



Notes from the Front
Note Number 1
23 February 2004



Soldiers of the 2nd DAGGER Brigade Combat Team (BCT) awoke to sunny skies and 60 degree temperatures this morning in Camp New York, Kuwait. Camp New York has been the temporary home for the approximately 3,500 soldiers of the BCT for about two weeks and they are ready to move forward to Iraq.

The BCT's journey began for most between 10-12 February when we were whisked away by bus to Nuernberg Airport. There, we were processed by the efficient and professional 571st Maintenance Battalion from the 21st TSC. They weighed us, ensured our finance records were up to date and fed us a great meal before moving us to the planes. By 12 February approximately 3,400 soldiers from the brigade had arrived in the desert of Kuwait.

When we arrived we had about 6 more hours of processing to do at Camp Wolverine. There we received a short brief and two more great meals. To our surprise the weather was not that hot, but it was dusty. By the early afternoon we were moved a few hours north to Camp New York.

Camp New York is nine square kilometers of pure soldiering – the camp is a piece of desert located about 50 miles from anything resembling civilization, and is scratched out of the desert floor with 20 foot high earth wall on all 4 sides. It is home to IID's 2nd and 3rd Brigade Combat Teams as well as the DISCOM. Recently a contingent of Marines from the USS Bataan has also moved onto camp. Our soldiers sleep in large tents with electricity and air conditioning (the AC also doubles as a heater during the night. The camp also boasts shower facilities, an MWR tent, a gym, a small PX and laundry facilities. There is also an excellent dining facility, and two short order Dining Facilities, where soldiers are served hot meals three times a day. If soldiers don't want to eat at the Dining Facilities they can also buy meals from the Subway and Burger King on the camp – and if none of those arouse our taste buds, we always have a wide variety of Meals Ready to Eat (MRE). Overall the living isn't bad, even if it is in the middle of the desert.

But we are here to prepare for our mission in Iraq, and Kuwait has great facilities for that. First, there are the wide open spaces. Our resourceful leaders have turned much of the open space on the camp into improvised training areas for small unit training. Here we practice skills that will be essential for the next year. Then there are the Udari Ranges where units can fire anything from a pistol to a tank just to verify their marksmanship and practice close quarters fighting. Our final training will be a Convoy Live Fire Exercise in preparation for our movement north. Simultaneously we are receiving our equipment from the port and moving it up to Camp New York. This is over two thousand pieces of equipment (tanks, trucks, trailers, HMMWV's, and containers) we will have moved safely and efficiently. We are also receiving new equipment for each individual soldier (desert boots, radios, light weight undergarments, and even some cold weather gear) which will improve our ability to do our jobs.

Even with all this going on we still miss our families in Schweinfurt. Soldiers form lines at the phone tent and the post office to make contact with their loved ones. We know that your love and support are with us. Your strength allows us to focus on our mission, do our job and come home safely. We keep you in our hearts and our prayers -- Remember that you are with us every step of the journey.

DUTY FIRST!!!!

COL Randy Dragon
Commander, Dagger Brigade Combat Team