

June 2012

# The ORION GALLIVANTER

## 1917 - 1919

*Dickebush Sector*  
*Mount Kemmel*  
*Vierstraat Ridge*  
*East Poperignhe Line*  
*Hindenburg Line*  
*LaSelle River St. Souplet*  
*Meuse-Argonne St. Mihiel*



## 1940-1945

*Makin*  
*Majuro*  
*Eniwetok*  
*Saipan*  
*Okinawa*

## 2001-Present

*Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan*  
*Iraqi Freedom*  
*Noble Eagle*

# 150 Years of History

Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment will mark 150 years since the American Civil War as the troops lead the world's largest St. Patrick's Day parade here on Saturday.

More than 800 Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's 69th Infantry Regiment and support elements, including the 42nd Infantry Division Band, will lead the city parade.

The regiment mobilized for service in the American Civil War in April 1861, serving in the First Battle of Bull Run through the summer. The regiment returned to New York, only to see many of its members again muster as part of the 69th Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The unit, part of the famed Irish Brigade, would go on to serve in numerous campaigns in 1862 and serve through the end of the war.

The battalion concludes the annual parade celebration with awards and honors at the battalion headquarters at the New York State Armory on Lexington Avenue. The battalion will host military leaders to present awards to the

unit Soldiers of the Year.

Joining the battalion this year will be Phil Taylor, artist for the American Fallen Soldiers Project, presenting a portrait of one of the unit members killed in the war in Iraq in 2005, Sgt. Kenneth VonRonn.



VonRonn, 20, of Bloomingburg, New York, was a combat medic who died January 6, 2005 in Baghdad, Iraq when an improvised explosive device struck his Bradley fighting vehicle. He was assigned to the battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

The 69th Infantry, based at the Lexington Avenue Armory here in New York City, has served as the St. Patrick's Day parade Honor Guard since 1851. Anti-immigrant emotions in that era often led to violence and the Irish troops participated to ensure the safety of the celebration. The National Guard troops of Irish heraldry have led the city parade in every year since.

The Lexington Avenue Armory was listed as a National Historic Landmark in June 1996, and has housed the 69th Infantry since construction was finished in 1906. New York National Guard Soldiers have marched away from the historic building to World

# THE ORION GALLIVANTER



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## Commander's Message

To my fellow Gallivanter-

The 27th IBCT is in full swing now with Soldiers spanning the globe and serving our nation's call. As in the past so many times before the Soldiers of the 27th have endured many challenges and changes to their mission as well as several adjustments to their manning levels. From all reports, I can assure you that they are performing their mission with a vigor and determination that will ensure excellence in everything they do. They have provided outstanding support, training and mentoring to their partners and in some cases faced enemy attacks head on and judiciously defeated them in place.

On the home front the Brigade's Rear Detachment is working closely with the unit family readiness groups ensuring that Soldier family needs are being tended to. With regard to the Division Association activities, we remain engaged with the Soldiers overseas and stand ready to greet these fine warriors as they begin their return home in the coming months ahead.

As the majority of our officers have been very busy supporting or even serving with the Deployed Brigade, there will not be a reunion this year. Instead we will begin preparations for a welcome home reunion for next year after the Soldiers have returned and have transitioned back to their normal lives. Until then, I will keep you posted on our progress.

For our veterans here in the states, please enjoy your summer and keep our deployed Soldiers in your prayers. And for our deployed members, stay safe and take care of your battle buddies.

I remain yours in the 27th,

GARY S. YAPLE  
27th DIV Commander

## Editor's Corner



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Fellow 27th Veterans,

For the second time since assuming the role as editor for the Gallivanter, these editions are being written and prepared while in a deployed status. The Stars of Orion are once again away on distant shores.

This deployment is interesting in that we are performing missions in several different countries at the same time. We have combat and support elements in Afghanistan, Security and Command elements in Kuwait, Security elements in Bahrain and sections of our BN's in New York and in Mississippi. Whether at home or deployed, our Soldiers are performing their myriad of missions in the professional manner that our state and our country have always expected from the 27th.

Although the 27th BDE would have preferred to remain as one element, the situation that we find ourselves in does have a plus side. Numerous Active Duty, Reserve and fellow Guardsmen will have a chance to work with our Soldiers and will get to know the level of professionalism and the caliber of our character. In the future, these interactions will be remembered and will with hope, allow us to draw on the networks that we've established.

Sincerely,

Your Editor

Robert Romano

*(Note: The woman in the picture is recording artist, Kelly Pickler who visited the troops on a USO tour. She mentioned that she collected patches and of course, I felt she needed a 27th patch as well.)*

## 150 Years of History

*The 1-69th leads the way*

*(Continued from page 1)*

Wars I and II and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Lexington Avenue Armory has also served as an important cultural venue, serving as the home of the 1913 Armory Show which introduced Modern Art to America, as well as fashion shows today. The New York State Division is currently preparing to execute a \$3 million rehabilitation of the armory facade thanks to money provided by the National Guard Bureau.

The 69th Regiment's history and lineage begins when predecessor units were organized in December 1849 in New York City from companies of the 1st Irish Regiment.

Over a year later, the 2nd Regiment was organized in October 1851. A month later, the 2nd Irish Regiment was mustered into the New York State Militia as the 69th Infantry Regiment.

The regiment received its nickname as the "Fighting 69th" from Confederate General Robert E. Lee during the Battle of Malvern Hill in 1862 in Virginia.

In World War I the 69th was redesignated the 165th Infantry and fought as part of the 42nd Infantry Division, the Rainbow Division, the second U.S. division to arrive in France. The famous author of the poem "Trees," Sgt. Joyce Kilmer, was a scout in the 69th Infantry and died while serving in France.

In World War II the 69th was part of the New York National Guard's 27th Infantry Division and invaded the Islands of Makin and Saipan and fought on Okinawa.

In 2004 the battalion was mobilized for service in Operation Iraqi Freedom. As part of the 256th Brigade Combat Team the battalion secured "Route Irish", the road from Baghdad International Airport to downtown Baghdad. At one time this was termed the most dangerous road in Iraq and the 1-69th turned that around.

Hundreds of battalion members were assigned to the 2008 deployment of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to Afghanistan for Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, the training and mentoring mission for the developing Afghan security forces.

During the autumn storms in 2011, 1-69th Soldiers joined a Task Force of NY Army and Air National Guard members to assist in recovery efforts.

The battalion again provided hundreds more of its Soldiers to the 27th Brigade mobilization in January 2012 as troops now trained at Camp Shelby, Miss. The Soldiers will conduct missions in Kuwait or Afghanistan and are expected to return home in early 2013.



*NEW YORK-- New York Army National Guard Private Cheyanne Jose Pena (center, right), a member of the 1st Battalion 69th Infantry, joins General Raymond Odierno, the Chief of Staff of the Army in cutting the Army Birthday Cake during a ceremony in Times Square on Thursday, June 14, the 237th Birthday of the United States Army. Major General Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General of New York, also took part in the event. Traditionally the oldest and youngest Soldiers present at an Army Birthday celebration cut the cake. Also taking part was Buddy Valastro (right) from the television show "Cake Boss" who made the special cake.*



*SHINDAND AIR BASE, AFGHANISTAN -- New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Joseph Bieler, right, and Command Sgt. Maj. David Oliver, of the Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, uncase the battalion colors during the unit's transfer of authority ceremony here May 26. The 2-108th is working with the Afghan National Security Forces in a Security Assistance and Advisory role.*



## 27TH BSTB SOLDIERS TRAIN FOR AIRPORT MISSION

HATTIESBURG, Miss -- Some New York Army National Guard troops have shifted gears from communications to security in preparation for their upcoming deployment to Bahrain.

Almost two dozen Soldiers of C Company, 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion used the Hattiesburg - Laurel Regional Airport here to learn airport security operations March 12 to 14. The unit is part of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and brigade Soldiers are at Camp Shelby, Mississippi preparing to go overseas.

Airport security is one of several missions C Company may be performing in Bahrain, according to 2nd Lt. Matthew Carpenter, a platoon leader in the company and officer-in-charge of the airport training.

The airport is the ideal place to learn how to work with airport personnel and learn their procedures, said Carpenter, of Hamburg, N.Y.

"The sole reason we're here is get experience working at an airport," he said. "We can step back, watch how they do things, pick up a few pointers and work them into our standing operating procedures."

Originally a signal company, the Soldiers learned how to provide security in the airport terminal and the airport perimeter, said Sgt. 1st Class David Colliton, of Florida, N.Y. They may be augmenting host-nation security in Bahrain, he added.

"We have to get in the mindset that we're a security

force," he said. "I guess you could say we're a back-up force."

To do that, they had to learn how to back off, Colliton explained. In their initial exercises involving roleplayers, the Soldiers tended to be too aggressive, doing full vehicle searches, he added.

By the second day they'd assimilated lessons from the previous day training, tailoring their actions to the lower threat level, learning how to assist the people they'll encounter, while acting as extras eyes and ears for the police, Colliton explained.

"We're there simply supporting them," he explained. "A lot of it is going to be providing customer service."

Their presence alone should deter trouble, said Pfc. Aaron Saint-Aude, of Westbury, N.Y.

"It's definitely a shift in the mission," he said.

He's looking forward to seeing Bahrain and hopes to see some tourist attractions while off-duty, Saint-Aude said.

"I like traveling," he said. "I'm curious to see what it's like in the Middle East, culture-wise."

The Soldiers are continuing to train here for their Bahrain missions.

"Our heads are in the game, looking forward to going on the deployment," Carpenter said.



*HATTIESBURG, Miss -- Spc. Matthew Shearer, of Voorheesville, N.Y., inspects the exterior of an airliner following a flight. Shearer belongs to C Company, 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, which used the airport to learn airport security operations March 12 to 14. Airport security is one of several missions C Company may be performing when it deploys to Bahrain. The unit is part of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and brigade Soldiers were at Camp Shelby, Mississippi preparing to go overseas.*

## HOW IT HAPPENED

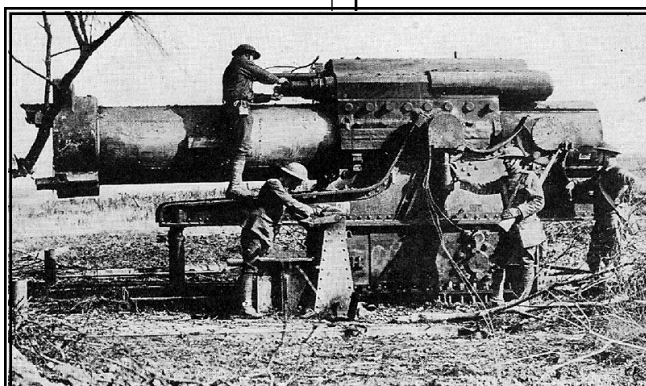
### Part 8: "Marne"

October 4<sup>th</sup> we had a sad accident. A fellow in Co. B on labor detail was ordered to dig some dirt from under an overhanging side of a pit from which we were taking dirt to repair a road. The overhanging side caved in on him burying him alive and we could do nothing for him. At 5 A.M. a heavy barrage started and we understood that the French were advancing under our artillery fire. Some French railway large caliber guns were placed a few hundred ft. from my tent and I soon got used to being rocked to sleep by the jar caused by their firing which was one shot every 18 minutes. Fritz was dropping some large shells right in our neighborhood that day, which was Sunday. We heard the Central powers had asked President Wilson for an armistice, visions of going home flashed through our minds. My happiness was soon shattered when I was advised that I was detailed to Marne for two weeks duty in ammunition dump; had to take all equipment as the outfit was liable to move before we were relieved. Marne was no nice place to go as it was under constant shell fire and work night and day. We lived in cellars and bomb proofs and did most of our work at night preparing shells to be taken up front and loading trucks, but there was plenty of work to be done during the day time such as sorting the different gas, shrapnel, ball shrapnel, high explosives and other kinds of shells so that we could find them in the dark as we were allowed no lights.

At 8 P.M. each night as regular as the days came and went, Fritz dropped 20 shells in town; about this time the german ammunition was beginning to get poor and from 3 to 8 of the 20 shells would be defective and not explode or be what we called "Duds." This daily 8 P.M. serenade usually

consisted of 5 gas shells and the rest shrapnel. The second night I was trying to get in 40 winks of sleep in our bomb proof, having kicked all the rats away from my corner, when I was awakened by hearing my name being paged from outside. I went and found that my bunkie Benson, in the dark had fallen in a large hole. After derricking him out we both went to sleep. Some large caliber French guns were banging away real near us and sleep was practically impossible; we would just be dozing off when "wham" goes a kiss for the Kaiser from the gun named "Dutch Cleanser" and sleep was off again. Having your mind brought back to earth like this when just dozing off is like taking a ride in a fast elevator kind of brings your stomach up where your adams apple is supposed to be. This was the kind of peace we were giving the central powers and this was also how much time we were giving them for an armistice so that they could prepare to keep us from advancing. Our next stop was the breweries in Berlin. "Let's Go."

The night of October 9, 23 received orders to move at once. No sleep the night before last nor last night; now we must travel all night tonight. A big drive was on and we heard that if we could get the Boche beyond the next hill we would have him in the open for 23 miles. Our orders were to move to Le Clair but we got on the wrong road some way and ended up in Chattencourt where we had a dandy ammunition detail wished on us. We worked here until about 5 A.M. in mud and water up over our ankles. Finally we were relieved and wet, tired and hungry found our way to the dugouts in Le Clair where after loading a few more trucks to go forward, we went down in the dugouts and got a few hours sleep. Later we were advised that by our working all that night at Chattencourt we saved a regiment of the 26<sup>th</sup> Division infantry from being annihilated as the artillery was putting over the barrage that they were advancing under,



**SILENCED GERMAN BARKERS**

*German 38-cm. gun captured by members of the 106th Field Artillery of the 27th Division while operating with the 33rd Division. The photo shows the hoist and railroad tracks used in handling ammunition.*

had nearly run out of ammunition, so we were glad we did the work. The big barrage had been going on for three days and we heard the infantry had made big gains. Three quarters of their schedule had been gained ahead of schedule. They sure were showing the Boche the real way to play war.

About 5 P.M. of October 9<sup>th</sup> about 250 of our planes passed over our heads on their way to the Boche lines where they dropped bombs and propaganda. We didn't realize previous to this, that there were so many aeroplanes in the world. The air was black with them in battle formation and the air was full of the whirl of their motors. We counted over 200 and there were some that passed before we could count them. It surely was a sight never to be forgotten and the report was that they bombed and blew up two Hun railway stations and 3 ammunition dumps. Of course the Boche anti air craft gave them a welcome but we heard that we only lost 6 planes out of the 250 which is a very good average. In our positions in Le Clair we built a kitchen and mess under some old camouflage in a gun position; we had our first mashed potatoes in a long time made from evaporated potatoes. Everything at the front must be in cans on account of the gas spoiling any food that was fresh so we got evaporated potatoes and vegetables which when soaked and cooked sure tasted good to us after the "Canned Willie and hard tack."

We often saw the Boche planes come over and burn down some of our large captive observation balloons and the two observers flutter to the earth in their parachutes. Fritz dropped a lot of shells and bombs around us in our dugouts here at Le Clair, trying to locate the French naval guns at Marne but we could laugh at them as we were 25 feet under ground. During all this time we had permanent gas sentinels whose duty it was to stay awake at night and rouse us in case of gas attacks but Fritz didn't put over heavy concentration of gas in our neighborhood to bother us any.

Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, Bob Powers and I got a day off to try and secure supplies for our detachment. We walked from our dugouts at Le Clair to the shattered town of Marne; here we caught a ride on a truck to Theirville where the commissary was located, also a Y.M.C.A. commissary that had quite a few supplies. We had collected 200 francs from

the boys at Le Clair and started in to purchase some delicacies to relieve the grind of regular army fare. At the Y.M.C.A. we bought jam, cigars, chewing gum and at the commissary we bought flour, syrup, baking powder and then the job of getting it back to the gang. After waiting a couple of hours and asking everyone we saw, we finally found a truck going our way so we loaded the stuff on and started merrily on our way. The truck only went to within 8 kilometers of our positions, so at 10 o'clock at night we unloaded and decided we had better get some sleep, so down in a cellar with the rats we laid ourselves down with an old blanket for cover. We woke in the morning after a sound sleep, stiff and cold, but after a short run and some exercise we warmed up. Next for food. We walked down the road a couple of kilos and found some soldiers cooking breakfast and horned in and got our share. Then back to our cache of supplies. About noon along came a truck which we hailed and got a lift. This landed us within a mile of our destination. The Bob stayed to watch the supplies while I went for help. I told the boys where Bob was and after digging up a wheelbarrow we started back. After the wheelbarrow was loaded, the boys put the rest of the stuff on their shoulders and we carted the supplies back to the dugouts. Next day the cooks got busy and we had doughnuts for the first time in months.

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*From the Historian:*

Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, was Armed Forces Day. To commemorate this day and to show their appreciation for local service members, the Genesee Country Village & Museum in Mumford, NY hosted a Military Heritage Day, dedicated to New York service men and women of all eras.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Division Association was in attendance, and material from our Archives and from personal collections specific to the 27<sup>th</sup> in WWI, WWII, the WTC, Iraq, and Afghanistan were on display. There were be other displays as well, including vehicles, re-enactors, and live weapons firing demonstrations. I encourage you to attend this annual event if you will be anywhere near western NY next year.

For more information, visit on the web at <http://www.gcv.org/> or contact me directly.

*Next: "Verdun"*

# An Essay on "MAIL CALL"

There are numerous events, conditions, situations, etc. that are universal to any person who has ever served in any military in any country across our planet. Rites of passage, camaraderie, wrenching fear, stress, boredom - we've all gone through it.

Beyond basic training and outright combat, with few exceptions, you would be hard pressed to find something more common and unifying yet so basic in the minds of veterans as...and no, I'm talking field latrines...I'm talking about, "mail call".

Beyond a good chow hall, a warm place to sleep and a clean quality crapper, nothing can raise or lower the morale of a military member faster than the thought of mail call. While it certainly has lost some of its luster in recent years due to our plethora of electronic communication that has become prevalent to the point that Soldiers are carrying cell phones into combat, mail call is still a powerful event in the daily lives of the military.

Mail Call almost seems out of place in many military settings. You're expected to be part of a team where every movement, every action, every event effects the lives of everyone as a group. But with mail call, everyone is on their own. You aren't wondering if best guy in the unit or the worst guy is getting mail - you're wondering if YOUR name is going to be called. "Did I get any mail?" is the thought that bounces around your brain as the day moves ever closer to that particular hour.

Regardless if you're expecting mail or not, you're always hopeful.

But there is an etiquette to mail call. You can't seem too hopeful - that's just wrong. Those that appear too hopeful are clearly tempting the Mail Call gods and will be punished. You certainly can't be too certain that certainly you aren't getting any mail. The Mail Gods will be offended for your lack of faith! A foolhardy endeavor to be sure!

No, in this situation mild indifference with just a touch of feigned interest is the method of the day. You'll keep that expression on your face regardless of the outcome.

And of course, you don't actually look directly at the mail clerk. The trick here is to continue the mild indifference by looking off in to the distance - a sort of heavily disassociated artist kind of pondering on the nature of things look usually works. Or you strike up a random conversation with the person next to you. Topic? Does it matter? Its mail call time! Babble on - it means nothing to the Mail Gods! Avert your eyes!



If your name is called, again - etiquette arrives to help. You turn your head quickly in the direction of the mail clerk somewhat like a panting dog who just heard a squirrel walking through some leaves. ("Squirrel!") If your name wasn't called you of course must be happy for the person whose name was called. Mutual support shows the Mail Gods that you're a team player!

If your name really doesn't end up being on the list you're expected to shrug it off. "No bother! I really wasn't expecting anything anyway! Pip, pip! There's always tomorrow!" But of course, no matter how you try to hide it, there's always a bit of melancholy. Hoping that there would be something - anything from home.

Anyone can crank out an e-mail. A salutation, a few short lines, maybe a smiley face. The sender feels good; keeping in touch, right? We've grown accustomed to e-mails and text messages and Facebook "comments" - words tossed out into the air like confetti off of a parade float. And quite often just as quickly forgotten. Void of emotion and depth, they are deleted, ignored or become stuck in an inbox.

When you're in the military, there's a connection like no other when you receive real mail. A letter, a card or a box is a physical link to the receiver and the sender. There's an element of interaction that's missing in our oh, so modern but oh, so bland technical world. Nothing can replace it.

Those who haven't served will never understand the power of a simple letter. Something held and read, re-read and then carefully tucked away by the receiver in a footlocker, backpack or a map case with a soft, grateful smile. Something that grows in a pile with miss matched envelopes gently torn on the top from each excited, enthusiastic opening. Some are slightly bulging from enclosed pictures or newspaper clippings. Small manila envelopes contain priceless treasures



that will adorn barracks walls, office desks and field jacket pockets. Every "miss you" card and "I love you Daddy" bit of handmade craft will find its place.

The power of that received mail doesn't arrive on that day that you hear your name called. It's power and its strength is far more subtle. It's not a hammer but a graceful whisper that arrives when it's ready; when it's needed; when it's wanted. It arrives on a day when your spirit is lost, when it realizes that you're too far from home; that your life is moving on without you there and you feel empty.

And that's when you'll pull out that "Miss you Daddy" card, adorned with stickers and a crayon scrawled name, or a plastic sandwich bag filled with colorful fall leaves or a just a plain old letter from an old friend. And that's when you'll smile the deepest or maybe tear up just a bit knowing that someone back home took the time to think of you, to write that letter, to pick out that card, to fill that bag with leaves. That in their minds, you were worth more to them than just a thirty second, two line e-mail or the click of a "Like" button on a computer screen.

The wonderful thing about real mail is that even after the years have gone by, it still retains some of its strength from that first "Mail Call". Around my house in various boxes, pockets of these memories exist from the many years I've been in the military. From the first days when I shipped off to Texas, to my most recent departure from Mississippi. The bundles of mail are a timeline and a testament to the people I've known in my life.

From the early days, butterfly stickers on the envelopes from a high school friend. A group of letters on Air Force Stationery from the girl I had a Basic Training crush on. When I was in North Dakota, the impeccable handwriting of my long time motorcycling friend and brother from another mother. Correspondence from my Aunt, the Catholic Nun comparing the similarities between life in the Military and life in her order. Cards and letters written in an oddly shaded green ink with a flowing cursive - even at 20 paces I can tell my Mom's mailings. A flowing signature in a chestnut brown ink - my father. From the last deployment, cards and letters from my family - always filled with stickers, or handmade crafts or drawings. A letter with an enclosed Saint medal - straight from the Vatican (just in case) from a musician friend.

With some of these mailings, the connected people are still in my life. Others have drifted away and are fleeting in my memories. The mail bundles are a pleasant reminder of those people when I'm rooting through a box looking for something and stumble across those old, faded pages. I'm always compelled to read a few lines and can't help but smile again.

Have to go. Mail call e-mail just came in. My name just might be on the list. Looking for a box of cookies and a handmade stuffed purple frog.



*CAMP SHELBY, MS -- Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team move and treat mock casualties during a mass casualty exercise here March 7. Brigade Soldiers are here preparing to deploy overseas. The casualty exercise and others like it took place during a larger field training exercise which tested the battalion's ability to perform its Afghanistan mission.*



*CAMP SHELBY, MS -- Soldiers of the 27th BCT trained on the new AN/PSQ-20 Enhanced Night Vision Goggles as they prepare to deploy overseas. The AN/PSQ-20 is a hybrid night sight that utilizes image intensification and thermal imaging to create a combined view that provides a Soldier with a heightened situational awareness at night.*

*The system was issued to troops in the 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry. A half day block of instruction trained the Soldiers on use of the PSQ-20 and included a simulated patrol to show the capabilities of the new ENVG's.*

THE SHUTTERBUG PAGE



# First of the 27th to Deploy

CAMP SHELBY, Miss -- Charged with knowledge, enthusiasm and determination, some New York Army National Guard Soldiers have deployed to Kuwait to help safeguard American service members and civilians there.

Soldiers of the Base Defense Operations Cell (BDOC) left here on March 17, and are the first 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team troops to undertake an overseas mission since the brigade deployed to Afghanistan in 2008. Other brigade Soldiers are here preparing to deploy for overseas missions as well.

Numbering over three dozen Soldiers, BDOC's overall mission will be to oversee other Soldiers and contractors providing force protection at bases in Kuwait -- an important job which will also involve other tasks, including emergency management, according to Lt. Col. Robert Bready, the officer-in-charge of BDOC.

"We're not manning the gates ourselves," said Bready, of Highland, N.Y.

A great many American service members, Defense Department employees and contractors live and work at Kuwait bases, he said.

"Risk is always present, no matter where we go," Bready said. "There are a lot of Americans at risk. You never know when a terrorist organization will turn their attention to Kuwait."

Composed mostly of Soldiers from the Brigade's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, BDOC also includes troops from the brigade's 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry and 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, along with the New York Army National Guard's 42nd Combat Aviation Brigade and 69th Infantry Battalion, Bready said. The Soldiers were chosen for their battle command staff experience, he added.

"Our Soldiers are experienced and trained in operations center work," Bready said.

One of those Soldiers is Staff Sgt. Kurt Miller of Whitesboro, N.Y., who described the deployment as "an old mission for a new army," because it involves force protection

for civilians as well. Miller belongs to one of the BDOC's base defense liaison teams, which assesses bases to discover possible vulnerabilities.

"We don't just deal with ourselves, we deal with everybody," he said.

Their training here included classes and online courses on base defense, safety, force protection and overseeing contracts, Miller said. Sgt. 1st Class Marye Hollenbeck, of Stillwater, N.Y., said she enjoyed counter-IED and base defense training.

"It was a lot different than I thought it would be," she said. The Soldiers of BDOC will bring a spectrum of skills to the mission, she added.



He wasn't looking forward to the deployment until he became a member of the base defense liaison team, said Sgt. Mike O'Rourke, of Camillus, N.Y. Doing vulnerability assessments involves driving from place to place, something he enjoys, he added.

"I was a colonel's driver, so I got used to it," he said. His cavalry scout training has given him special knowledge of tactics which will be an asset to the team, he added.

O'Rourke encouraged the Soldiers' families to be supportive.

"My wife is very supportive, and it makes going overseas much easier," he said.

In addition to deploying to Afghanistan with the brigade in 2008, Miller has deployed to Iraq, and has taken part in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations in Haiti and Bosnia. He's enthusiastic about the mission as well.

"I'm with a really cool group of guys and gals, and I'm looking forward to working with them," he said. "It's time. We're ready to move."

Hollenbeck agreed.

"We've done all the training we can do, and it's time to move on and put it to use," she said.

# THE ORION GALLIVANTER



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