

TIGER TRACKS

Winter 2010

The Newsletter of the Steel Tigers 77th Armor Association

OPERATION CLAYMORE FORGE

By: Sgt. Mark Miranda
4th BCT, 1st AD Public Affairs

Inside a small room in a town nicknamed "Little Chicago," Spc. Ryan McGonigal kept an eye to the meeting taking place and an ear to his headset. He was listening to chatter radioed in from the other Soldiers in Lt. Col. William Walski's personal security detachment keeping watch on the street outside. Three feet away from McGonigal, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 13th Cavalry Regiment, was sitting down for a meal with the town's mayor, a doctor and an Iraqi parliament representative to discuss local issues with the help of a translator. Talks were interrupted as a rocket-propelled grenade impacted the building across the street.

Quick to react, the PSD began firing personal and Humvee crew-served weapons in the direction of the attack. Moving carefully through the street, the PSD moved to aid the wounded and to apprehend a suspect seen leaving the Ministry of Energy building, from where the attack had come. Good training for the PSD, and for all Soldiers of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division "Highlanders," who ran through training lanes throughout Claymore Forge, a field training exercise.

Scenarios at training sites like Little Chicago were daily events as 4-1 AD loaded up equipment and moved out to their designated positions to train in the sand and dirt at McGregor Range, N.M., and Doña Ana, N.M. Training covered tasks including search and cordon, mounted and dismounted patrols and reactions to enemy contact for the combined arms battalions such as 4th Battalion, 6th Infantry.

Table drills for 1st Battalion 77th Armor Regiment's fighting vehicles and 2nd Bn., 29th Field Artillery Regt., were conducted to validate training on weapon systems, warrior tasks, and many other individual and group field duties. Units conducted multiple convoys, set up facilities and equipment and conducted sustainment operations. Qualified Soldiers of 121st Brigade Support Battalion's supply distribution company performed sling load operations, preparing heavy parts and supplies for helicopter airlift. "All of us doing this have undergone the 40-hour block of train up on slingload, and each of us is required to be Pathfinder or Air Assault certified," said 121st BSB's Staff Sgt. James Springstube.

Scouts of 2-13's C Troop practiced an air assault landing and a soft extraction of a person considered a high-value target from a site at Doña Ana made up to look like a small town. "The mission is to search and secure the man they're after, and then exfiltrate him to the pickup site," said Cpl. David Hennigen, a medic who went through the training the day prior.

Adding to the realism of the training lanes for 2-13 were Iraqi men and women role players brought in from cities as far away as Phoenix and Dallas. Realistic training gets reactions from Soldiers; we see how situations might actually play out in combat – people look to leadership for direction when something chaotic is happening," said Capt. Jeffrey Witherspoon following 121 BSB's mass casualty exercise.

Claymore Forge was 4-1 AD's final field training exercise before the unit deployed to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California in early 2009.

REUNION INFORMATION

Reunion 2010 will be held in El Paso, Texas, June 24-27, 2010! As some of you may remember, this will be the second time the fair city has hosted our reunion. El Paso and Fort Bliss have a special place in our hearts as it is the current home of the 77th Armor. Please mark your calendars!

El Paso is a 400-year-old community with roots that reach back to Native Americans, Spanish conquistadores, Mexican immigrants and American pioneers. This unique blend of cultures and customs makes a city of 700,000 feel like a small town.

Registration will be \$65.00 per person; schedule and details will follow soon. Make your reservation today!

EL PASO, TEXAS/FORT BLISS
JUNE 24-27, 2010
HOLIDAY INN SUNLAND PARK
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Have something on your mind?
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Times are tough. There is no doubt about it, and we are certainly not immune. Chuck's leadership over the past two years kept us afloat and traveling in the right direction, and I hope I can do the same. Unfortunately, things are getting a bit tougher and we are being challenged to make a few changes. My focus over the next two years will be on: (1) reducing costs, (2) increasing membership, and (3) increasing membership participation. Therefore, in the following months you are going to notice several changes in the way we do business.

First, we are going to be limiting the mailing of this newsletter to active (that means paying) members of the Association. Mailing costs are high and we can no longer afford to mail the newsletter to every contact we have on file. We hope this will encourage some non-members to join or re-join the Association. Please remember that membership dues are payable every January. At \$15.00, we hope membership is accessible to everyone.

Second, we are trying to become a cash based Association. I know credit cards are a convenience for everyone and, although we are still accepting payment by credit card, we would appreciate it if you would pay your membership dues by check. This will help keep our credit card fees down to a minimum. I know this is a tough one, but the fees we have to pay to the credit card companies dramatically reduce the amount we have to cover Association activities. All checks can be mailed to: Robert Basner, Steel Tigers 77th Armor Association, 7966 Maple, P.O. Box 38, Birch Run, MI 48415.

Finally, it's time to make plans to attend the 2010 reunion. We had a great time together in El Paso in 2006 and I am positive the 2010 reunion will be even better. Our annual reunion is really the cornerstone of our organization. It's a time for us to meet again, face to face, and talk about how our shared history has created a bond that time and distance cannot diminish. Please plan on attending.

Although I am confident that these changes will help us get back on track, I think it is also normal to be a bit nervous about how the changes will be received. I hope you are patient with me and my fellow board members. Please do not hesitate to contact with us to let us know how these changes affect your interactions with the Association. We need to hear the good, the bad, and the interesting suggestions. In short, we need your active participation in your Association.

As always, I am available by email at gerryandvivian@yahoo.com or by telephone at (949) 830-5873. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your support as we navigate these tough times.

Gerry Dubois
President

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

1 Corinthians 16:13 “Watch, stand fast (Insiste Firmiter) in the faith, be brave, be strong.”

The holiday season has just past. By the time you read this edition of the 77th Armor Newsletter, we will be fondly remembering Thanksgiving and Christmas, two of the holy days that we as a nation celebrate. One holy day is dedicated to giving thanks to God for the blessings He has bestowed on us individually and collectively as a nation. The second Holy-Day (holiday), Christmas, is often lost in the hustle and bustle of the commercialization, but none-the-less, a day of thanksgiving to God the Father for giving His only begotten son as a gift and future sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

All of us remember Thanksgiving and Christmas's that we were absent from our families because of duty to our nation. Some of you can remember the bitter cold and sleepless nights in tank turrets as you were moving to contact in the French countryside, or the bone freezing cold of the Chosin Reservoir in Korea, or the movement to a search and destroy operation in Vietnam, or patrolling the dry dusty roads in Bosnia and Iraq. We can all remember the heartache that we felt when we thought of our family, sweethearts, and friends on battlefields so far away. Sacrifice is a gift of such great value than no man can pay for it. Freedom requires the continuous payment of sacrifice. As citizen soldiers, just like our forefathers before us, we willingly gave this gift to our families, our countrymen.

The noble cause for which American citizen soldiers have been willing and are still willing to sacrifice for is freedom from tyranny. The great seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia shows Virtus, an ancient Roman deity with her foot on the prostrate body of a tyrant with the inscription “Sic Semper Tyrannis” which means “Thus Always to Tyrants.”

Freedom is a gift given to us from God. This principle is stated in the Declaration of Independence- that we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable Rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But because of tyrants-life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness must be protected, therefore it requires sacrifice from citizens' soldiers.

Pope Benedict XVI stated, “Freedom is not only a gift, but also a summons to personal responsibility. Americans know this from experience—almost every town in this country has its monuments honoring those who sacrificed their lives in defense of freedom, both at home and abroad. The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good, and a sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate. It also demands the courage to engage in civic life and to bring one's deepest beliefs and values to reasoned public debate.”

On the Korean War Memorial located on the Mall in Washington DC, it says that Freedom is not free. The 58,000 names on the Vietnam Memorial located next to the Korean Memorial attests to the price of freedom.

The soldiers of The 1st Battalion, 77th Armor are presently in harm's way and were far from home during Thanksgiving and Christmas. As soldiers and as family members of soldiers of previous wars, we remember the pain of separation from our love ones. We understand their noble sacrifice and thank God for such men and women of the 1st Battalion 77th Armor. I know that many of you have been faithful prayer warriors for the soldiers of the 77th Armor. I encourage you to lift up petitions to God on their behalf for protection, courage, compassion, perseverance, and mercy.

Father Jerry A. Brown
Chaplain, 77th Armor Association

VA FUNDING BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

WASHINGTON — On October 22, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law a measure designed to keep funding for veterans' medical care steady amid future budget negotiations.

Noting the Veterans Affairs Department was providing care for veterans without a Congress-approved budget, President Obama said the new law would guarantee timely and predictable funding by laying out the VA budget ahead of schedule.

The President said the measure would let the VA know as much as a year ahead of time just how many tax dollars officials could expect to buy equipment, provide health care and hire employees.

"Over the past two decades, the VA budget has been late almost every year, often by months," Obama said in the White House's East Room, surrounded by veterans and lawmakers. "At this very moment, the VA is operating without a budget, making it harder for VA medical centers and clinics to deliver the care our vets need."

The White House said changing the funding process was needed to protect veterans' programs, given that Congress has been late 20 of the last 23 years in passing a budget bill. Aides say the uncertainty of the budget process harms those who have served in uniform because of financial uncertainty for programs.

"This is inexcusable. This is unacceptable," Obama said.

The VA provides health care for more than 23 million American veterans; as many as a quarter of the nation's population qualifies for VA coverage, either as veterans or family members of veterans. But the budget uncertainties have led to delays in replacing medical equipment or insufficient staff to handle their work.

To the average veteran, advance appropriations means better access to care, shorter wait times for appointments, and shorter lines at the VA medical center since VA will be able to implement new programs and hire additional staff in a timely manner, rather than waiting for Congress to sort out political matters, while veterans suffer.

Cut along the dotted line to mail form

2010 Membership/Change of Address Form

- New/Renewal Membership Address/Information Change
 Donation

Select Membership Type

All Association members receive newsletters and a Reunion Registration discount. Membership period: January-December.

- | | |
|--|---------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Active Duty Army
(includes free Steel Tiger hat) | \$15.00 |
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- Check Please make your check payable to "Steel Tigers 77th Armor Association."

Credit Card # Exp. date

Signature

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