

# TIGER TRACKS



www.steeltigers.org

Summer 2005

The Newsletter of the Steel Tigers 77th Armor Association

## STEEL TIGERS IN ACTION: ACTIVE DUTY UPDATE

The Steel Tigers Deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II (OIF II) to Kuwait on February 12, 2004. By March 5, 2004, the Steel Tigers had completed a 3 day approach march from Kuwait arriving at their new homes, FOB PALIWODA and LSA ANACONDA. Over the next year, the Steel Tigers would become the diplomats of democracy and the architects of a fledging Iraqi Government and Army.

Baptized by fire daily in the months of March and April, The Steel tigers earned their combat patch as the Anti Iraqi Forces (AIF) tested their resolve. The Steel Tigers met the enemy with courage and fortitude, pursuing the enemy relentlessly as they fled from each battle. By the end of May 2004, the Steel Tigers had captured or killed nearly all of the local AIF leadership leaving the local network of terror cells without direction and uncoordinated.

ened the local city governing councils resulting in the first city charter being signed in the Division Area of Operation in November 2004. The Steel Tigers invested over \$7,500,000.00 into the local Iraqi Communities building roads, schools, water treatment plants, hospitals, and other critically needed infrastructure. The Steel Tigers conducted Operation Tiger Cub throughout the year, delivering school supplies and medical supplies to the local communities in continuing efforts to strengthen relations between the United States and the Iraqi citizens. The Steel Tigers efforts culminated on January 30, 2005 when the Iraqi citizens were able to vote in the first free elections in the history of Iraq. On January 30th, over 32,000 Iraqi citizens went to polling sites in the Tiger Area of Operation casting their ballots making the first free Iraqi Elections a resounding success and a monumental moment in the history of Iraq.

The Steel Tigers combat operations peaked during Operation Baton Rouge in October 2004, when the 2nd Brigade Combat Team freed Samara from the Anti Iraqi Forces who had been using Samara as a safe haven. The Steel Tigers conducted urban warfare operations for 4 days, freeing one Turkish hostage and destroying dozens of weapons caches.

During OIF II, the Steel Tigers conducted 5,472 combat patrols, 280 combat logistics

patrols and 19 Task Force level raids. The Task Force discovered 50 weapons caches, 147 IEDs and 39 UXOs. The Task Force had 155 IEDs detonated on patrols, 117 direct fire engagements and 350 indirect fire attacks. 6 Steel Tigers were Killed In Action and 91 Steel Tigers were Wounded In Action during OIF II.

In February of 2005, the Steel Tigers conducted a deliberate relief in place with 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 7th Cavalry and redeployed to Germany having completed its mission successfully in Iraq.

### HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

HHC 1-77 played a vital role in the success of the Task Forces mission supporting OIF II. HHC was the logistical hub of the Task Force providing fuel, ammunition, repair parts, food, and all other necessary commodities to conduct daily operations. Located on LSA Anaconda, the support platoon was truly the life line of the Task Force, conducting daily combat logistical patrols to FOB PALIWODA delivering mission critical supplies.

In addition to its logistical role of supporting the Task Force, HHC also took on a maneuver role enhancing the Task Force flexibility

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OCT 2nd, 2004 SAMARA. SPC Sparling from TF 1-77 AR moves between buildings in the streets of Samara during OPERATION BATON ROUGE. Photo by Ashley Gilbertson, New York Times.

Throughout 2004, the Steel Tigers continued to hunt the enemy while learning the art of nation building. The Steel Tigers trained and equipped over 500 Iraqi Army soldiers and 500 Iraqi Police officers in an effort to help Iraq secure itself. The Steel Tigers strength-

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To one and all,

I want to extend a sincere invitation to all of the veterans that served with the 1-77 Armor in Vietnam (all attachments to the fifth are always welcome). The Fifth Division is in its 85th year of reunions and I want to personally extend a warm welcome to all of you who can join us in this celebration of camaraderie and friendship.

The reunion is always on Labor Day weekend (2-5, September, 2005).

The reunion this year will be in Portland, Oregon at the Red Lion Hotel on the river (Columbia river). It is only 10 to 15 minutes from the airport and train station. There will be a shuttle for all to use — just call in advance. The phone number for the hotel reservations is 1-800-733-5466. If you need additional information, I can be reached at the following numbers: home (360) 892-7639, cell (360) 798-7111, office (360) 574-4616. My address is 8004-D NE Hwy 99, Vancouver, WA 98665. Registration is \$15.00 and the dinners are \$27.00 per night. Advanced payment is needed to assure accommodations. The hotel fee is \$91.00 per night and includes a buffet breakfast. When you make your hotel reservations (call 1-800-733-5466) be sure to tell the hotel that you are with the Fifth Division or the rooms will be \$120.00 per night. Welcome home and hope to see all of you at the reunion 2-5 September, 2005.

Mike Sperling  
President  
Society of the Fifth Division

P.S. I hold a warm spot for the 1-77 Armor. You guys came out and saved us (Recon 1/61) when our ambush was hit. You turned an ugly night back to normal. When they heard you racing to us, they were gone in minutes

## **77TH ARMOR ASSOCIATION UPDATE**

Dear Fellow Steel Tigers,

Of utmost importance to us was the performance of the 77th Armor Battalion and Task Force in Iraq. We have tried to get more directly from them, but, like us when we returned from Vietnam, they are reluctant to talk about it. We hope they will soon be forthcoming, that they will realize that while we were not with them in their war, we have walked in their boots, and will understand. What astounds me the most is the obvious quality of the individual soldiers and their leaders. They went out daily, exposing themselves to the dangers of mines and roadside bombs, of well-aimed sniper fire, of rocket propelled grenades and mortars, and occasionally organized attacks or defenses in fortified positions by a very capable and determined enemy. With all this, the Battalion, scattered thru three task forces, and the 1-77 task force with its attachments, lost only six KIA while in Iraq for 12 months. While we mourn them, we are also grateful for all who returned home safely. Remembering our Vietnam loses, we feel pride in them, and with them remember those who did not return with the Battalion. Our heartiest congratulations on this excellent performance

### **What has your Association been up to recently?**

Let's start with what you directed. We were part of the official ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial, the "Wall", on Veteran's Day. There was a good delegation of Members and wives, one daughter, and we had a large wreath of which we were proud. We asked our out-of-town members, Redd Carr and Walt Evans, to place the wreath. The day was wonderful to remember our Comrades who did not return with us from Vietnam. We had donations sufficient to cover the costs to the Association, and we thank the donors heartily.



Veteran's Day 2005 at the Vietnam Memorial, Washington, D.C.

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# THANK YOU

On September 11, 2004, the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment hosted a Patriot Day celebration and Back to School Bash for the family members of the Steel Tigers. The event was a success with approximately one hundred family members in attendance.

I would like to thank the 77th Armor Association, whose generosity made this event possible. Due to their donation to the families of the Steel Tigers at this year's Regimental Reunion, the battalion was able to make this event totally free for all of the participants. Thank you for all that you do to support our soldiers and their families.

CPT Mike Panaro



*(Association Update: Continued from page 2)*

Your Association was also represented at the reunions of two other organizations. As their former Battalion Commander, your President was invited to the reunion of A Troop, 4th Squadron, 12th Cavalry. A Troop was assigned to the Battalion for Vietnam. Many of their troopers first served in 1-77 Armor. The reunion was in the Washington, DC area, and the main event was a visit to the Vietnam Memorial, complete with Color Guard and Firing Squad from The Old Guard, the ceremonial troops of the 3rd Inf in charge of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery. They had about 120 people in attendance. The other organization was the Society of the Fifth Division, whose reunion was in Indianapolis. Do you realize that at that time, the Society of the Fifth had 72 members who served with the 77th Armor? Our attendance was not that many, but was the largest yet.

## Membership Information and Newsletters

We want to clear up a point that has caused some confusion regarding membership dues. Membership payments cover the calendar year, not one year from the time of payment. If there is a question, please discuss with Bob Basner, Treasurer and protector of our funds.

The heart of your Association is now Vietnam veterans. We formed the Association, produce most of the Membership (and dues), and are responsible for carrying the torch. However, we know that we will decrease in numbers, while the Active Army 1/77 Armor is our future. It won't be many years until those veterans provide ever more Members, and we will attend Reunions they host. In the same vein, we have found more than expected of our predecessors from our founding World War II tank battalion, and the tank battalion with our number when they entered

into the Korean Conflict. We welcome their participation, and look forward to learning more about where we came from.

Nicole Dubois was able to get us a free Yahoo email discussion group:

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

Thanks Nicole. We also have a small but steady stream of traffic over The 77th Armor Association's official web site:

<http://www.steeltigers.org/guestbook/guestbook.php>

Thanks, Chuck Winslow, for keeping this going and updated. It appears that we have been able to steer some of our Members to the type and source of help they need. This alone makes it all worthwhile. And, we have been contacted by several prospects for membership, mostly people we have not previously know how to contact.

## Finding More Friends

We did get a few volunteers to expand our contact and search capability, and we thank you. Walt and others are slowly going through our lists and you will receive more direction, if you already haven't. You are a great help to your Association.

## History

Our Historian, Bob Rushforth, has put into publishable form some important parts of our history. He, too, needs help. If you can help him edit his drafts, or assist with the research, collection and recording of our history, he can close out several projects and get into new combat periods. Please contact Bob directly to offer assistance.

Insiste Firmiter,  
Tom Miller  
President 2004-06  
(703) 476-1798

## 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, Iraq, and who continue to serve. 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/>

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and combat power. The Task Force Scout platoon in addition to being the primary maneuver platoon of HHC also provided the personnel and vehicles for the Task Force Commander's Personal Security Detachment (PSD). The Scouts conducted daily combat patrols and counter mortar



SPC Trask of 2-108 IN attached to TF 1-77 AR gives medical aid to an Iraqi child in March 2004. Photo by CPT Richard Johnson, HHC 1-77 AR Commander.

patrols around the LSA in order to protect the LSA from indirect fire attacks. The Scouts found dozens of caches in the year of 2004, resulting in a significant reduction in the enemy's capabilities to attack coalition forces.

In April 2004, 1/B/2-108 IN "Hammer" (NYARNG) joined the Steel Tiger team. Hammer adjusted quickly to its new mission and became a huge asset to the Task Force. In their 8 month tour Hammer found numerous weapons caches in the orchards and fields surrounding LSA ANACONDA, and detained 25 known insurgents. In Samarra Hammer was the main effort of HHC, leading the way through the streets of Samara fearlessly engaging the enemy in house to house urban combat.

The medics accompanied combat patrols daily into sector, providing their life saving skills to all soldiers who were injured. The medics saved dozens of lives during OIF II including many Iraqi civilians. Two Steel Tiger medics gave their lives while in combat during OIF II.

The Maintenance Platoon worked long grueling hours every day as the extreme temperatures and sand took their toll on all vehicles. The Maintenance Platoon learned many new skills during OIF II as they encountered battle damage from road side bombs and small arms fire.

The Mortar Platoon fired 104 missions totaling 857 rounds during OIF II. The Mortar Platoon was additionally responsible for the Task Force S3's PSD, providing personnel and vehicles. The mortars provided immediate indirect fires for missions ranging from suppression and illumination to terrain denial.

The Battalion staff provided daily administrative support and management for the Task Force. During OIF II, the S2 shop provided all graphical products for the Task Force, ran the detention facility operations, processing 1,009 detainees and screened all local nationals that applied for employment on the FOB. The S3 shop provided Command and Control for the Task Force, synchronizing all operations down to the platoon level. The S4 shop contracted all of the facilities constructed during OIF II including the MWR building, Dining Facility and enough housing units with over head protection for over 1,000 soldiers, greatly improving the quality of life for the Steel Tigers. The S5 shop built the foundation for successful elections on 30 January 2005 and for the future of the Balad region. The S5 shop invested over \$7.5 million into building projects for the Iraqi people in the Tiger AO; projects ranging from water purification plants to road construction and agricultural improvement projects.

### ALPHA COMPANY

Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment deployed from Schweinfurt, Germany in February 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. That month, the Company Commander Kevin G. Bolke and MSG Alan K. Hummel, were told that Alpha Company would become part of TF 1-18 IN serving in Tikrit, Iraq. The Company was further re-organized after losing a tank platoon to another Infantry Task Force, TF 1-26. TF 1-18 was made up of 1-18 IN and elements from Alpha Company 1-77 Ar-



A CO, 1-77 AR "War Lords" on the job OCT 2004.

mor, 9th Engineers, D 2-108 IN (NY NG), 299th FSB and 1-7 Field Artillery. The soldiers of Alpha Company 1-77 Armor were based out of FOB Omaha, which is located on the outskirts of Tikrit. Although they are Tankers, the War Lords patrolled and raided as if they were Infantry. The steel tracks of their M1 Abrams dominated the streets of Tikrit. Alpha Company participated in Cordon-and-Knock operations in the Tikrit area. "Tangerine Pinch," as the operation was known, was a joint operation with the 201st ING and the Tikrit ESU. The purpose of the operation was to deny insurgent sanctuary and promote the Vanguard job corps program. Over 200 job corps cards were distributed and exchanged for employment. Tangerine Pinch was the second in a series of three sequential TF 1-18 (A/1-77) operations (Mandarin Squeeze in Tikrit, Tangerine Pinch in Tikrit, Mustang Flex in Abu Toma). In total, approximately 898 homes were searched as part of the three separate operations clearly sending the message to insurgents that there is no sanctuary in and around Tikrit. In addition to conducting combat missions in Tikrit and the outlying areas, TF 1-18 IN (A/1-77) also worked to rebuild the area's infrastructure (i.e., communications, power, sewage, water, schools, hospitals, clinics) and improving the quality of life for the Iraqis in the TF 1-18 IN (A/1-77) Area Of Responsibility.

### BRAVO COMPANY

Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment deployed from Schweinfurt, Germany on 12 February 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. The first stop on the tour was Camp New York in Northern Kuwait where the company's task organization was adjusted in order to provide

tank support throughout the Brigade Combat Team's Area of Operations. A section from the company's 1st Platoon was sent to Task Force 1-7 FA in order to support operations in Beiji. The 2nd Platoon was sent to Task Force 1-26 IN in order to support operations in Samarra. The 3rd Platoon was sent to Task Force 1-18 IN in order to support operations in Tikrit. Bravo Company lost nearly all of its organic platoons upon arrival in Kuwait and the road ahead looked dismal, but the headquarters element of the company did not give up and a new company was born.

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ILT Sarson moves forward in Samarra Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment Samarra Iraq. Photo by Ashley Gilbertson, New York Times

Team Regulator would mirror the Army's new Units of Action with a combat engineer platoon from Charlie Company, 9th Engineer Battalion, an infantry platoon from the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, and an anti-tank platoon from the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment. This new team came together at Forward Operating Base Paliwoda in Balad, Iraq where they would play a pivotal role in every major operation conducted by Task Force 1-77 Armor. Team Regulator lead the way for Task Force 1-77 Armor in both stability and kinetic operations.

Team Regulator began in April with Operation Hussein Brothers, which resulted in the capture of two AIF who had attempted to kill the Task Force 1-8 IN Commander. Team Regulator also uncovered and destroyed weapons caches owned by these men. Following the capture of the Hussein Brothers the enemy regrouped for the AIF Easter Offensive of 2004. Despite constant mortar attacks on the FOB and numerous IEDs in sector the Regulators took the fight to the enemy by conducting nightly raids during the month of April. On 23 April 2004, the Regulator Team conducted Operation Tiger Maul in Aziz Balad, which resulted in the

capture of two IED makers and the destruction of an IED factory. These AIF were eventually released from prison as the Amnesty International Representatives working for the Brigade Detention Facility caved to the pressure from the liberal media following the Abu Ghraib scandal. Nonetheless, Team Regulator would move forward and conduct kinetic attacks throughout the year.

During the summer of 2004 Team Regulator conducted over 20 raids and captured numerous AIF in the Task Force Area of Operations. At the same time, the Regulator's rebuilt and delivered supplies to schools and hospitals in and around Balad. These efforts to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis proved successful during the elections of January 2005. As Team Regulator worked to defeat the AIF in the Balad area, they also prepared for the Samarra Campaign by conducting rehearsals and feint operations into Ad Duliyah.

On 1 October 2004 Team Regulator and Task Force 1-77 Armor moved from Balad and attacked the southeastern corner of Samarra as part of Operation Baton Rouge. This operation was a deliberate attack to regain control of the city, which was taken by the AIF in June. Team Regulator attacked house by house and block-by-block until the Task Force had control of the southeastern portion of the city. The operation resulted in the capture of several AIF and the destruction of numerous weapons caches. Team Regulator also freed a Turkish KBR truck driver that had been held hostage by AIF. He was very happy to see Americans and he left Samarra with his head still intact.

Team Regulator returned to Balad following Samarra and picked up where they left off. In the months that followed

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C CO, 1-77 AR M1A1 Tank patrolling Samarra during Operation Baton Rouge on 03 OCT 2004.

## FALLEN HEROES

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.*

**SPC Curtis L. Wooten, III**, 20, of Spanaway, Washington was killed on January 4, 2005, by an improvised explosive device. SPC Wooten was a machine gunner on a HMMWV in Charlie Company. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

**SPC Gregory A. Cox**, 21, of Carmichaels, Pennsylvania died September 27, 2004 in Balad, Iraq, when his military vehicle was unintentionally run off the road by a civilian vehicle causing it to rollover. Cox was assigned to 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

**SFC Joselito O. Villanueva**, 36, of Los Angeles, California died September 27, 2004 in Balad, Iraq, when he was at an observation post and was shot by a sniper. Villanueva was assigned to the 9th Engineer Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany, attached to the 1/77th.

**SPC Edgar P. Daclan Jr.**, 24, of Cypress, California was killed September 10, 2004, by an explosive device as his patrol was responding to indirect fire near Balad, Iraq. Spc. Daclan was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, based in Schweinfurt, Germany, attached to the 1/77th

**SPC Richard K. Trevithick**, 20 of Gaines, Michigan was killed April 14, 2004 when an improvised explosive device exploded near his convoy vehicle. Trevithick was assigned to the Army's 9th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany, attached to the 1/77th.

**SGT Lee D. Todacheene**, 29, of Farmington, New Mexico was killed April 6, 2004, when mortar fire hit his guard post. He is believed to be the first Navajo to be killed in the war in Iraq. The army medic was assigned to 1st Battalion, 77th Armored Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

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Team Regulator captured 3 Division HVTs and 2 Brigade HVTs. In addition, Team Regulator captured the leaders of the 82mm mortar cell that had been attacking the FOB throughout the summer. The capture of these individuals led to a sharp decrease in attacks following Ramadan.



1 October 2004-SGT McMillian & SSG Andrews move to clear a roof in Samarra. Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment Samarra, Iraq. Photo by Ashley Gilbertson, New York Times

The keystone event of the year was the Iraqi elections in January 2005. The Balad area had the highest voting percentage of any other area in the Salah Ad Din Province. Over 30,000 people turned out to vote despite AIF attacks on the polling sites. The Regulators were able to capitalize on the momentum of the elections and complete a successful Relief in Place with Charlie Troop, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment before redeploying to Schweinfurt in February of 2005.

### **CHARLIE COMPANY**

C Company, 1-77 AR deployed from Schweinfurt, Germany on 12 February 2004 and first arrived at Camp New York, Kuwait. While at Camp New York, the House of Pain tasked organized and gained its infantry attachment from 1/C/1-26 IN and detached 1st Platoon to C/1-26 IN. The month spent in Camp New York culminated in the preparation and planning for the road march into Iraq.

On 03 March 2004, the House of Pain sent its air advanced party, into Iraq via Air Force C-130s. The remainder of the

company began the road march north on 05 March 2004. After more than two days of continuous travel the remainder of the company arrived at Forward Operating Base Lion. The company's main responsibilities while set at FOB Lion included patrolling of MSR Tampa south to Taji, counter-ambush and counter-IED patrols to the south of LSA Anaconda, and acting as a quick reaction force (QRF) for FOB Lion. In total, the company conducted over 150 combat patrols while at FOB Lion.

On 20 April, the company handed the sector surrounding FOB Lion over to 2/108 IN and moved to LSA Anaconda. At LSA Anaconda, the soldiers quickly became accustomed to the sound of incoming rockets and mortars, since the post received some type of indirect fire almost every day. The soldiers also became quite adept at quickly getting out of the gate in order to respond to these threats during missions as the Company's QRF. While at LSA Anaconda the company took on the responsibility of route clearance of MSR Linda as well as combat operations in the highly contested area of Yethrib. Daily operations were routinely 12 plus hours a day, per platoon.

In May, the House of Pain began training with B CO 203 Iraqi Army from Yethrib. The company was also credited with bringing in local leaders to develop a peace agreement as well as a town charter that was signed by all of the local leaders within the Yethrib area. This set the ground work for elections in January 2005.

The House of Pain task organization changed on 05 May 2004, when 6 tanks were flown to LSA Anaconda on C-17 aircraft. On 10 May 2004, the Company Team was tasked to provide 2nd Platoon, with four tanks, to 1-7 FA in order to fulfill their missions in Beiji, the northernmost portion of the 2BCT sector. The remaining two tanks were assigned to 3rd Platoon.

From 30 September 2004 to 09 October 2004, Team Pain participated in Operation Baton Rouge in order to liberate the city of Samarra from insurgent control. The mission was extremely successful and Team Pain distinguished itself by killing eighteen AIF, capturing five AIF, and discovering six significant weapons

caches. The company was also chosen to stay in Samarra an additional eight days and be attached to 1/14 IN in order to conduct Stability and Support Operations.

On 03 January 2005, the House of Pain moved to FOB Paliwoda to rejoin the Task Force in preparation for Relief in Place and Redeployment Operations. On 16 February 05, the company participated in the Transfer of Authority Ceremony with Task Force 5-7 CAV, 3rd ID and redeployed back to Schweinfurt.

While deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II, Charlie Company distinguished itself by killing 25 AIF capturing 42 AIF, and discovering 15 weapons caches. The company conducted a total of 1425 combat patrols and executed 19 Company level and 9 Battalion level raids. All this was done with an 82 man Company.

### **CHARLIE COMPANY (1-26 INFANTRY)**

In February of 2004, Team Rock began a year long deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. The deployment began with a flight from Germany to Camp New York in Kuwait. At Camp New York, they received further training to prepare them for combat operations in the vicinity of Balad, Iraq as a part of Task Force 1-77 Armor. In early March, the company concluded their training and began the road march from Kuwait to their new station in Iraq.

Upon arrival in Iraq Team Rock immediately jumped into combat operations. The Company Team conducted several raids in the Task Force 1-77 area of operations. They made their first mark on March 17 with the discovery of a large cache of weapons and explosives. This was the first big find for Team Rock and Task Force 1-77. This event would set the tone for Team Rock's operations for the deployment.

During the hot summer months in Iraq, Task Force 1-77 was receiving at least one indirect fire attack on Forward Operating Base Paliwoda per day. The Task Force organized several raids during the month of June to put an end to the attacks. Team Rock took part in Operation Tiger Axe on 21 June in Yethrib and Operation

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Tiger Sanctuary on 23 June to find the mortar cells attacking the Task Force.

In July 2004, the city of Samarra became a priority for the Dagger Brigade. Anti-Iraqi Forces seized control of the city and were attacking coalition forces on a daily basis. On 23 July, Team Rock participated in Operation Tiger Cohiba, a joint shaping operation with the Iraqi National Guard in Samarra to prepare for later offensive into the city.

On 29 July, Team Rock participated in Operation Tiger Linebacker to capture personnel responsible for placing Improvised Explosive Devices in the area of Ar Roashed north of Balad.

On 5 August, the company participated in Operation Tiger Cohiba II, another shaping operation in Samarra. Team Rock engaged and destroyed six Anti-Iraqi Forces during this operation. For many members of Team Rock, this was the first time they had been able to engage the enemy. The success of this mission proved to be a great confidence boost for the soldiers of Rock. They knew they could perform and be successful in combat. Team Rock led the way in October for Operation Baton Rouge, the offensive operation to retake control of Samarra from Anti-Iraqi Forces. The company fought from house to house to regain control of the city. They stayed in the city conduct-



September 2004. Iraqi Army Soldiers train in a live fire exercise along side C 1-26 Soldiers at OBJ HAWAII in Iraq. Photo by CPT Matthew Archambault.

ing patrols and other combat operations until Transitional Security Forces from the Iraqi government could come into the city and assume responsibility for security. Upon the success of Operation Baton

Rouge, Team Rock transitioned back into their normal area of operations. On 31 October, after a suicide bomb attack, Team Rock conducted Operation Conner to find and capture any Anti-Iraqi Forces operating within Ishaki.

On 8 November, Team Rock moved back to its infantry roots with Operation Plymouth Rock. The company conducted a fifteen kilometer dismounted movement to the objective. With the success of this operation, the company began conducting missions using dismounted movements for the purpose of stealth.

On November 16, Team Rock participated in Operation Tiger Rampage to locate and capture members of a mortar cell operating outside of Forward Operating Base Paliwoda. Team Rock continued the trend of using dismounted movement as a key to mission success on 25 January with Operation Rock of Gibraltar. This was an operation to capture Anti-Iraqi Forces in the vicinity of Ishaki. The dismounted movement proved to be again successful with the detainment of several of the targeted individuals.

In preparation for the momentous event of Iraqi Elections on 30 January 2005, Team Rock Conducted Operation Strategic Hamlet on 23 January to clear the city of Ishaki of any AIF.

During their time in the area of operations, the company conducted eleven company sized raids and several more platoon sized raids. They also oversaw the construction of three new schools and several infrastructure improvement projects for the local populace. Team Rock's time in Iraq proved to be eventful and very successful. They saw that their area of operations was secure and that the people of the area were safe.

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## CHANGE OF COMMAND

**Farewell and thank you to  
LTC David Hubner and  
CSM John Fortune**

**A warm welcome to  
LTC Miciatto Johnson and  
CSM Ernest Edwards**

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Dear Steel Tigers brothers,

Memorial Day is past and gone but the memories never leave us. The following poem was printed in the bulletin for Memorial Day 2005 at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, San Antonio, TX. I thought it appropriate to include for your thoughts today.

We walked among the crosses  
Where our fallen soldiers lay  
And listened to the bugle  
As Taps began to play.  
The Chaplain led a prayer;  
We stood with heads bowed low  
And I thought of fallen comrades  
I had known so long ago.  
They came from every city  
Across this fertile land  
That we might live in freedom;  
They lie here 'neath the sand.  
I felt a little guilty;  
My sacrifice was small.  
I only lost a little time  
But these men lost their all.  
Now the services are over  
for this Memorial Day.  
To the names upon the crosses  
I just want to say,  
"Thanks for all you've given;  
No one could ask for more.  
And may you rest in peace  
Now and forever more.

Author Unknown

I hope to see some of you in Portland, OR, at the Society of the Fifth Division Reunion September 2-5. Your Vietnam-era brothers of 1/11 and 1/61 Infantry often ask about you and would like to see you there.

God's peace be upon you all,  
Chaplain Jim

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