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## DRILL TEAM FROM V CORPS' 1ST ARMORED DIVISION SWEATS FOR ITS DREAM OF PERFECTION

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**BAGHDAD, Iraq** -- Sweat dripped from their tired brows and exhaustion began to set in. Still the Soldiers stood tall and marched in perfect unison, maneuvering their rifles with orchestrated accuracy in the desert heat. They wanted to walk away, but they didn't. Instead they practiced their routine one more time.

In their quest for precision the Soldiers – the drill and ceremony team from the Division Support Command of V Corps' 1st Armored Division – puts in as many practice hours here as their mission allows.



SPC JEANINE KINVILLE  
*Staff Sgt. Robert Parker, drillmaster of the Drill and Ceremony Team from the Division Support Command of V Corps' 1st Armored Division, walks through the team's formation as they practice drill movements in Baghdad.*

The team was formed from the DISCOM's Headquarters and Headquarters Company following the announcement of the division's extended deployment here. At company formation one day shortly after the division's extension was announced, HHC 1st Sgt. Jermon Henry says he announced that he intended to form the team, and asked for volunteers.

"The turnout was great," Henry says. "Learning the routine took their minds off the extension."

Ultimately Henry, who has experience serving on a drill and ceremony team with the 3rd Armored Division in the late 1980s, formed a team of 14 Soldiers from various sections within his company.

Staff Sgt. Briggette Bates, a food service specialist on the team, signed up after the first sergeant's announcement.

"It was a morale activity to keep our minds occupied," she said.

The first sergeant hand-picked the team's drillmaster and solo performers based on who he thought could handle weapons best.

"1st Sgt. Henry asked me if I was interested in becoming the drillmaster," said Staff Sgt. Robert Parker, aviation logistics supply sergeant. "I said I would give it a shot and just stayed."

Henry took the Soldiers under his wing to begin teaching them how to drill and perform as a team with their M16A2 rifles.

"He is the drill sergeant," said Bates about Henry. "He had a lot of patience with us and has increased our knowledge."

The drill team's routine is a combination of basic and trick movements with spinning rotations, a variety of marching steps and rifles thrown in the air, Henry said. The majority of the routine has team members executing drill movements guided by commands given not by voice, but by the drillmaster slapping his thigh.

"I make sure all the commands are given properly," said Parker. "It's an easy job -- they (the team) do all the work."

The team's long routine was broken down into learning phases to help Soldiers through the exact movements and rifle tricks.

"Once we learned, (the) first sergeant would take us further, until we learned the whole routine," said Parker. "We spent about a day or two on each phase."

The team members learned in mid-May that they would be performing at the division's Memorial Day torchlight ceremony at Baghdad International Airport.

"We started practicing really hard when we found out about our upcoming performance, so we could do our best for Memorial Day," said Bates.

"Everybody was committed (to) it. There were lots of individual hours of practice time, especially the solo acts," Bates added.

Henry said he knew the team members were determined. They practiced for weeks in the Baghdad heat.

"I am very proud of them all. They picked it up so well," said Parker. "We had put in over 60 hours of practice in a month's time."

In addition to the Memorial Day festivities, plans were for the team to perform for other units as its mission here allowed, said Henry. Now, with the division's deployment winding down, Henry has expressed interest in keeping the team alive once the unit returns home to Wiesbaden Army Airfield, Germany.

"They like to perform and show off their skills," said Parker. "It shows their peers there is another thing they can do besides their (jobs)."

"I think it helped them extremely," said Henry. "Drill team helps establish discipline, esprit de corps and teamwork with the Soldiers. These are things you want to give younger Soldiers to keep the tradition going on."

