



Crossed Bayonets

1-178 Field Artillery Unit Returns Home

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Kimberly Calkins
218th MEB, Public Affairs

INDIANAPOLIS – The 1st Battalion, 178th Field Artillery, headquarters in Georgetown, S.C., returned to the U.S. from Afghanistan Nov. 7.

The soldiers completed a demobilization process at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, Ind., before returning to South Carolina.

The 1-178th spent eight months in Afghanistan at Forward Operating Base Metherlom, near Kabul. The battalion's primary mission as part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team was to provide security for engineers, civil affairs, and medical personnel.

Approximately 800 soldiers returned, to include C Company and D Company, 1st Battalion, 110th Infantry Regiment, Pittsburgh, Pa., and C Company, 1st Battalion, 294th Infantry Regiment, Barrigada, Guam. The 1-178th maintained command and control of these units while in Afghanistan.

"The best part was watching their schools being built and kids getting their education," said Sgt. Kurt Barry, a Spartanburg, S.C., native. "When I was there in 2007-2008 there wasn't enough schools for the kids to attend." This is Barry's second deployment.

Many soldiers are on their second tour to include Sgt. 1st Class Thadious Scott, Security Forces platoon sergeant, who was deployed in Iraq in 2004.

"I'm just happy to be in the U.S.," said Scott, who will return to his two children in Columbia, S.C.

Multiple flights continued to arrive in the U.S. as the remaining 1-178th Soldiers returned home Nov. 30



Sp. Dustin Peets, 1st Battalion, 178th Field Artillery, Georgetown, S.C., was one of many returning soldiers from Afghanistan Nov. 7. Soldiers greeted by the command staff of the 218th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Charleston, S.C., and the 28th Infantry Division, Harrisburg, Pa.

A Soldier and a Novelist

Courtesy story and photo

CHARLESTON, S.C. - Sometimes adversity brings out our hidden talents. South Carolina Guardsman, Maj. Curtiss Robinson, has been known for many things in his career. He is a logistician by trade, a clinical counselor by education, and a full contact fighter by choice.

But when he was deployed to Shajoy District of Zabul province, Afghanistan in 2007, he found nothing had adequately prepared him for the stress he felt daily. "Some people lift weights, go running or play spades," said Robison, "everyone deals with stress in their own way."

Robinson immediately fell back on his military training first and tried to use exercise as a means to unwind, but in the remote Romanian forward operating base, nicknamed FOB Dracula, there was limited opportunity to run. Hitting the heavy bag was his second attempt followed by venting through e-mail and letters back home. These techniques had been effective in previous deployments but now were somewhat less fulfilling.

As his thirteen man team slowly molded the local tribesmen into a proper security force, he found that writing about their lessons learned and engagements helped him manage his perspective on what he was doing and why he was doing it. The main downside was the horror of war was not always appropriate to share with family members and friends back home and many of the details could endanger the mission and could not be released. Not wanting to terrify his family reliving story of how fellow soldiers suffered in the process of

fighting insurgents, Robinson created fictional characters to represent his team and the enemy they fought.

"I started writing to cope with stress in the Army. I published my first book "Defenders of Griffon's Peak" April 2009 after returning from Afghanistan," said Robinson. "I found that as I felt anger, fear, and frustration in combat, my characters reflected my emotions. My writing is a strong parallel with my experiences in combat."

The tales he began weaving were all based in reality but before long they took on a life of their own. The heroes in the stories embodied great values while often fighting real world challenges like anger and frustration, and in some cases, over confidence.

The villains also embodied the worst mankind has to offer and became grotesque beings intent on destruction. In many ways, these tales became akin to heroic battles found in ancient Greece or more like those found in J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" but they always shared the fate of the soldiers and allies who fought in Afghanistan. More importantly, they became the key to dealing with the battlefield stress and anger which had grown day by day in Robinson.

Robinson completed his first book, "Protectors of the Vale", in February of 2008 mostly while his men slept after a long day of training maneuvers or engagements with enemy forces.

By early May he was on his way back home with several chapters of book two, "Defenders of Griffon's Peak", complete. Although his newly discovered talent was enjoyable, as the stress of fighting subsided, so too did the drive to write as often.



Maj. Curtiss Robinson, while in Afghanistan.

The mission was done but the stress lingered on until 2009 when "Protectors of the Vale" was finally published followed less than a year later by the publication of "Defenders of Griffon's Peak."

Robinson has started on book three but more importantly he noted that there is a real moral to his story while deployed.

Robinson said, "We must not let the enemy conquer our spirits or weaken our resolve. With a little creativity and great determination, there is always hope and always a way to win."

Not only has Robinson written fantasy novels, but he has also written self-defense instruction manuals for law enforcement and martial arts handbooks for Goshin Jujutsu, a modern self-defense-oriented style of Jujutsu.

Robinson books "Protectors of the Vale" and "Defenders of Griffon's Peak" can both be found on amazon.com



BSB Commander Soldier Was Ready and There When Duty Called

Story by Camille Breland
GX Magazine

It was a muggy Tuesday morning in September of 2009. The place was South Carolina “hot as the devil,” as Lt. Col. Larry Peeples described. The day began just like any other. Peeples, commander of the 218th Brigade Support Battalion (BSB), was driving to his office at the battalion headquarters in Varnville, S.C., preparing for another busy day. As the senior logistician for the battalion, he was scheduled to conduct a maintenance check at one of his units.

Peeples was cruising in his civilian Mitsubishi Eclipse down Highway 278 in Hampton, S.C., thinking about the day ahead, when he passed a local logging company. He continued through an intersection and noticed an 18-wheel tractor-trailer hauling logs, trying unsuccessfully to cross the tracks. He glanced in his rearview mirror and saw a train approaching the intersection. The truck’s driver seemed to be struggling to shift the big rig into reverse. Peeples locked eyes with the truck’s driver, Herman Breeland of Allendale, S.C. The truck had stalled on the tracks. “He’s not going to make it,” Peeples thought.

Seconds later, the train began blaring its horn, but the truck didn’t move. The train struck the truck with a force so strong, it looked like an explosion. Pieces of white cab, sheet metal, fiberglass and other parts of the truck propelled in every direction. According to a news report, the axle landed in a ditch far from the tracks, while part of the fender landed by the front of the train. Peeples saw the entire accident, and believed there was no way anyone could survive.

But without hesitation, he responded. He pulled over, dialed 9-1-1, explained the situation and gave his location to the operator. Then he rushed to the scene. By that time, the train had stopped, and part of the truck was wrapped around its front car. He scanned the area for the truck’s cab and driver, but they were nowhere to be seen.

Peeples climbed through one of the junctions in the train and began searching for the driver. His swift recon showed pieces of the cab near a chain-link fence to the side. All that was left of the cab body were the seats. Finally, in a ditch by the fence, he saw feet peeking out from under layers of metal and debris. It was the driver. The steering wheel was near him. Not knowing how seriously the man was injured or if he was even alive Peeples contemplated what to do. Then he heard a moan a sign of life.

Peeples is determined, and he doesn’t do things halfway. As commander of the 218th BSB, he has a big role to fill: The brigade is the operations task force for the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Explosive Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF) comprised of National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve and Active Duty Air Force personnel from six states and one protectorate. It’s part of only two CCMRF units in the country.

When the 218th attended CCMRF task force training this summer at Camp Atterbury, Ind., Peeples led his battalion 14 march units totaling 294 vehicles and 526 personnel on a two-day, 800-mile cross-country convoy to reach the training site, just to prove they can self-deploy. They returned home with every Soldier, vehicle and piece of equipment, unharmed.



Photo by Capt. Tim Irvin

He’s also an extreme proponent of safety and preparation. Before his deployment to Iraq, he wanted all of his Soldiers to go through an emergency first aid course and combat lifesaver training. But instead of simply giving a directive, he set an example by taking the courses as well, which he said turned out to be some of the best training he has ever received.

Peeples’ leadership and determination trace back to his youth, when he decided to go through ROTC at the Citadel, a prestigious military university in Charleston, S.C. Peeples enlisted in the National Guard through the Simultaneous Membership Program in his junior year. The next year, he attended school and ROTC while serving in the Guard. He graduated from the Citadel in 1989, received his officer commission and became a maintenance ordnance officer for a headquarters company in South Carolina a unit that he commands today.

“It’s kind of neat to come full circle from being the lowest guy on the pole to the biggest,” he joked.

Beginning in the early ’90s, Peeples began deploying to Central America with a joint task force to perform humanitarian missions. As an engineer logistics officer, he planned and executed projects like building clinics and schools for local populations in Honduras and Panama. He traveled there every year until 1999, spending a total of about two and a half years on the ground. When Hurricane Mitch destroyed parts of Central America in 1998, he returned to Honduras and assisted in cleanup and recovery efforts.

He worked for 90 days in the Sula Valley with an engineer and medical response team as part of New Horizons, or “Nuevos Horizontes.” The American troops also brought schoolbooks and supplies to help the country get back on track.

Peeples deployed to Iraq from 2006–2007 as the director of logistics and G-4 for Forward Operating Base Bucca, a camp that housed about 20,000 detainees captured during the initial Iraq surge. While he had originally been sent into theater to oversee engineering for air damage control, he found himself rolling up his sleeves on the ground with Soldiers from every rank.

“We all pitched in and did our part,” he said. “It was a unit [with 27 Soldiers], and it wasn’t unusual to see captains and E-8s lifting boxes.”

Each hot, long day that passed in Iraq began to shape Peeples into the man he is today. He admits the deployment gave him the opportunity to use his skills and job training to the fullest, and helped him to become a better leader by seeing how others led. He even had a conversation with General David Petraeus, then-commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, who came to visit the detention facility.

Peeples coined his own personal motto: “It’s not my job to place the blame; it’s my job to fix the problem.” Throughout his career, he has led Soldiers to prevent and overcome challenges when the occasion arose. And Sept. 22, 2009, was no different. “It Was Just Me and Him”

Once Peeples realized the truck driver was still alive, he rushed over, uncovered him from the rubble and began to assess his awareness and injuries.

“Can you hear me? Are you OK?” he bellowed. The driver began mumbling and shaking, and slipped into a seizure-like state. Peeples gripped the man’s head and body, holding tightly to keep him from injuring himself even more. The colonel knew the man’s leg was broken, since it was slumped at nearly a 45-degree angle. There was also a large gash in his thigh as well as multiple cuts on his head, arms and elbows.

The driver’s body calmed, and he looked directly at Peeples. The colonel asked if the driver could understand him. The driver nodded. Peeples looked at his watch: It was about 7:40 a.m. For nearly the next hour, Peeples wrestled the man to keep him still as he disjunctedly attempted to stand up. He applied pressure to the man’s worst wounds and continued to check his vital signs. All the while, Peeples remained calm and fixated on the mission: to keep the man alive.

Once paramedics, police and other emergency responders arrived at the scene, they took over the care of the driver and began to assess Peeples’ own health. When they began questioning him about what had

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Charlie Co. takes Ravenel Bridge for Command

Story by David MacDougall
The Post and Courier

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Capt. Mark McGee, who had commanded the C Company, 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment since August 2009, relinquished command to Capt. Gene Hindman during a traditional “passing of the colors” ceremony held in the bridge’s pedestrian walkway at the city line between Charleston and Mount Pleasant.

Two groups of soldiers met on the bridge. The larger group, led by the outgoing commander, McGee, walked from the armory on Mathis Ferry Drive. A smaller group, led by Hindman, rode in a van to the city side of the bridge and walked up from East Bay Street.

The soldiers were backpacks that weighed about 30 pounds.

The ceremony took only a few minutes; 1st Sgt. Robert Smith handed the company banner to McGee, who gave it to Lt. Col. Fred Pasley,

the brigade commander. A soldier read the order establishing Hindman as commander and Pasley presented the banner to Hindman, who then handed it back to the first sergeant.


Usually, change of command ceremonies are held on parade fields, but Hindman said



Soldiers from C Co. 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment, march across the Ravenel Bridge for a change of command ceremony. (Photo by Capt. Tim Irvin)

he wanted to hold the ceremony on the bridge because of its symbolism to the community and to him personally. Until Thursday, he was assigned to brigade headquarters on Hagood Avenue in Charleston. His new assignment has him working on the Mount Pleasant side of the bridge.

Hindman, of Greenville, and McGee, a Charleston native, have known each other since they were both cadets at The Citadel. Hindman was in the class of 1995 while McGee graduated in 1997. They met again when they served together in Afghanistan.

Hindman takes command of a company of 131 soldiers. The company is a special federal entity known as a CCMRF, which sounds like “see-smurf” when the soldiers pronounce it. The first C in the acronym stands for CBRNE or “Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear and High-Yield Explosives.” The remaining letters stand for Consequence Management Response Force 

Obama Presents Medal of Honor to Soldier at White House

Story by Staff Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown,
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama presented the Medal of Honor Tuesday to the first active-duty servicemember in nearly 40 years.

Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta was described as a humble, low-key Soldier — one that shies away from the limelight. But his actions on Oct. 25, 2007, were anything but low-key when he refused to let enemy fighters carry off a fellow wounded Soldier in Afghanistan.

Giunta, then a specialist, individually pursued two insurgents who had captured a badly wounded Sgt. Joshua Brennan during a deadly firefight. Giunta killed one insurgent and injured the other, and immediately began to administer first aid to Brennan, all while under heavy enemy fire.

It was this act of rare bravery that saved lives and warranted receipt of the Medal, Obama explained.

Yet Giunta doesn’t seem to see it that way, and feels that he did what any Soldier in his place would have done.

The president quoted Giunta as saying, “If I am a hero, then every man who stands around me, every woman in the military, every person who defends this country is.”

Obama agreed with Giunta’s sentiment that every military member is heroic, but added that Giunta is genuinely a homegrown hero.

“I’m going to go off script here for a second, and just say

I really like this guy,” Obama quipped, resulting in cheers from the audience. “When you meet Sal, and you meet his family, you are just absolutely convinced that this is what America is all about.”

Since the Vietnam War, the Medal of Honor has been given nine times, but to Soldiers who have given the ultimate sacrifice.


“Staff Sergeant Giunta, repeatedly and without hesitation, you charged forward through extreme enemy fire, embodying the warrior ethos that says, “I will never leave a fallen comrade,” Obama said. “You may believe that you don’t deserve this honor, but it was your fellow Soldiers who recommended you for it.”

The Iowa native and paratrooper in 1st Platoon, Battle Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team says he was just doing his job.

“I’m incredibly proud of my service. I’ve given blood, sweat and tears for this country and I know some great men and women that have died for this country,” said Giunta.

“I’m glad that I can say I’m part of the stars and stripes and the men and women that serve every single day,” he said.

Obama said he is proud of America’s servicemembers, as they repeatedly do everything their nation calls them to do.

“This medal today is a testament to his uncommon valor, but also to the parents and the community that raised him; the military that trained him; and all the men and women who served by his side,” Obama said. “All of them deserve our enduring thanks and gratitude” 



President Barack Obama presents the Medal of Honor to Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta, Nov. 16, for his actions of valor during an enemy attack in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan, Oct. 2007. (Official White House Photo)

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4th Battalion Conducts Change of Command at Marion County Museum

Bullard and Philpot also Honored during Ceremony

Story by Naeem McFadden
Star & Enterprise

MARION, S.C. — More than 300 National Guardsmen with the 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry stood at attention for a Change of Command ceremony Saturday Nov. 13 outside the Marion County Museum.

The event included an infantry squad demonstration, an honor to fallen soldiers and arrival of a Black Hawk helicopter.

The reorganized battalion, bring combat experience, going from a mechanize unit to light infantry.

Lt. Col. Fredrick Pasley replaces out going Commander Lt. Col. Kenneth G. Rosado.

“It’s a fantastic ceremony and good to have in the community,” Rosado said, after serving since June 2008.

“The welcome was great, and we did everything we wanted to accomplish,” Pasley said. “We show what our squads were made up of.”

Pasley said converting from being in vehicles to being on foot and the tactics are pretty much the same but he’s ready.

The responsibility includes commanding over five units, including headquarters in Mullins and Weapons Company in Mario along with three companies in Monks Corner, North Charleston and Mt. Pleasant.

Soldiers honored in the ceremony were Staff Sgt. James David Bullard and Sgt. Edward O. Philpot.

Bullard, 28, of Marion died serving in Afghanistan with the Army National Guard 1st Battalion 263rd Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition) Unit B Company, based in Dillon.

Philpot, 38, of Latta died serving with the 1st Battalion 263rd Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition) S.C. National Guard Unit based in Mullins



Sgt. Maj. Alfred Elvington guides the riderless horse during the battalion change of command. A pair of black riding boots are reversed in the stirrups to represent a fallen leader looking back on his troops for the last time. (Army photo by Capt. Tim W. Irvin)

1-118th Infantry Changes Command

Krell Relinquishes to Carruthers

Story and photos by Sgt. Erica Knight
108th Public Affairs Detachment

COLUMBIA, S.C. – Lt. Col. Michael Krell relinquished command of the 1st Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment to incoming commander Lt. Col. Robert Carruthers at a ceremony at McCrady Training Center on Oct. 16.

“A lot of people go through their career without that great commander,” said Lt. Col. Waymon Storey, 218th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) Commander. “You’re lucky. You’ve got them back-to-back.”

Krell commanded the battalion for the past two years, seeing them through Operation North Wind in Japan and taking over the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF) mission.

“There aren’t words to express how proud I am of you,” Krell said. Krell praised the officers for going above and beyond in all of their duties and the noncommissioned officers for taking care of the Soldiers they supervised.

“Leadership is absolute,” said Krell. “You either can or you can’t. You have proven you can time and again.” Storey told the Soldiers that Krell set the bar high, but that he was sure Carruthers would push it higher.

“I pledge my absolute commitment to you,” said Carruthers. Carruthers will be taking the battalion to a training exercise in Saudi Arabia in February and then a deployment to Kosovo in 2012.

Krell will be moving on to the Deputy Brigade Commander position at the 218th MEB Headquarters



Lt. Col. Robert Carruthers receives the 1st of the 118th Infantry Brigade's flag from Lt. Col. Waymon Storey, 218th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Commander, during a change of command ceremony at McCrady Training Center in Columbia.



DUTY CALLED *continued from page 2*

happened, he could barely remember. It was a blur. And he was weak. He said responding to the accident was instinct. He didn't think about it—he just acted. The paramedics began to clean Peeples—his ACUs were soaked with blood and sweat—while the driver was airlifted to Augusta, GA, and placed in a trauma unit.

"It was an emotional rollercoaster," Peeples told GX about the experience. "I was busy, busy, busy, and the adrenaline had kicked in."

The responders eventually released Peeples, and he made his way back to work, picking up the day where he had left it, but constantly thinking and praying for the truck driver's life. He washed up in the bathroom at the armory and completed the inspection he had scheduled in damp, soiled ACUs. Then he got the call: The driver was in critical condition, but alive.

Peeples said his combat lifesaving and other medical training he received through the National Guard were the reasons he was able not only to quickly respond to the near fatal accident, but also to work efficiently and effectively during the crucial first moments.

"Everything we do is about saving lives," he said about being a National Guard Soldier. "We have to have medical training when there are not enough medics or doctors around."

A Man of Valor

News traveled fast throughout the region about the catastrophic collision, and newspapers and TV stations interviewed Peeples about his role in event.

In the weeks and months following, friends and strangers congratulated him for his heroic actions, but he didn't want the attention. "I didn't do it for that," he said. "I just did it because that's what we do. When you put on the uniform you've got responsibility—just like a police officer, just like a firefighter—to set a standard, an example for everybody."

"I just felt like I'm doing this because this is what I'm trained to do, and I hope somebody would help me if I was in that situation," he added.

Though he considered his actions that day a normal part of his Guard duties, others saw it as something extraordinary. On June 19, 2010, in a surprise ceremony, Peeples was awarded the South Carolina National Guard Medal of Valor. He had no idea he was receiving the prestigious award until his friend and colleague, Colonel Waymon Storey, called his name at a military dinner event. "I felt surprised and honored that my actions were deemed worthy of such praise," Peeples replied.

Storey, who has known Peeples for more than 20 years, said he wasn't surprised at all when he heard about Peeples' actions after


the accident. "Larry takes the initiative in anything he does," Storey, commander of the 218th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, acknowledged. "He truly is a good leader, a good Soldier and a good person—and that's **"What makes the first two work."**

Since the crash, Peeples now keeps a fire extinguisher, medical kit and combat lifesaver bag in the backseat of both of his vehicles. He's still driving the same route to work each day and calls Breeland, the truck driver with whom he spent a life-changing hour, every so often to chat.

Most of all, he gets to do what he loves every day: be a Citizen-Soldier. As a husband and father of two, Peeples enjoys the fact that the National Guard is based in his community, where he grew up.

"In the National Guard, we've got to do it all," he asserted. "We've got to take care of the state, we've got to take care of our families, and when the Army—the A-team—gets tired, we have to go in and back those guys up."

Sound like a challenge? Perhaps it is. But Peeples is up to the task. Even though he has been in the Guard for more than 20 years, he said there are still positive changes and plans he'd like to see come to fruition.

"I'd like to stick around a little while until I can make a difference," he shared. "I haven't finished doing all that I want to do." 



COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR'S CORNER

By CSM Michael Kirkland
218th MEB Command Sergeant Major

Five Things Every Leader Should Know

Does your spouse, significant other, family or friends know your supervisor by name? The boss is a common topic of conversation at home or with friends after work. What are those conversations like? Are they reflective of what the boss is doing for you or what the boss is doing to you? Do you think the spouse, significant other, family or friends of your subordinates know your name? What do you suppose those conversations are like?

If you lead others, you are a topic of conversation around the dinner table, probably in several households at once. How do you want those conversations to go? We can't dictate every impression or emotion that our Soldiers might have about us, but we can take steps to create the kind of relationship that garners the



benefit of the doubt. And it starts with taking a genuine interest in them as people. There are five things every leader should know about their Soldiers:

- 1. Who is the most important person in your Soldier's life?** Find out who that is, and learn their name(s). If your Soldier has children, learn their names, all of them. Learn birth dates and anniversaries for each one.
- 2. Where and how did your soldiers grow up?** Learn where they were born, how they grew up, what their parents did, etc. Taking an interest in their backgrounds will provide insight for leading them. For instance, people who grew up on a farm generally have deep-seated views on values and work ethic; people who grow up in big, northeastern cities are comfortable mixing it up with peers, etc.

- 3. What are their hobbies? What do they like to do when they're not working?** Knowing what gives them joy outside of work helps you relate to them more effectively. You might be able to draw a connection to something they care deeply about in their personal lives. Again, take an interest in their lives outside of work.
- 4. What are they passionate about?** What really motivates your people? Understanding what drives them will allow you to feed them the carrot instead of using the stick. It will also give insight into how they will try to motivate those around them (we give praise and show appreciation the way we want to receive it).
- 5. What are their goals for their career and the rest of their life?** How are they doing in achieving their goals? You should include military and civilian interests. This provides numerous ways to connect with your Soldier and provide knowledge and skills that benefit the Soldier, the organization, and you as the leader.

What if you found out that the reason your Soldier was late for drill because they lost their job and now had to walk to drill? You may be able to put them into another job that resolves their problem and yours.

If you make a sincere effort to learn these five things about each person that reports to you, it makes you a better leader.

Think of any boss you've ever had, didn't you enjoy working for those who took a genuine interest in you as a person? If you take the time to ask these five questions, you stand a better chance of being represented in a positive light when the conversation gets around to you, because there's no question that it will, one way or another!

You also stand a better chance of noticing something that allows you to intercede for your Soldier before a problem becomes too big to fix.

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Menacing Mortars

Story by Capt. Mark McGee and
Capt. Tim W. Irvin

In the fall of 2007, Capt. Gene Hindman, Commander of C Co., 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment, Mt. Pleasant, S.C., was assigned as the intelligence officer for PMT (police mentor team) "Swamp Fox," part of Task Force Phoenix Six in Afghanistan.

"In mid October, we had received a mission to search and cordon a small compound in the northwest Zabul province. We broke up into three squads and began our sweep of the buildings," said Hindman. "We had an SF (Special Forces) team supporting us. They had setup an over watch position, with their 60 mm mortar, on a high plateau overlooking the small village."

"We cleared the buildings with no issues. We then moved into the orchard directly behind the buildings," Hindman recalled.

"As soon as we entered the orchard we started to receive a heavy volume of small arms fire. We immediately returned fire but the orchard was so thick that we couldn't see much in front of us."

Fortunately for Hindman and his Soldiers, the SF team could see everything from their vantage point on the plateau 500 meters away.

"We continued forward, returning fire as we moved. Suddenly, the SF guys told us to stop over the radio," Hindman explained. "They could see the Taliban fighters setting up an ambush with PKM (machine gun) directly to our front."

Once Hindman and his squad had halted, the SF team engaged the enemy fighters with six rounds from their 60 mm mortar, killing three Taliban fighters.

"Without that mortar we would have been forced to assault the Taliban machinegun position," Hindman said. "That mortar saved us from possible casualties."

Mortars have been used for centuries and are an important asset to military missions during combat.

We can trace the history of the modern mortar to the 1600's, when portable mortar systems were used in siege warfare. The high-arching trajectory of mortars allowed early commanders to send explosive projectiles over fortifications and walls with deadly effect. Unfortunately, mortars were heavy then, and required the use of animals and carts to move them into position.

Those portable systems were the precursor to the systems we use today. Modern-day, heavy mortars are carried into battle by wheeled vehicles, and track vehicles.

Changing times

The current asymmetrical battlefield has caused many commanders to change the way they would deploy their mortars in a conventional force-on-force battle. Missions in Afghanistan and Iraq are often led by smaller company or platoon-sized units.

These missions are usually scattered across great distances and over rugged terrain. A single mortar can increase the unit's lethality on patrols and disrupt ambushes. Depending on the mission and the size of the unit, different caliber of mortars can be used.

Today, the National Guard currently uses three different mortar systems: 60 mm, 81 mm, and 120 mm. Different calibers are available to company- and battalion-level airborne, air assault, light infantry and special operations units.

In 1915, the man-portable mortar system was developed as a result of the trench warfare of World War I. The high-angle fire and portability of the mortar allowed rounds to be dropped into enemy trenches where artillery rounds could not effectively land. The light weight tubes allowed infantry Soldiers to carry indirect fire support with them and move with the fight. This man portable mortar developed into the 60 mm mortar currently used today.

In 2006, Staff Sgt. Dustin Reed, training non-commissioned officer, A Co., 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment, Moncks Corner, S.C., was a squad leader for a mortar section in Tal Afar, Iraq.

"When we conducted dismounted patrols, we would often carry our 60 mm mortars because of the added benefit of indirect fire to support the ground troops," said Reed.

"From the time we received a call-for-fire mission, we could have a round down range within two minutes. Because of the mortar's high angle of fire, hitting a target in an alley or narrow street wasn't a problem," said Reed. "The mortar was also very effective when we needed to lay down a smoke screen to conceal Soldiers' movements."

"Pocket" Artillery

The smallest mortar in the U.S. arsenal is the M224 60 mm mortar. It is used specifically in a light infantry company. It has a range of almost 3,500 meters and weighs about 48 pounds. For dismounted operations, the M224 can be carried without a base plate to reduce its weight to 18 pounds, but the loss of the base plate reduces its range to slightly over 1,300 meters. The M224 can be set in a position prior to conducting operations or carried by crew members for a hasty deployment if the unit comes in contact.



Soldiers from the 218th MEB, fire a 81 mm mortar, during training at Camp Shelby, Miss. (Photo by Capt. Tim Irvin)

For long range support, the M252 81 mm mortar is also used in a mortar platoon at battalion level. The platoon consists of approximately six mortar tubes and is under the control of the battalion commander. The M252 has a range of approximately 5,800 meters and weighs 91 pounds. The larger round provides greater distance and effects on the enemy than the smaller 60 mm mortar, but requires a vehicle to move it quickly.

At company level airborne, air assault, light infantry and special operations units, smaller mortar are used. Within a light infantry company, the mortar crew typically has two 60 mm mortars and six crew members. The crew consists of three Soldiers per mortar system: the gunner, assistant gunner and an ammunition bearer. In these small unit configurations the gunners also serve as the squad leader and section sergeant.

Most battalions use the 81 mm or 120 mm mortar systems. They are organized as a mortar platoon and are under the direct control of the battalion commander. A 120 mm mortar platoon has more Soldiers than the 81 mm platoon. These additional Soldiers man the larger 120 mm tube and staff the Fire Direction Center (FDC). The FDC calculates fire mission requests and advises the mortar gunners what direction to fire.

The M120 120 mm mortar is the largest mortar system in the U.S. inventory. The massive M120 has a range of almost 7,200 meters and weighs in at

319 pounds. The system can be towed or vehicle mounted on the tracked M1064 heavy mortar carrier or a wheeled M1129 Stryker. When the 120 mm is mounted on a vehicle, it can be fired from inside. This gives the crew additional protection from small arms fire and increases the response time for ground forces in need of firepower.

"Some of our guys were receiving sniper fire from a building. This forced them to take cover and halt. They called in an immediate suppression mission. We fired several HE (high explosive) rounds from our one-twenty onto the target building. This eliminated the threat and allowed the Soldiers to continue on with their mission," recalled Reed.

"On numerous occasions my mortar section would shoot illumination missions in order to provide a burst of light over a target house, or objective in the middle of the night or early morning. This improves the visibility for Soldiers on mission," said Reed.

"Umbrella" of Fire


Mortars allow units to quickly place indirect fire on enemy positions that are protected from our direct fire systems due to terrain. Commanders are always aware of the 'umbrella' of fire that mortars provide them. If Soldiers were to be outside of that 'umbrella', they would move the mortars so that they would be covered. Mortars are that important.

See MORTARS on page 7



MORTARS *continued from page 6*

“It is has significant psychological impact on the enemy knowing we can place deadly fires on his position within seconds of an attack,” said Hindman. “If we can’t reach the enemy, our mortars sure can!”

Mortars have played a significant role in combat throughout the history of warfare. Recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have proven mortar systems are as vital to winning the fight on the ground. Most commanders believe it is essential that units train and maintain their mortars to be ready, reliable and relevant in the fight 

Up Close and Personal

A mortar is made up of four major components; the tube, the bipod, the base plate and the gunner’s sight. U.S. mortars fire three types of ammunition with many variations of each. The basic types are high explosive (HE), smoke and illumination rounds. HE rounds are used against enemy personnel, fortifications and vehicles. Smoke rounds are used to mark enemy positions or obscure the enemies view and enable friendly forces to maneuver more safely. Illumination rounds can be used to provide to light up the night in either white or infrared light. These rounds assist friendly forces when moving at night and expose enemy activity.

Photo by John Crosby and illustration by Sgt. Joshua Edwards



The First Christmas Gifts

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Joel Burke
218th MEB Chaplain

“They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.” Matthew 2:11


The story of the wise men is a popular one to retell around Christmas. For Christians it tells us the story of the first Christmas gifts. Since gift giving is a big part of the Christmas celebration it would be good to focus on the first Christmas gift so that we can see how far we have come from the original intent.

First, the wise men gave their time to Jesus. We assume that there were three wise men because the gifts were three fold. However, there may have been many more than three wise men. Often people travelled in large companies because there was safety in numbers. Scholars believe that the journey of the wise men could have taken well over a year and the return trip would have doubled that. They gave time to the pursuit of giving to Jesus. People take time for what is important to them. Give Jesus time as we pray and serve him this Christmas.

Second, we see that the wise men worshipped Jesus. Notice the reverence that was evident for these wise men. They knelt down and worshipped the baby Jesus. Giving God worship means that we recognize the importance of God in our lives. For Christians it means that we worship God either publicly or privately on Christmas as a gift to him.

Third, we see the one to whom the gifts were given. They were given to Jesus. Somewhere along the course of time we have changed the original intention of Christmas giving to giving to one another. As we preserve our current traditions let’s also give Jesus our attention. This is a good reminder for Christians and for those who are of other faiths to remember God during this holy season or Christmas.

Fourth, we see the special significance of the gifts. All three gifts were given to royalty and were valuable. Gold symbolized the kingship of Jesus. Frankincense was an incense used by priests and signifies prayer. Myrrh symbolizes suffering. Jesus was king, he was in tune with God and he would suffer and die for the sins of the world. These gifts were more than just valuable, they foretold the story of Jesus’ life.

Remember to give to Jesus this Christmas and truly celebrate his birthday 



Command Staff Visits 1-178th FA During Demobilization

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Kimberly Calkins
218th MEB, Public Affairs

CAMP ATTERBURY, Ind. – Col. Waymon B. Storey III, 218th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) commander visited the 1st Battalion, 178th Field Artillery, during their demobilization process at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, Ind., in November.

The 1-178th recently returned to the U.S. following an eight-month deployment in Afghanistan.

“It is great to have our Soldiers back in the U.S.,” said Storey. “We are very proud of their accomplishments in Afghanistan.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Kirkland, 218th MEB command sergeant major, and other command staff accompanied Storey.

Throughout the day, the command staff met with Soldiers during briefings and medical out-processing.

Storey discussed the medical briefings with Sgt. Richard Murrietta, health care non-commissioned officer, who is in charge of medical briefing mobilization and demobilization process at Camp Atterbury.

“We educate Soldiers to be truthful when answering medical questions and going to follow-up appointments,” said Murrietta. “We listen and try to meet the needs of Soldiers.”

The medical briefings allow Soldiers to document any combat related injuries and seek further treatment as necessary during demobilization.

“We will continue to care for our Soldiers, making sure they all return home safely and medically sound,” said Kirkland.

During a second command visit, Brig. Gen. Ronald Huff, Chief of Staff, South Carolina Army National Guard (SCARNG) and



Col. Waymon B. Storey III, 218th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade commander, speaks with Soldiers returning from Afghanistan during demobilization at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, Ind., Nov. 12. The 1st Battalion, 178th Field Artillery served eight months in Afghanistan.

Command Sgt. Major Robert Brickley, State Command Sergeant Major of SCARNG met with 1-178th Soldiers who are currently in the Warrior Transition Unit (WTU).

Sgt. Mark W. Germanoff, Forward Support Company, 1-178th FA, Hemingway, S.C., suffered a torn meniscus and medial collateral ligament (MCL) injury. He will receive orthoscopic surgery at Fort Gordon, Ga. before returning home.

“We will work with WTU to bring Soldiers closer to home,” said Brickley. “We want to work with Soldiers to ensure they receive the proper medical care they are entitled to.”

Sgt. Jaun M. Perez, C Battery, 1-178th FA, received an electrocardiogram (EKG) and

heart catheter while assigned to the WTU.

“I attributed my troubled breathing and tightness in chest to the high altitude,” said Perez, when he was stationed in Afghanistan. Perez’s wife came to Camp Atterbury to visit him during his medical procedures.

“We are glad they are home,” said Huff. “We will make sure they are well taken care of and reintegrated with families.”

Once the 1-178th completed the demobilization process at Camp Atterbury, they returned to homecoming events at Eagle Aviation in Columbia, S.C.

“It will be good to be home for the holidays and getting back in the swing of life,” said Lt. Col. Edward M. McInnis, 1-178th commander.

Persevering the Past

by Maj. Scott McDaniel



The 218th MEB has created another milestone in the SCARNG by establishing the first major subordinate command historical display entitled the “Regimental Room” at its headquarters in Charleston. The purpose of this display is to present a snapshot of our long organizational history from settlement in 1670 to today. South Carolina has a long and rich military history, written in the blood, sweat, and tears of its Soldiers.

The “Regimental Room” is an annex of the South Carolina Military Museum and traces the histories of the 118th and 218th Infantry Regiments and the 178th Field Artillery and 263rd Armor Regiments back to 1670.

Many Soldiers and entities were involved in the development of this heritage area including the South Carolina Military Museum, the Washington Light Infantry (WLI), the Sumter

Guards, the Fort Jackson Museum, John Peck, the U.S. Army Finance Museum and the U.S. Army Adjutant General Museum. The WLI and the Sumter Guards both donated complete uniforms, including an 1800’s militia sword and hat.

The displays feature many artifacts and photos from the Brigade’s past. Command Sgt. Maj. Ceaser Hargrove and Sgt. Darnell Thompson donated items that were struck by enemy bullets in Afghanistan, a testament to the fighting spirit that continues within the 218th MEB.

According to project officers, MAJ Scott McDaniel and MAJ Chip Sturgis, the “Regimental Room” displays the units history from the Revolutionary War through the Civil War, both World Wars and the War on Terror.

As this is an ongoing display of our unit’s history, individuals are encouraged to loan items for display and showcase the sacrifice made by the Soldiers of the 218th MEB across the globe.

The “Regimental Room” is open in the 3rd floor lobby of the Charleston Readiness Center during normal duty hours and weekend drills. It is designed to be a ‘self-guided’ tour, but a guide may be requested for units.

For more information please contact
Maj. Scott McDaniel at (803) 832-0652 or
william.s.mcdaniel@us.army.mil.

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