



Screaming Tiger

By Capt Edmund Dunger



Whilst down on B Coy's deployment to the Falklands in Jun 11, I found out that I had picked up the British Army Officer Exchange Job off the No 5 board with the 101st Airborne Division, US Army. I was rather pleased with this out come as I was not expecting to get the job!

The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) is famous for Easy Company that was depicted in the TV series Band of Brothers. It is the only Air Assault Division in the world and has been deployed multiple times in the last ten years as a Division on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Division is based out of Fort Campbell, which, crosses the state borders of Kentucky and Tennessee. Fort Campbell is a town in itself (106,700 acre installation) with a population of 200,000 people, three airfields and a live fire range complex ranging from aviation attack lanes right down to 9mm pistol ranges.



Capt Dunger + SFC Wilson at JBAD airfield

The 101st Airborne was formed on the 2nd November 1918, but was deactivated shortly afterwards. It was reactivated during WWII on the 16 August 1942. On its reactivation Maj Gen William C. Lee its first commander famously quoted that the unit did not have any history, but it did have a '*Rendezvous with destiny*'; which has become the unit's motto. The division then famously fought in WWII at D Day, Bastogne, Operation Market Garden and The Battle of the Bulge. After the Second World War the unit's next operational theatre was Vietnam where it was again heavily involved. Most recently, the division has been involved on Op Iraqi Freedom (conducting the largest air assault ever!) and still currently Op Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

My exchange position is as the assistant S3 (Ops officer) in 2nd Brigade Combat Team's S3 shop. My wife Charlotte and I moved over to the states in Nov 11 and were thrown right into the deep end of finding a house, getting social security numbers and Charlotte giving birth to our first daughter Amelia on 14th January 12.



Life in the Brigade S3 shop was busy from the outset. Just after I turned up to 2nd Brigade Combat Team (known as STRIKE Brigade) the brigade received a mission change. It was due to deploy in Jan 13 as a Battle Space Owner to Regional Command-East in Afghanistan. The Bde's mission was now to deploy 40 combat advisor teams to advise the units of the 201st and 203rd Corps ANSF. The Brigade was to start training on its return from Xmas leave. This left a tight deadline to organise training and fit it all into the 72 working days the Bde had before it deployed down to be assessed at the US version of OPTAG, called JRTC in Louisiana. For this deployment I was moved from Bde Hq's to work as part of one of the Bde's Bn's, 1/75 CAV known as the 'Widow makers'. The position I hold is as the XO for a 13 man team that is advising a unit at the Kdk level.

Life in the US Army involves long hours. Most soldiers live off post, with there being a long waiting list for housing on post. I live 11 miles from camp and it takes me 30 minutes to drive into work. However, due to 60,000 cars trying to get into camp for the same time this more than often takes a lot longer! The US Army starts its day with PT at 0630 until 0800 hrs. It then starts its office working day from 0900 – 1700 (but this more than often at brigade level will go on until 2000 hrs each day). These hours start to make you appreciate the sensibility of the British Army's working ethos. The US Army is focused around work, and not as much on the other fun activities that our Bn's get up to. For example parachuting, skiing and adventurous training expeditions do not happen!

On return from Xmas leave, it was into a busy cycle of ranges, signals training (they have a wide range of complex computer systems in their ops rooms and vehicles); fitness and other mandatory training that had been stipulated for us to conduct by FORSCOM (Our higher command which has somewhere just over a million troops under its control). This all resulted with us being ready to deploy down to Louisiana on a 21 day training/ exercise package being conducted at the Joint Readiness Training Centre (JRTC). This is their small version of OPTAG with the major training area being at the National Training Centre in California. NTC is so large that it has a mountain range running through it.

JRTC is in a sweaty and hot Louisiana down on the Gulf coast and was a 12 hour coach drive from Fort Campbell. However, I did manage to tick off three

more states on the road trip down and see the Mississippi river! The first seven days involved us going through an advisor training package that was being run out of the camp called TIGERLAND! Suffice to say I was rather happy to be able to say that I had visited Tiger land. For the next 12 days we then deployed out onto the training area that is called the box! This involved a number of section attack lanes with various scenarios. Our team then set up and ran a joint ops room with ANSF role players, so that we could practice our roles as advisors. On return from JRTC we took leave in April with the majority of the Brigade teams then deploying into Afghanistan by 01 May 12.

My team had May back in the states as we were not required in theatre until 01 Jun 12. Time was spent with family and conducting basic administration and low level skills training. The final teams from the brigade deployed from Fort Campbell on the 29 May 12. We flew from Campbell to Manas in Kzryzhghstan. After a day or so in Manas and some



Teaching ABP conducting air operations



Mandatory training, we boarded a C-17 and flew down into Bagram airfield. Bagram airfield is in a sunken bowl surround by mountains. Once in Bagram I had to conduct a trip up to Kabul to visit the British Camp Souter, in order that I could collect my UK Osprey body armour plates. From Bagram my team then deployed forward to Jallabad and then into FOB JOYCE in the Kunar River valley. We are advising the Afghan border police that is responsible for a number of outposts on the Afghan/Pakistan border. The two most famous of these being Ghaki and Nawa pass. Kunar is very different to the south with it being very mountainous. The river valley base is 3000 foot above sea level with some of the passes getting up towards 8000 feet. Movement is canalised due to the mountains, and the threat of IED's is more from R-CIED's than PP-IED's.



Capt Brancieri and 1SG Antley

So far it has been an amazing experience being on tour with the US Army. I am currently conducting a 9 month tour (the US Army has just reduced tour lengths down from 12 months to 9 months). I look forward to catching up with the Tigers of 2PWRR in Feb 13 when I get back and take some post tour leave.

Editor: Apologies to Ed for the late publication of this report.

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