



RIPCORDER REPORT



No. 60 - 1

August/September 2003

Ripcord Reunion "Review" 23 July 03

Dear Fellow Ripcorders and Ripcordettes,

As I sit here putting pen to paper, we have a total of 74 people registered for the reunion in Charleston, South Carolina. There's been a few changes in the itinerary for the reunion; they are: there will be NO Scheduled Tour on Friday morning. I had to cancel the busses that I had arranged for, because of lack of response. Some of the registration forms that I received, were either left blank or marked "no" for the tour. The busses would have cost us \$2200.00 with or without 100 people to ride them, ergo cancelled.

Do not, I say again, DO NOT! use the registration form that Hawkins has on the website . . . It has the wrong information on it. For example, we're going to Charleston, South Carolina NOT Columbia, South Carolina. Use the registration form that is sent with the newsletter only.

We do have a BBQ planned for Thursday afternoon, pool side, at the hotel. Saturday afternoon, we will have a "business meeting", to discuss future reunion sites and dates and the newsletter. Saturday evening (naturally) is the banquet.

As requested by a multitude of people, we have hats, shirts and jackets for sale, along with string ties and books. I would greatly appreciate all those that requested the items last year, purchase them this year. We need to recoup the funds that were expended for these items.

My most heartfelt thanks to the following people, that since the last newsletter, "dug deep" and generously donated to the Association:

Bob & Jeanne Smoker, Doc Harris, Bill and Sheila Williams, Jim Neff, Phil & Priscilla Kallar, Steve Wallace and Susan Huggins, and Bill and Sheila Williams (again).

See you all, in Charleston, and for those who want to purchase a reunion wine bottle, bring an extra \$25.00 with you; they're pretty special this year.

Fred Spaulding

This letter from the current 101st Airborne Division Commander to the previous CG. Good reading on what they accomplished.

Dear General Bagnal:

Greetings from Mosul, Iraq. The division has now been deployed for over three months and in Iraq for well over two of those, and I wanted to give you a quick overview of the Screaming Eagles' activities during that time.

The receipt of our soldiers and equipment in Kuwait went very quickly. The first ship with 101st equipment arrived in early March and we rapidly unloaded ships, rebuilt aircraft, received troopers by air, conducted aviation environmental training, assembled units at camps in the Kuwait desert, planned for combat operations, and rehearsed for those operations. We went "through the berm" on the heels of the 3rd Infantry Division on 21 March and moved nearly 400 km in the first three days, establishing one aircraft refueling base by ground sand using our air cavalry and an infantry force from 3rd Brigade that air assaulted 385 km to seize the location for a second aircraft refuel and rearm point. By D+4, we were 400 kilometers into Iraq with the bulk of our 3rd Brigade and well over 100 aircraft. In addition, we had two large refueling bases established to support air assault and attack helicopter operations.

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Quote of the Day

"You know the world's gone mad when the best rapper is a white guy, the best golfer is a black guy, the tallest guy in the NBA is Chinese, the Swiss hold the America's Cup, France is accusing the USA of arrogance, and the Germans don't want to go to war!"

Unexpectedly stiff resistance by Ba'ath Party Militia and Fedayeen regime thugs, as well as incredibly bad weather (not just fierce dust storm, but at times a mud storm) and logistics challenges slowed ground operations for almost 72 hours and brought air operations to a halt. During that time, we firmly established our bases and built up additional combat power and logistics stocks by road from Kuwait. When the storm passed, we air assaulted elements of both 1st and 2nd Brigades over 400 km directly into combat in the south and north of An Najaf to deal with the enemy forces in those areas to protect the Corps lines of communication that the enemy had cut. We destroyed the elements in that area in several days of hard city fighting, and An Najaf, a city with a population of over 600,000 and enormous religious significance, became the fanatical, well-armed Ba'ath Party militia and regime paramilitary forces fighting for their very survival on their turf in a major city. Of equal importance, we found that the civilian population would welcome, not fight, the arrival of American soldiers.

During that time as well, we destroyed a Republican Guards infantry battalion, as well as its supporting tank company and artillery and air defense batteries, in a tough battle just south of the city of Al Hillah. That fight was the only one we had in which Republican Guards forces fought with determination, employed combined arms, and massed indirect fires. It was quite a battle but the last of its kind for us, as the Iraqi high command subsequently pushed its elements round so much to plug holes that their units were no longer coherent, lacked clear central direction, and lost the ability to fight as combined arms teams.

Simultaneous with the ground attacks, the 101st Aviation Brigade conducted a successful night deep attack and a number of excellent armed reconnaissance missions, and also provided superb Kiowa Warrior and Apache Attack Helicopter close support for the units fighting in An Najaf and several other smaller cities. Over the next week they also supported additional air assaults and ground operations in which we destroyed the enemy in two more major cities, Karbala and Al Hillah, each with a population of over 500,000 and in a number of smaller cities and town as well.

We also continued Apache and Kiowa deep armed reconnaissance missions during those later ground attacks, achieving considerable success with each and amassing impressive "BDA." We then air assaulted forces over one hundred kilometers north and cleared South Baghdad, as well as Al Mahmudiya and Iskandiriya (two cities south of Baghdad). Simultaneously, we air assaulted a battalion several hundred kilometers into the western desert to establish a base at Hi airfield and to secure a critical dam and clear the city (Haditha) near it, a mission from which we were released only a couple of weeks ago.

Throughout the heavy combat phase of this operation, our soldiers performed magnificently and our commanders led from the front. Our air cavalry squadron commander, for example, had two aircraft "shot out from under him" - although he made it back to the assembly

area without problems each time (in all, we had 22 aircraft hit by enemy fire, with all returning to base safely). He and his crews pioneered tactics for using Kiowa Warrior aircraft over built-up areas, and they destroyed an astonishing number of enemy vehicles, weapons systems, arms caches (enormous everywhere we went), and personnel. (He has already received a Distinguished Flying Cross and will soon receive a Silver Star as well). Another of our great aviation leaders - An Apache company commander - returned from a battle wounded by shrapnel and with an unexploded RPG round and two 57 mm rounds sticking out of his aircraft (EOD took care of the enemy rounds and medics took care of the captain, and he was back into the fight two days later).

Our ground commanders led equally heroically. Brigade, batallion, and company commanders were repeatedly at the point of decision, such as in Karbala where the 2nd Brigade Commander personally organized, under mortar and small arms fire, the massing of five infantry companies and a tank company, supported by Apaches, Kiowa Warriors, artillery, mortars, and close air support (the Air Forces supported us very well throughout) to take down a particularly determined enemy element in one building. During that fight and others, we also had medics who were wounded but continued to work on their fellow troopers until they succumbed to their own wounds or were forced onto a stretcher by their fellow troopers. As you would expect, there are also countless stories of our squad and platoon leaders on the ground inspiring their men through heroic personal example. We even had a Brigade Command Sergeant major react to an ambush of a column of vehicles by diving from his HMMWV, maneuvering on the enemy, and knocking them out with a grenade, thereby saving the column from what likely have been substantial casualties.

The fighting was tough for quite some time. Indicative of that is the fact that we fired over 3,500 rounds of artillery, employed about 150 sorties of close air support (including use of precision munitions to take out Ba'ath Party Militia barracks and headquarters, as well as paramilitary bases, in each of the cities we took), shot 14 tactical missiles (each of which clears an entire grid square), expended over 45,000 rounds of Apache and Kiowa Warrior machine gun ammunition, and used tons of everything else from small arms through TOW missiles. Every infantry unit engaged in close combat at some point, every artillery battery fired multiple missions, and every attack aviation unit conducted numerous close support and armed recon missions.

The intense fighting came to an end when we moved to South Baghdad, which we cleared and we were linked up with the battalion we'd give to 3rd Infantry Division clear the Baghdad Airport terminal and several Special Republican Guard locations. (That battalion had a huge fight defending against a fierce counterattack the night after 3 ID took the airport. Fortunately, the enemy never realized that the forward looking infrared radar on our new TOW missile system allowed our soldiers to see them

massing at night well beyond the range at which they could even see our forces. This enabled our troopers to hammer the enemy with close air, artillery, and mortars before they even knew we saw them). While conducting the detailed clearance operations in south Baghdad and in several cities south of there, we still engaged in small fights and took nearly 20 casualties, and our snipers and our infantry units killed a couple dozen more enemy during that "slower" period.

Throughout our operations, we suffered relatively light casualties considering the number of enemy killed. To date, we've lost 3 soldiers in combat in Iraq and had 84 wounded in action. Last night, we had a twilight Memorial Day service for those Screaming Eagles who lost their lives in Iraq.

Following a week in South Baghdad, we air assaulted 500 kilometers further north to Mosul. Our current area of operations encompasses that city (the 2nd or 3rd largest in Iraq, with approximately 1.8 million people) and the rest of northern Iraq. We now have coalition forces too - one company of Albanian Infantry in land Rovers and nearly two companies of Free Iraqi Forces on foot with captured weapons.

We have been successful in establishing security in Mosul and are now engaged in a host of activities designed to get life for the citizens here back to normal - and then to make it better than normal. We have worked closely with the remaining police (about 3,000 are on the streets and they are gradually becoming productive), food distribution folks, banking officials, fuel bureaucrats, wheat harvesting managers and farmers, customs and trade officials, school and university administrators, etc. We've rebuilt bridges, collected and secured huge amounts of the weaponry and ammunition taken out of the former 5th Iraqi corps ammunition storage point (a massive facility approximately 10 square kilometers in size), and we've cleared streets of battlefield debris gotten power and water functioning again, and helped with a variety of other tasks. Particularly notable is that we were able to facilitate the selection of an interim city/province government, led by an interim mayor whose brother and cousin were executed by Saddam and who was forcibly retired from the Army (as a Major General) in 1993 for plotting against Saddam. He is widely respected and seems to be a capable individual, and we're doing all that we can to help him and the interim government - which has representatives from all ethnic groups in this uniquely diverse city - achieve success. All of this has been quite challenging given the ethnic diversity and numerous new political parties. And it has been compounded by each mullah, sheik, priest, Kurdish leader, retired general, government ministers, and former exile having an urgent need to meet with us personally and privately - and none has ever had a short conversation in his life!

Our lines of communication now stretch over 1,200 kilometers - from Kuwait to Northern Iraq - and, were it not for our helicopters, we could never have survived this long logistically. We have truly "lived off the Hook" for

much of our time in Iraq, although both rail and truck systems have gradually developed to the point that emergency resupply by Chinook and Blackhawk has become less necessary. (Nonetheless, our air crews still flew over 10,000 hours in the past 30 days and just under 10,000 hours the previous 30-day period as well.) And recently, we were able to get C-130s to land at one of the three major airfields we control.

In the end, as always in our Division's history, our troopers have found solutions to every challenge and they have resolved countless ambiguous situations. We are all particularly proud of our thousands of "strategic corporals" - the small unit leaders who have had to make snap decisions, often in life-or-death situations, that have potentially strategic implications. They've consistently done wonderfully.

This has in short, been an incredible experience, and it has been a true privilege to be "Eagle 6" during this time. I know that you appreciate how I feel in that regard. Beyond that, I used to wonder why old men got choked up talking about their comrades; I now know why.

With thanks for your support of the soldiers of your Division,

Air Assault!

Very Respectfully,

David H. Petraeus

This Article provided by MG Ben Harrison, USA-Ret.

Hi folks -

Very interesting perspective from a Marine Lt. Col on 1 July:

Hey Guys, sorry it's been so long since I've sent anything but a quick note to you individually. How everything have been pretty hectic since the end of hostilities and the start of the real war. Despite what the assholes in the press like to say over and over:

- 1) We did expect some armed resistance from the Ba'ath Party and Feydaheen;
- 2) It isn't any worse than expected;
- 3) Things are getting better each day, and
- 4) The morale of the troops is A-1, except for the normal bitching and griping.

My brief love affair with the press, especially the guys who had the cajones to be embedded with the troops during the fighting, is probably over, especially since we are back being criticized by the same Roland Heady types that use to hand around the Palestine Hotel drinking Baghdad Bob's whiskey and parroting his ridiculous B.S.

I'm in Baghdad now, since SpOpComm 5 is relocated here from Qatar. It looks, sounds and smells about the same but at least you can get maker's mark at the

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local OC. We came up in mid-June to help set up operation Scorpion an Sidewinder. It represents a major (and long overdue) shift in tactics. Instead of being sitting ducks for the ragheads we now are going after the worthless pieces of fecal matter. (O'd Note: VERY understated!)

I'm no longer baby-sitting the pukers from CNN and the canned hams from the networks, but have a combat mission coordinating a bunch of A teams, seeking, finding and rooting out the mostly non-Iraqis that are well-armed, well-paid (in U.S. dollars) and always waiting to wait for the press and then shoot some GI in the back in the midst of a crowd.

The only reason the GIs are pissed (not demoralized) is that they cannot touch, must less waste, those taunting bags of gas that scream in their faces and riot on cue when they spot a camera man from ABC, BBC, CBS, CNN or NBC. If they did, then they know the next nightly new will be about how chaotic things are and how much the Iraqi people hat us.

Some do. But the vast majority don't and more and more see that the GIs don't start anything, are by and large friendly, and very compassionate, especially to kids and old people. I saw a bunch of 19 year-olds from the 82nd Airborne not return fire coming from a mosque until they got a group of elderly civilians out of harm's way. So did the Iraqis.

A bunch of bad guys used a group of women and children as human shields. The GIs surrounded them and negotiated their surrender fifteen hours later and when they discovered a three year-old girl had been injured by the big tough guys throwing her down a flight of stairs, the GIs called in a MedVac helicopter to take her and her mother to the nearest field hospital. The Iraqis watched it all, and there hasn't been a problem in that neighborhood since. How many such stories, and there are hundreds of them, ever get reported in fair and balanced press? You know, nada. The civilians who have figured it out faster than anyone are the local teenagers. They watch the GIs and try to talk to them and ask questions about America and now wear wraparound sunglasses, GAP T-shirts, Dockers (or even better Levis with the red tags) and Nikes (or Egyptian knock-offs, but with the "swoosh") and love to listen to AFN when the GIs play it on their radios. They participate less and less in the demonstrations and help keep us informed when a wannabe bad-assholes up in the neighborhood. The younger kids are going back to school again. Don't have to listen to some mullah rant about the Koran ten hours a day, and they get a hot meal. They see the same GIs who man the corner checkpoint, helping clear the playground, install new swingsets and create soccer fields. I watched a bunch of kids playing baseball in one playground, under the supervision of a couple of GIs from Oklahoma. They weren't very good but were having fun, probably more then most Little Leaguers.

The place is still a mess but most of it has been for years. But the hospitals are open and are in the process of

being brought into the 21st Century. The MOs and visiting surgeons from home are teaching their docs new techniques and one American pharmaceutical company (you know, the kind that all the hippies like to scream about as greedy) donated enough medicine to stock 45 hospital pharmacies for a year...Safe water is more available...Electricity has been restored to pre-war levels but saboteurs keep cutting the lines. And, the old Ba'ath big shots are upset because they can't get fuel for their private generators. One actually complained to General Mckeirnan, who told him it was a rough world.

The MPs are screening the 80,000 Iraqi police force and rehabbing the ones that weren't goons, shakedown artists or torturers like they did in East Berlin, Kosovo and Afghanistan. There are dual patrols of Iraqi cops and U.S./U.K./Polish MPs now in most of the larger cities. Basra has 3.5 million inhabitants. Mosul is a city of 2 million. Kirkuk has 1 million. How many and hundreds of other small towns have not had riots or shootings? The vast majority.

The six U.K. cops were killed in a small Shiite town by the ex-cops they were re-habbing. According to a Royal marine colonel I talked to, the town now has about twenty permanent vacancies in its police force...Mick, he's a big potato eater from Belfast named Huggins and knows how to handle terrorists after twenty years fighting with the IRA. He sends his regards and says he'd love to have you here. Thinks you'd make a great police chief, even though the cops would be more frightened of you than the local hoods (then he laughed)

I heard one doofus on MSNBC the other night talk about how "nearly 60" GIs have been killed since 01 May. The truth is that 21 GIs have been killed in combat, mostly from ambush, from 01 May through 30 June. Another 29 have been killed by accidents or other causes (two drowned while swimming in the Tigris).

The [MSNBC turd] is the same jerk who reported on the air that "dozens of GIs" were badly burned when two RPGs hit a truck belonging to an engineer Battalion that was parked by a construction site. The truck was hit and burned, three GIs received minor injuries (including the driver who burnt his hand) and three warriors of Allah were properly sent to enjoy their 72 slave girls in Paradise. Hell of a way to get laid.

A mosque in that shit hole Fallujah blew up this morning while the local imam, a creep named Fahlil (who was one of the biggest local loudmouths that frequently appeared on CNN) was helping a Syrian Hamas member teach eight teenagers how to make belt bombs. Right away the local Feyhadéen propaganda group started wailing that the Americans hit it with a TOW missile (If they had there wouldn't have been any mosque left!) and the usual suspects took to the streets for CNN and BBC. One fool was dragging round a piece of tin with blood on it, claiming it was part of the missile.

The cameras rolled and the idiot started repeating his story, then one of my guys asked him in Arabic where he had left the rag he usually wore around his face that made

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him look like a girl. He was a local leader of the Feyhadeen. We took the clown in custody and were asked rather indignantly by the twit from BBC if we were trying to shut up "the poor man who had seen his mosque and friends blown up." I told the airy-fairy who the raghead was and if he knew Arabic (which he obviously didn't) he'd know he was a Palestinian. I suggested we take him down to the local jail and we'd lock him and his cameraman in a cell with the "poor man" and they could interview him until we took him to headquarters. They declined the invitation. Guess what played on the Bullshit Broadcasting System that evening? Did the Americans blow up a mosque? See the poor man who is still in a state of shock over losing his mosque and relatives? Yep. Our friend the Palestinian.

Our search and destroy missions are largely at night, free of reporters and generally terrifying to those brave warriors of Allah. The only thing that frightens them more is hearing the word "Gitmo". The word is out that a trip to Guantanamo Bay is not a Caribbean vacation and they usually start squealing like the little mice they are, when an interrogator mentions "gitmo". No wonder the international Red cross, the national council of churches and the French keep protesting about the place. They know it has proven to be very effective in keeping several hundred real fanatical psychopaths in check and very frankly would rather see them cut loose to go kill some more GIs or innocent Americans, just to make. W. look bad.

We have about 200 really bad guys in custody now and probably will park them in the desert behind a trip roll of razor wire, backed up by a couple of Bradleys pointed their way, if they decide to riot. Maybe a few will get to Gitmo but most are human garbage that wouldn't take on your five-year old grandson face-to-face. The more we go after them and not vice-versa I think we will see the sniper attacks go down. Yeah, they'll get lucky now and then, but it's showtime, fellows.

Our first objective is to get the die-hards off the street (or make them too scared to come out in them) and destroy their caches of weapons (we have collected more than 227,000 AK-47s and that is only the tip of the iceberg; Curly bought nearly a million of them from our pal Vladimir), then cut off their money supply, mostly from Syria and Lebanon. We must continue to get public services up and running, so the local families can get water, sewage and garbage service; electricity, public transportation; oil fields and refineries working and a Dinar that won't halve in value every month.

It's going to be a long haul (remember it too 10-15 years in Japan and West Germany) but if we don't stick with it, nobody else will, and we'll have some other looney running the place again.

This place has greater potential than Saudi Arabia (bunch of goat-herders who stuck black gold) or Iran (weird dudes who can't run a rug bazaar much less a major country).

I keep telling myself even the Democrats can't be that

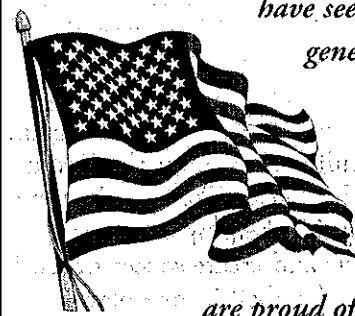
self-destructive. But then I look at the current line-up. The cram of the crap. If that lying lesbian bitch ever gets elected we're really in trouble. (O'D NOTE: AAAAMEN!!! Very precise and correct description of the scummy Sen. from NY.] by we, I mean the whole world. She'll slide just plain Bill in as the Secretary-General of the U.N. and then the whole world will be trying to take our great country...the greatest ever (and that's coming from an ex-Canuck) down and civilization with it.

Armageddon, here we come. Remember, it's located on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Enough of that cheery speculation. The good news is that General Schoonmaker is going to be appointed chief of Army and the old man is coming to Tampa to run the SpOps desk at Centcomm. He's tops and will be getting his second star. To me it means that SpOPs will be more predominant in future operations and after 18 years as GB, maybe I'll have a shot at a bird-level combat command. The old man asked me to come to MacDill and be His ACS but I told him after I spent four months changing the diapers of the media types, I wanted to go back to action. Hence, my current gig. As the movie quoted old General Patton, "God help me, I love it" I do. Nothing more satisfying than working with the BEST damn soldiers in the world, flushing real human poop down the drain and giving some folks a chance at trying freedom for a change. They may learn to like it and then my great-great-grandson won't have to worry about some maniac trying to destroy the planet.

My tour is over at the end of August, and I plan to return to Tampa, brief the old man, then head to San Rafael and see my two sweethearts. I'd like to visit my parents in Toronto and my brother in London, before taking on a trip across the country. Just like any other family. It will charge my batteries before I end up back in some other shit...er, interesting and challenging location. I hope to see most of you and ask for some advice, not support. I know I've had that all along. Thanks.

Now about that Maker's mark. God Bless America.
Mark.



"The world has witnessed the skill and honor and resolve of our military in the course of battle. We have seen the character of this new generation of American Armed Forces. We've seen their daring against ruthless enemies and their decency to an oppressed people. Millions of Americans are proud of our military, and so am I. I am honored to be the Commander-In-Chief."

*President Bush
at MacDill Air force Base, Tampa, Fla., March 26, 2003.*

*This story was told by the CSMA at a Soldiers B...
recorded by Chaplain James Henderson, stationed there.*

d at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, and

Our Commander in Chief

At Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, DC, recently, the Command Sergeant Major of the Army, (CSMA), Jack Tilley, was with a group of people visiting the wounded soldiers. He saw a Special Forces soldier who had lost his right hand and suffered several wounds on his face and side of his body.

The CSMA wanted to honor him and show him respect without offending, but what can you say or do on such a situation that will encourage and uplift! How do you shake the right hand of a soldier who had none? He decided to act as though the hand was not missing and gripped the soldier's wrist while speaking words of comfort and encouragement to him.

But there was another man in that group of visitors who had even brought his wife with him to visit the wounded who knew exactly what to do. This man reverently took the soldier's stump of a hand in both of his hands, bowed at the bedside and prayed for him. When he finished the prayer he stood up, bent over the soldier and kissed him on the head and told him that he loved him. What a powerful expression of love for one of our wounded heroes!

And what a beautiful Christlike example! What kind of man would do such a thing? It was the wounded man's Commander-in-Chief, George W. Bush; President of the United States.

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**RIPCORD
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