

THE 44TH ENGINEER BATTALION DEPLOYS AGAIN

By Second Lieutenant Patrick J. Anderson and Second Lieutenant Jennifer Sanford-Hayes

The 44th Engineer Battalion deployed from Korea in August 2004 to serve in Iraq under the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division. The deployment of the 44th marked the first time that any unit serving in a deployed environment was re-deployed to another theater of operation. This deployment set historic precedents not experienced by any other Army unit during the Global War on Terrorism—or any other conflict.

The 44th Engineer Battalion—also known as the “Broken Heart” Battalion—deployed to Korea from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and landed with the historic invasion force at Inchon, in September 1950. The 44th served on the Korean Peninsula for more than 50 years, making it the longest continuously serving battalion in Korea. With the battalion’s departure, it has left behind a great legacy that will be remembered for years to come.

The Soldiers of the 44th and the rest of the 2d Brigade Combat Team prepared for departure with only a few months notice—a monumental achievement. Getting the Soldiers ready for Operation Iraqi Freedom required not only the efforts of the leaders and the troops deploying but also the support and tireless efforts of those staying behind.

In an effort to recreate the conditions the troops would face in Iraq, the 2d Infantry Division set up contemporary operational environments throughout the western corridor of Korea. The Korean Training Center was the site of a mass conglomeration of units, including infantry, artillery, aviation, and engineers. Contractors posing as Iraqi civilians moved all through the camp, testing the defenses and readiness of forward operating bases (FOBs). A military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT) village was constructed with the help of the Korean Service Corps to augment the

already formidable MOUT training site on the Korean Training Center.

Soldiers getting ready to deploy to Iraq were sent through as much realistic training as possible. They had to react to ambushes; identify and clear improvised explosive devices (IEDs), mines, and booby traps; and conduct MOUT training. Patrolling and handling crowds of inquisitive civilians—any of which could be potential enemies—were heavily emphasized.

Once the 44th Engineer Battalion set foot on the ground in the Middle East, its immediate priority became terrain familiarization and acclimatization at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Major tasks it performed included receiving its vehicles and equipment, as well as new equipment that would allow it to operate in the harsh desert environment. The main focus in Kuwait was combat preparations. There were numerous live-fire exercises, combat loading of all equipment, and rehearsals for the tactical movement into Iraq. Upon completion of these preparations, the 44th conducted a tactical convoy to its FOB in Ar Ramadi, the provincial capital of Al Anbar Province, located west of Fallujah and Baghdad along the Euphrates River.

Army engineers were engaged in a variety of diverse missions during the course of the Global War on Terrorism that encompassed the full spectrum of military engineering. The 44th was also prepared for a variety of missions. These missions included managing, maintaining, and repairing all facilities for two FOBs; performing enemy cache searches throughout the brigade area of operations; performing route clearance missions and IED searches and neutralization; building barriers to protect local government facilities;



Iraqi weapons in front of the battalion headquarters

supporting infantry task forces with engineer support and demolition missions; and performing traditional infantry-type tasks.

As the days became weeks, the 44th developed a better understanding of what their time in Iraq would be like. In September 2004, the 2d Brigade Combat Team of the 2d Infantry Division was given responsibility for Ar Ramadi and the surrounding areas. The 44th contributed significantly to providing a safe and secure environment for the freedom-seeking Iraqi people.

An unexpected task was preparing the Ar Ramadi area for the Iraqi elections held in January 2005. The successful implementation of the democratic process in Iraq stands as a testament to the Soldiers of the 44th. Their efforts in Ar Ramadi helped ensure that the citizens of Iraq were afforded the opportunity to vote. The Soldiers put in long, stressful days constructing fortifications around polling centers, as well as providing security on the day of the elections. Thanks in part to their tireless efforts, no Ar Ramadi citizens were injured by enemy activity while casting their ballot on election day. The Soldiers of the 44th also trained members of the new Iraqi security forces to support the elected government of Iraq and assume responsibility for ensuring a safe and secure environment for the citizens of Iraq. This historic work was critical to our nation's efforts in the Global War on Terrorism.



Detonation of an IED discovered by members of the 44th Engineer Battalion

The missions of the 44th Engineer Battalion gave its Soldiers an opportunity to work with a variety of other military organizations. Members of the Iraqi security forces served beside the Broken Heart Soldiers during the elections. These Iraqi soldiers were integral in providing security to the Iraqi people and demonstrating to them that they are on their way to self-reliance. Members of Bravo Company, 44th Engineer Battalion were also able to work beside engineers from the U.S. Marine Corps, who fought right by their side on many missions.

The mission of the 44th Engineer Battalion continues. Recently, the Soldiers received news of their reassignment. Instead of returning to Korea, the 44th will be reassigned to Fort Carson, Colorado. This will mark the first time the 44th has returned to the United

States since it departed from Fort Bragg in 1948.



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This article is dedicated to seven Soldiers from the 44th Engineer Battalion who lost their lives while defending freedom from the threat of terrorism. They are Private First Class Mark A. Barbret, Private First Class Aaron J. Rusin, Private First Class Andrew M. Ward, Specialist Robert O. Unruh, Sergeant Bennie J. Washington, Staff Sergeant Omer T. Hawkins, and Staff Sergeant Arthur C. Williams.



Soldiers receiving a convoy brief before departing Camp Buehring, Kuwait

