

# TIGER TRACKS

Fall 2005

## The Newsletter of the Steel Tigers 77th Armor Association

### Steel Tigers to Return to Iraq

In November 2005, the Army announced a rotation plan for units deploying to Iraq beginning in mid-2006. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division was identified as one of the units that will be deployed. As part of the 2nd Brigade, the Steel Tigers will continue to hone combat skills while simultaneously preparing for impending missions and deployment. This level of rotational planning helps ensure a degree of predictability for our troops, their families, and the community as a whole. It currently appears that the upcoming rotation continues the Army's 12 months "boots-on-the-ground" policy goal. Knowing what may be in store for a Soldier and his family can help ease the stress associated with a deployment. This timely notification helps Soldiers and their families cope while we remain trained and ready for any mission assigned to us. Having participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom II, our Soldiers have a wealth of experience in the full-spectrum operations they will perform in Iraq. They will continue current efforts to assist the Iraqi people with security, governance and economic development, ultimately leading to Iraqi self-reliance. We have been anticipating an announcement of a potential deployment in support of the Global War on Terror since early this summer. The DOD announcement does not change our training strategy, or the level of preparedness of the Schweinfurt Military Community (SMC) to support every Soldier and family member assigned to the Steel Tigers. We will be fully prepared to deploy, fight and win in support of the Global War On Terrorism and ultimately, return home.

LTC Miciotto Johnson

### My VA Experience

There are many horror stories concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and many are justified. There are also very good experiences. Fortunately, my experiences have been good. To fully understand my experience, you should probably know a little about my history. I started my career as an 11D with a MACV Team and then I was assigned to the 77th Armor. Like many, Vietnam was the beginning for me. However, unlike most, I stayed in the Army and retired as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Sergeant Major. Some of my experiences in EOD did not help the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) I was soon to face.

After retirement, I started my new careers, but soon found out that I "did not play well with the other kids." Then the nightmares, flashbacks (that I did not recognize as flashbacks. I thought I was just daydreaming), memory loss, and job performance problems started. I went from job to job, telling myself that I was going to something better or better pay, which was mostly true, but the real truth was that I was just a step ahead of being fired. At one of my jobs, I was offered the chance to go to their Employee Assistance Program (EAP). It was a good thing for me and the social worker soon told me I had PTSD. I immediately informed her that her diagnosis was "BS," that I did not buy into the PTSD excuses, and that my experiences were not that bad. I soon left that job and found another but the work problems and

my own personal problems got worse. Again, I went to the company EAP program, which told me the same thing, and I replied as I had the first time. However, one month later I found myself in the mental ward of the local hospital, just hours short of doing harm to myself. While I was there, I met a wonderful doctor. Dr. Brenda VerEllen had been in the VA system in Washington State before going into private practice. She was instrumental in bringing me around, putting me on the right medication, and explaining that I did have PTSD.

*Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape. People who suffer from PTSD often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged, and these symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly impair the person's daily life.*

Accepting my condition, I started the VA process. I first went to the VA in St Louis (a real nasty place in 1999), through the emergency room for referral. I was sent to the PTSD program at Jefferson Barracks,

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### A Letter from Colonel Max Pickarts (Ret)

Dear Comrades in Arms of the First Tank Battalion, 77th Armor and your charming and faithful families,

Our association President, Colonel (Ret) Tom Miller asked that I write some comments for our forthcoming newsletter. I will do that, but first, I want to say how pleased and proud I am of our 1/77 active duty comrades who performed magnificently as part of the First Infantry Division in Iraq. Reports verified that they carried our colors into battle with professionalism, courage, and great success. Hopefully, LTC Hubner and LTC Johnson, and other current and former members of the battalion can attend our next reunion, as it will be most interesting to learn first hand of their experiences.

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## 77TH ARMOR ASSOCIATION UPDATE

Steel Tigers All,

**NEW DEPLOYMENT.** Be aware that DOD has announced that the brigade to which "our" Battalion belongs is on the list for rotation to Iraq during 2006. Our Active Army members will keep us informed of developments. We will be with them every step of the way. Follow us through future issues of Tiger Tracks.

**HEALTH ISSUES AND VA BENEFITS.** This issue is dedicated to the health of our members. While the personal articles were written by Vietnam veterans, the information is for everyone. Some Veterans of Kosovo and Iraq also are in need of VA help, as well as everyone understanding self care. Please remember that we have at least two Service Officers in our ranks, and they are available to quietly help any of our members understand when they need help, what help is available, and how best to go about getting it. The after results of combat and other conditions of stress can come to all of us, and are not limited to Vietnam veterans. Check out these articles, and take action if you need. Wives, please encourage your husbands.

There are certain steps we need to take on our own. Even without the exposure to chemicals that most of us have experienced, there are a couple of very simple steps we can all take to check on conditions that are easily treated and cured-but only if caught early enough. The first of these is to be tested for colon cancer. Step one is very inexpensive and totally without pain. It is a simple test for blood in the stool. At some time we all should be further examined for changes in the colon that lead to colon cancer. If there is a history of colon cancer in the immediate family, your doctor may suggest a colonoscopy, to be done at intervals between five and ten years, perhaps beginning as early as age 50. Do it. It takes a day off work, but is the best test to detect this deadly form of cancer in its earliest and fully treatable stages. Wives, be alert.

The other test is for prostate cancer, called a PSA test. It is a simple blood test, and coupled with a digital rectal exam by your doctor is very efficient in catching this form of cancer in its earliest stages. Again, the trait is inherited. Additionally, every one who served in Vietnam is presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. Therefore, if prostate cancer is detected, it is presumed to be service connected, and VA benefits apply without question. The benefits don't come without paperwork, however. Learn what you need to do to be properly treated-not always surgery-and how to file for the benefits. Wives, be encouraging.

I can personally attest to the dangers of both these diseases, and also attest that a cure is available. Just act, don't hesitate, act-and live to enjoy.

**ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES.** You and the Association were again represented at the Vietnam Memorial on Veteran's Day. We were low key this year, but we paid our respects to our fallen brothers honored by the Wall, and to all veterans of that war, including ourselves. We also saluted the fallen and the flag at the World War II Memorial, as the birth of our Battalion was at that time. Rounding out the day, respects were also paid at the Korean Memorial. Our Battalion cadred three separate regimental tank companies for that conflict. Veteran's Day, all Veteran's, all wars.

We have also turned the tide on being self sustaining, but only as long as you, our Members help us by insuring we have a current mailing address. An e-mail address and phone number also help, as we all tend to move and forget to send in changes of address. These multiple ways allow us to contact you more often, spread the word of important events, and help us to help you. If there is any question that we may be out of date, please call, write or e-mail with your current info. Also, contact every buddy you have to make sure they are also properly entered on our rolls.

**MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS!  
STEEL TIGERS REUNION**

**EL PASO, TEXAS/FORT BLISS  
OCTOBER 11-15, 2006  
HOLIDAY INN SUNLAND PARK  
915.833.2900  
www.holiday-inn.com**

Start now to work with the people you worked and fought with to get them together at our next reunion, El Paso/Ft Bliss, October 2006. It would be great if every platoon/section, and every company could have their own mini-reunion within the framework of the Battalion reunion. Time will be in the schedule for these comrade face-to-face periods. We will have a variety of activities to entertain the wives so they won't be bored. Wives, don't let your husbands come without you!

We continue to collect stories about individual and unit actions and events. It is slow going, but becomes both faster and more interesting when we have many people describing the same event from their own viewpoint. Send in your story, please. Wives, if you get your husband to open up to his wartime buddies, you may learn things he would never feel he could tell you. It helps us all when we can talk these things out.

**WHO WANTS TO RETURN TO VIETNAM?** We have the opportunity to revisit our old encampments and battle sites, from the DMZ south to LZ Nancy and from Wunder Beach to the Laotian border. Enough tours have gone now that decent hotels and eating places are available, as well as knowledgeable guides to all the sites we would choose. Although by no means posh, this is no longer a hardship tour. These trips are commonplace to certain veteran organized and commercial tour organizations. For our purposes, we need at least ten, but not more than thirty persons. The entire trip would take 10 to 14 days, depending on how many locations we wanted to cover, and how long we felt we must spend at each site. We can also add on pre- or post- trips to other important sites in, near or on the way to or from Vietnam. That adds to the days and costs. Such a trip would cost around \$3,000 double occupancy, more if you have your own room. That includes airfares, most meals, local transportation where we go as an organized group, and hotel. Tips to guides and maids, some meals and expenses incurred on open time are in addition. Please contact me by any means to let me know if you want more details. I know several veterans who have returned to Vietnam, and all consider it to be the most important trip they have ever made. Ask your closest buddies, and form your own mini-group.



**TIGER TRACKS NEWSLETTER.** This issue is our third since the last reunion, thanks to Chuck Winslow and Nicole Dubois. Tell us news that we need to spread, and suggest articles we should run.

**OPEN MAILBOX.** I continue to offer to discuss almost any subject with any current or past member of the 77th Armor Regiment. Call (703) 476-1798, write 12902 Wheatland Rd, Fairfax, VA 22033, or e-mail [HQ66Tom@schach.org](mailto:HQ66Tom@schach.org).



**SALES STORE.** Don't forget to visit our store on the website (<http://www.steeltigers.org/catalog/>). We are slowly adding to the articles available to you. Check our brand new hat/lapel pin. Wives, some of these items could interest you, too. If not, tell us what you would like to have us have available.

I remain in your service,  
Tom Miller, President, 2004-2006

## Update your Contact Information

We have learned by trial and error that about one third of the Veterans for whom we had one or more forms of contact cannot be sent e-mail and/or ground mail any more. In other words, you have moved or changed e-mail providers, and forgot to send us the updated information. Thus, it takes many, many hours to find you again.

Please, please, when you have a change in street address, e-mail address, or phone number, let us know. Our search for additional and new prospective members is limited by the huge amount of time it takes to find you again. And, you become concerned because you haven't heard from us for too long. To update your email address or postal address, use the form on the back of Tiger Tracks or contact Bob Basner at:

Robert Basner  
Steel Tigers 77th Armor Association  
7966 Maple, P.O. Box 38  
Birch Run, MI 48415

Or by email at: [bobnconnie2@aol.com](mailto:bobnconnie2@aol.com)



The Steel Tigers Yahoo Group is an informal way to keep in touch with others in the Steel Tigers family. This email group is open to all of the valiant tankers from the 77th Armor Regiment who served so willingly and bravely in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Kosovo, and who continue to serve in Iraq. Any MOS that served or serves with the 77th may join. The group is also open to the family of those who served or serve in the 77th.

To join go to:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/steeltigers/>



*(My VA Experience: Continued from page 1)*

where all they did was put me on more drugs. No group, no this is the what, when, where, why of PTSD, just more drugs.

I then filed my claim. Within a month, I had my first evaluation. "I see no problem with you, sir" was the doctor's reply. I asked, "What about the other statements and records I had kept from the EAP and Dr. VerEllen?" "Not my call on what they think," he replied.

Frustrated, I went to see the VFW service representative, since I was a life member. I gave him the medical records I had, along with my DD214. He informed me that he saw no reason that I could not get 100 percent because of the medical statements and the fact I had a CIB, Purple Heart, and Bronze Star. This was the last time I ever heard from him although everyone I talked to about this told me the VFW guy was the best one around.

Months later, I was working in Marion, Illinois and was having some problems, so I went to the VA hospital there. Turned out to be one of the best moves I had made up to that point. Their PTSD program was outstanding. Not only did I have a doctor assigned to me, I had a nurse and a social worker assigned to me as well.

Soon I was in a group. Group was a strange event in the beginning, but soon became an extremely important part of life and the process of learning how to handle my PTSD.

One of the guys in my group kept telling me how he processed through the system. He had one major recommendation, which I pass on to you. Get a Service Representative and if they do not communicate with you, drop them and get another.

I selected the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) as my service representative, and they were great. The DAV gathered all my paperwork and walked it through the VA in Chicago. At times, they would call me and ask for more information, or tell me that I needed to go back to my doctor, nurse, or social worker and ask for something specific. The DAV also prepared me for my next evaluation.

My first evaluation (using the DAV) I got

40 percent, second evaluation I got 70 percent and then finally "Unemployability." Of course by then work had caught up to me and I had been terminated. It took me about 3 years from the first time I applied in St Louis to finally getting this last rating.

What I advise everyone who asks me how to work the process follows. Keep in mind, the VA that finally helped me was in Marion Illinois. Unfortunately, each facility and location differs.

1. Get a good service representative. I recommend the DAV.
2. Keep in contact with your representative. Call him at least twice a month if he does not call you. Make sure he gets copies of all your records.
3. Get and keep copies of all your medical records. Review all of your medical records. It is amazing that what is recorded is not always what you said or what you were told.
4. Go to the VA facility. Make and KEEP your appointments.
5. Do not abuse or get hateful with the ladies at the front desk or on the phone because it will back fire on you.
6. Try to get a copy of your military medical records, and if you had a security clearance, do a Freedom of Information Act request for a copy of the investigation. (I found a statement by one of the medical doctors in my security file that ended up helping me a lot with my PTSD claim).
7. When you have your evaluations, do not dress up for them. Go as you are on any normal day. Do not volunteer any information to them. Answer the question, briefly. The problem is that the evaluating doctor only gets one look at you, and if you give him the impression all is okay, that is what he will record. Be honest, but think through your answers.
8. Start documenting. Some call it a "Stressor Letter." It is basically your PTSD history and is the only time I would ever ask anyone to tell me about his experiences in Vietnam. Also, try to document your problems and be as specific as you can. This also includes your flashbacks. I warn

you, this can be a very VERY emotional project. Don't worry about the format or how neat it is. When it is ready, give it to your doctor and if you are lucky enough to be in a group, give it to the facilitator. Also send your service representative a copy.

9. Get into a group. In some areas, there are Vet Centers that have groups. The point is get into a group and make sure their notes get to your service representative.
10. And most importantly: Don't give up.

Once you get either 100 percent or the Unemployability, file with the Social Security Administration for disability. This can be another long process. Unemployability, means just that, you can't work or keep work. It is an individual decision on whether to pursue it.

In closing, with the exception of my first go around with the VA, I do not have a problem with them. I play the game following their rules and I try very hard not to get "huffy" with them, but I do not give in.

***To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.***  
***Abraham Lincoln***

For me, life isn't "jump up and down" great, but it is a hell of a lot better. I am lucky that I can draw my full military retirement (since my VA is 100 percent Combat Related) and my 100 percent VA. Keeping busy is the hard part because excess time on my hands means I prone to think back, which I try not to do.

Take care and "STAND FIRM"  
Michael Weber

**For more information, contact:**

**Department of Veteran's Affairs**  
<http://www.va.gov/>

**VA National Center for PTSD**  
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>

**Disabled American Veterans**  
<http://www.dav.org/>

**Veteran's of Foreign Wars**  
<http://www.vfw.org/>

*(Max Pickhart's letter: Continued from Page 1)*

I write about our retirement experience for one main purpose, to tell you it is time to quit. Most of you, Vietnam only, gentlemen, are now in your late fifties or pushing into the sixties, and many are still humping away. Based on our experience, I suggest you retire as soon as you are financially able. Enjoy the good life, it doesn't last forever.

One of my highlights of 2004 was attending the Armor Conference at Fort Knox in May. It was well done, and without exception, I was most impressed with the outstanding caliber of our active duty officers and men of the mounted force. Their professionalism, high morale, superb physical condition, confident personalities and eager attention to all the presentations was remarkable. Many junior enlisted men attended the various presentations, and the learned questions they asked the general officers following presentations was most impressive. Basically, there was a confident spirit in the air, those soldiers were smart, dedicated, and winners. No question! One person cannot attend all the conferences nor visit all the displays. Following are highlights of what I attended.

The small attendance at the Honorary Colonels and Command Sergeants Major meeting was disappointing. Even so, Major General Terry Tucker, Commander of the Armor Center and Fort Knox gave us an overview of the current effort to reorganize the Army into a modular structure. I liked General Tucker. He is enthusiastic, understandable and very knowledgeable of the situation. It is apparent he has commanded at all levels.

CSM Smith, the Command Sergeant Major of the 2nd Bde, Third Infantry Division (Mech) gave us a very interesting briefing covering his brigade's operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The briefing was the Bde's Command brief of OIF, and very professional. It covered the movement into Iraq and to contact near Baghdad, the dust storm, Colonel Perkins, Bde Cmdr, order for the Baghdad Thunder Run, in which TF 1-64 Armor, conducted a Thunder Run along HWY 8, through Baghdad to assess the strength of the defense of Baghdad. The run certainly points out the overwhelming strength our forces had at that time in the war.

A panel from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment presented another interesting briefing. Following the assault phase of OIF, the Third herd was given a very large AO. The north boundary, started with Fallujah, and went northwest about 300 kilometers along the Euphrates River to the Syrian border. There, it turned southwest, and went along the Syrian border for approximately another 300 kilometers to the point where the Saudi Arabian border touches Iraq. There, it continued about 250 kilometers along the Saudi border before turning north and back to Fallujah. A very large AO, indeed. It was so large they couldn't evacuate injured personnel from the area near Syria to the nearest hospital, near Baghdad, within the "golden hour" rule. Therefore, another Mobile Army Hospital was established well to the west, near the Syrian border and Ar Rutbah. Colonel Teeples, Regimental Commander, and his squadron commanders presented detailed, professional briefs of their conduct of operations. It is noteworthy, that during this time, they had complete control of Fallujah and were in reasonable control of the crossings into Iraq. In my opinion, their ability to perform well, indicates our current ACR's are well suited for this type of counter insurgency operations. Even so, I understand the 3rd ACR, after standing down, is currently being restructured, as will the entire Army, into the modular Army Bde concept.

We won the cold war against the Soviet Union and its block of communist countries with a large, conventional force that was unmatched in major combat operations. Following the fall of the Soviet bloc we commenced reducing the size of our conventional force and currently have ten divisions. But, at the same time, we became threatened by a radical Islamic insurgent enemy, who, after numerous preliminary actions, attacked our nation on 9/11. Thus, we are at War, engaging a new enemy, increasingly unpredictable, over a complex global environment. It is obvious the current Army structure is not suited for this environment. This has caused the Army to initiate restructuring while fighting a war, not a common undertaking. As a division returns from combat it will stand down, transfer those who are non-deployable, restructure into the new organization while new personnel are assigned, train to combat standards, and return to the battle. Currently, the 3rd

*(Continued on page 8)*

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

### The Final Inspection

The soldier stood and faced God  
Which must always come to pass.  
He hoped his shoes were shining  
Just as brightly as his brass.

"Step forward now, you soldier,  
How shall I deal with you ?  
Have you always turned the other cheek ?  
To My Church have you been true?"

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,  
"No, Lord, I guess I ain't.  
Because those of us who carry guns  
Can't always be a saint.  
I've had to work most Sundays  
And at times my talk was tough.  
And sometimes I've been violent  
Because the world is awfully rough.  
But, I never took a penny  
That wasn't mine to keep...  
Though I worked a lot of overtime  
When the bills got just too steep.  
And I never passed a cry for help  
Though at times I shook with fear.  
And sometimes, God, forgive me,  
I've wept unmanly tears.  
I know I don't deserve a place  
Among the people here;  
They never wanted me around  
Except to calm their fears.  
If you've a place for me here, Lord,  
It needn't be so grand.  
I never expected or had too much,  
But if you don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne  
Where the saints had often trod  
As the soldier waited quietly  
For the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now, you soldier,  
You've borne your burdens well.  
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,  
You've done your time in Hell."

~Author Unknown~

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God's richest blessings on my Steel  
Tiger brothers, both veterans and  
active duty. Our prayers go with  
you all.

Chaplain Jim



# STEEL TIGERS AT GRAFENWOHR TRAINING AREA 01

In an effort to validate all tank fire control systems in support of more extensive future training exercises, the Steel Tigers of 1-77 AR deployed to Grafenwohr Training Area 01 – 10 November to execute an unprecedented Level II Modified Tank Gunnery rotation. Leading the way for the Second “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, the Steel Tigers deploy to GTA and the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels in January/February to complete its rebuilding and retraining model to become a combat-ready team capable of executing the three paramount battlefield functions: move tactically, react to contact, and report.

One might question the value of a ten-day gunnery given cost-benefit analyses that underscore tight restraints in budget, training time, and land available. With confidence and poignant candor, the battalion’s operation officer—Major Kevin Jacobi, otherwise known as “Tiger 3”—explains his vision for the FCS VALEX, “This exercise is going to make us a lot of money down the road; we are validating our weapon systems, testing our deployment systems, and setting the stage for training in the months to come.” According to Jacobi, this exercise is unlike anything the battalion has done in recent years. It’s a multi-echelon training experience that validates the fire control systems and exercises the tank systems in a tactical gunnery scenario, thereby building crew confidence. It also provides platoons a maneuver training opportunity to hone the Tiger Platoon Fundamentals as well as gives the companies and battalion a chance to exercise command and control and sustainment systems in a ten-day window, putting 1-77 AR three steps ahead of their counterpart maneuver battalions. “Broken tanks and broken systems are a good thing now,” Jacobi quips, “this exercise enables us to identify problems now so that we might fix them while we have the time and resources instead of trying to juggle that with a full-scale Level I tank gunnery.”

The other facet of the training exercise focuses on the nature of the battalion’s fleet of M1A1 AIMS main battle tanks. The battalion’s last gunnery took place in

April 2003. Since then, its panzers deployed and withstood 12 months of intense combat operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. Since returning from Iraq, approximately half of the fleet has been replaced by tanks from a variety of sources. Therefore, one third of the fleet has not fired in more than 30 months and half of the fleet is unproven. Herein lies the crux of the FCS VALEX. Three populations compose the Steel Tiger fleet: tanks that deployed to OIF II with 1-77 AR, tanks that remained in home station during OIF II, and tanks that arrived to 1-77 AR after OIF II. In order to succeed in future training events and deployments, the Steel Tiger fleet must be proved en masse. Accordingly, conducting a fire control system validation for the entire fleet not only validates its mission capability, but also serves as a force multiplier as the battalion moves into heavier training rotations.

In addition to exercising the battalion’s weapon systems and maximizing its battalion and company level systems, the FCS VALEX provides the unit’s most valuable asset—its soldiers—a chance to fire live tank rounds down range. Corporal Jason Merrill—a new gunner for Bravo Company’s 1st Platoon “Mad Dogs”—notes, “It’s great to get in the gunner’s seat and fire real bullets after all the hours of TCGST [Tank Crew Gunnery Skills Test], AGTS [Advanced Gunnery Training System], CCTT [Close Combat Tactical Trainer], and TCPC [Tank Crew Proficiency Course]; it’s even better that I get a chance to do this before qualifying for my first time on Tank Table VIII.” The chance to shoot is especially welcome after completing a rigorous reconstitution that included annual tank services and Delayed

Desert Damage checks. Steel Tiger soldiers are anxious to mount their tanks and exercise their tank fighting skills.



**ABOVE: Mortars complete a live fire training exercise with the 1/4 Cavalry in Wilflecken.**

**BELOW: Tiger 6 wraps up a successful two week exercise with accolades to the troops and the weekend safety brief.**

Meeting the challenge of an inimitable training exercise, the battalion not only set the bar higher for pre-deployment training, but also exceeded expectations and battalion commander LTC Miciotto Johnson’s intent. Although the return on a training event of this nature is evident now, the truth will certainly be in the pudding when the battalion emerges from its GTA and JMRC rotations next quarter ready to fight and win the nation’s wars. Once again, the mighty Steel Tigers have and will continue to prove their mettle as combat-tested and combat-ready.



# Happy Holidays



**Thanksgiving  
1968  
Vietnam**

**Thanksgiving  
2004  
Iraq**



Throughout the Christian world, the Christmas season is a time of joy and spiritual inspiration. Despite separation from our families and the hardships imposed by war, those of us in Vietnam will still share the traditional Christmas spirit this year. We can enjoy the spiritual satisfaction that comes from giving. As fighting representatives of the Free World, our gift is the help we give the Vietnamese people to secure their future freedom. Each of you gives a part of this gift and deserves the satisfaction of having increased the happiness of others -- the true Christmas spirit.

My best wishes to each of you and your families for the Christmas season. May you enjoy good fortune during the coming year.

**W.C. WESTMORELAND**  
General, U.S. Army  
Commanding





Infantry, 101st Airborne and 10th Mountain Divisions are being restructured. The Army intends complete the restructuring by FY07. Thus, the Army, based around 10 large division organizations, will be changed to an Army designed around 43 smaller, tailorable Units of Action. These brigade sized Units of Action will have three designs: Armored, Infantry, and Stryker. The Infantry UA can be task organized for air assault or airborne operations.

Armored UA Design Base Contains: Brigade Headquarters which has a MI Company and a Signal Company; an Armored Cavalry Squadron; two Mechanized Battalions, each containing two Tank Companies and two Mechanized Infantry Companies; an Artillery Battalion; and a Brigade Support Battalion which has Medical, Maintenance and Transportation Companies.

Note that the Armor UA is similar to the 1st Bde, 5th Div (Mech), after the 3/5 Armored Cavalry Squadron was attached to the Bde in 1969. The difference being the 1st Bde had three more rifle companies and one less tank company than what is scheduled for

the Armored UA. Of course, I haven't taken into account what the improved technology provides the new units. Do that, and the improvement of the new units over what we had is difficult to imagine.

In summary, Combat Brigades in the active component will increase from 33 to 43, plus the Chief of Staff, has asked the staff to find five more, somehow. More brigades gives the Army a larger rotation pool to sustain the War on Terrorism, which should reduce the need to deploy so many National Guard units, so often. (The National Guard will lose three combat brigades, as it restructures to the same brigade design that the active force will have.)

As in the past, whenever more than one UA is required for a mission, there will be a need for higher levels of command. Thus the Army will also transform the Army, Corps and Division control headquarters into two types of headquarters. One, called a Unit of Employment y (UEy), will plan and execute major land operations including Joint, multinational and interagency operations, currently Army and Corps level.

The second Unit of Employment, which will replace the current Division level of command, and on occasion, Corps, will be designated Unit of Employmentx (UEEx). Thus an UEEx will provide the command and control for combat operations in a specified area of operations (AO). We weren't given a lot of detail concerning the Units of Employment, but were told an UEEx had a lot of capability and could control 4-6 vice 3 maneuver units of the current division. (I have a gut feeling these new Uexs will pick up some of our current Division names, but it wasn't stated they would).

Of course, I attended all the social events scheduled for the week, and was pleased to meet old friends from years back. In summary, it was a very worthwhile trip, and I left confident that the new organization will work just fine, and certain that the Army will be able to handle all missions it is given.

In summary, life is good, be careful, and may God bless you, your families, and may God bless America.

Max Pickarts

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