iraqi partners, other units in Task Force Lightning, and TF Trailblazer. They are a skilled and motivated unit -- sought by many to make more and better facilities. It's great to have them on the team.

We have a fantastic team here and I'm confident that my next note will have even more great reports. We miss Hawaii and you, but it feels good to be making a difference here.

Until next time, Aloha!

Trailblazer 6