

Deploying for Victory

by Colonel William J. Lennox, Jr. and Lieutenant Colonel John M. House

There's a good possibility that the first round of the next major conflict involving American forces will be fired by a 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) Bradley fighting vehicle, Abrams tank or howitzer. History has shown this to be the case in World War II, Korea and Operation Desert Storm. We in the Victory Division, Fort Stewart, Georgia, are proud of our heritage and take the mission of readiness and deployability seriously. We've learned important lessons from our 1990 deployment to the Middle East and have put together a sound plan for the future that we upgrade continuously.

Operation Desert Shield

The deployment to Saudi Arabia included several unique challenges. Though the division had a plan, we did not have a reason before Desert Shield to carry out such a massive deployment. When it came time to deploy, much of the equipment for one direct support (DS) Field Artillery battalion and one mechanized infantry battalion was on a train returning from a National Training Center (NTC) rotation at Fort Irwin, California. One of our armor battalions had virtually ceased to exist due to a cohesion, operational readiness and training (COHORT) rotation of its companies to Korea. There were other complications—we faced an enemy with years of combat experience, one who was apparently willing to use chemical weapons.

The majority of the division's initial effort focused on preparing equipment at Fort Stewart for deployment (including that on trains returning from the NTC) and closing billets and offices. The division staged equipment at the rail marshaling area for ammunition upload and transportation to the port of Savannah. Units restocked supplies in vehicles returning from the NTC. Wheeled vehicles staged at Wright Army Airfield on Fort Stewart for convoy movement to Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF) in Savannah. The port



3d Battalion, 41st Field Artillery vehicles at Garden City Port in Savannah, Georgia.

support activity (PSA) called forward convoys from HAAF as ships became available. Units sent drivers to the PSA to ensure vehicles were safely loaded.

The 2d Brigade deployed first, but it took the 3d Battalion, 69th Armor instead of the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor due to the COHORT problem. This caused fire support teams (FISTs) administrative problems because 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery and 3d Battalion, 41st Field Artillery swapped task force FISTs. Because the division never restored the brigades to their Fort Stewart configuration, this caused hand-receipt and personnel-action irritants.

The division artillery (Div Arty) units moved to buildings in the National Guard area to isolate their soldiers from distractions. After several days, we realized the move was unnecessary because there were about two weeks between initial ship boarding and flights to Saudi Arabia. Additional supplies remained in our offices, and the Guard area was cramped. People returned to headquarters and billets, and those with families spent non-training time with their loved ones—a morale factor when facing a war.

As far as training was concerned, the Div Arty borrowed a battery of M109 howitzers from the National Guard to fire a few rounds and "shake out" crews. The result was more confidence building than anything else. The majority of training focused on the nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) threat.

Never had American soldiers paid more attention to chemical defense than during those days. The division was convinced we would fight "dirty." The chemical officers and NCOs were mentors for everyone. Every training event at Fort Stewart and in Saudi Arabia after deployment included NBC conditions.

The training program in Saudi Arabia included activities such as battery and battalion field training exercises (FTXs), maneuver brigade command post exercises (CPXs) and FTXs, live firing at the division's range complex, small-arms qualification and battery external evaluations. Daily fire support rehearsals ensured an effective defense of assembly areas. Tactical rehearsals at battery through division levels honed plans and trained units to execute them. Only imagination and ammunition limited training. By the time

it crossed into Iraq on 24 February, the division was ready.

As a result of lessons learned in the Gulf War, the unit has reworked its deployment concept.

The Division Ready Brigade Concept

As the Army faces this new period of strategic uncertainty, the 24th Infantry Division is well-positioned to be a major player, set in an area that can be characterized as a strategic launching platform. The ports of Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; and Jacksonville, Florida are close at hand, and Hunter Army Airfield provides air access. In fact, the port of Savannah is to the 24th Division what Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina is to the 82d Airborne Division.

To fulfill its mission to provide a heavy force in response to any crisis the XVIII Airborne Corps might face, the division established its division ready brigade (DRB) concept. This graduated response provides several levels of force from a modest degree of reinforcement for a light unit already in country to a full heavy brigade. The step-by-step progression puts an initial ready company (IRC) with an Abrams platoon and a Bradley platoon in the air in 18 hours. This force significantly increases the firepower available to a light battalion.

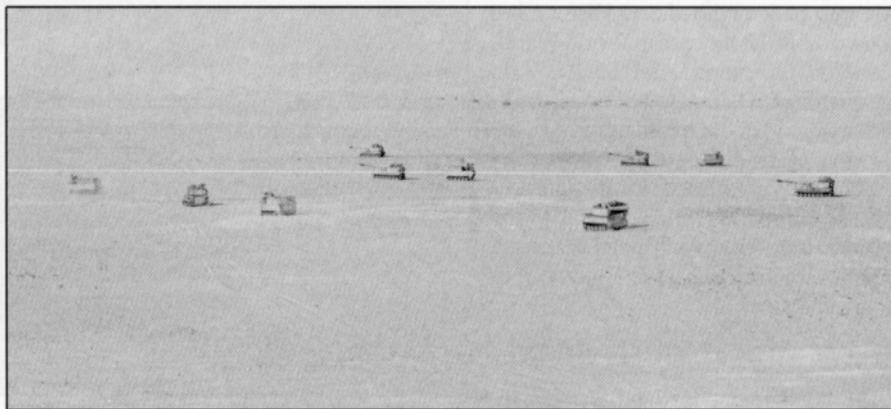
The division ready force (DRF) flyaway can be in the air in 48 hours with a battalion headquarters and two heavy companies, each with two platoons (supplemented on arrival by the two platoons of the IRC). A sealift DRF is also available for loading within 48 hours. It has a task-organized maneuver battalion, an M109A2 howitzer battalion with AN/TPQ-36 Firefinder radar and other combat support and service support elements.

The final package before the complete division moves is a three-manuever-battalion DRB. The habitually supporting DS (M109A2) battalion and other related "slice" elements deploy with it. Depending on aircraft and ship availability, elements of the division can be well on their way to any point on the globe within a day by air or a week by sea.

Each deploying maneuver force carries an appropriate Field Artillery contingent to provide fire support. The IRC deploys with its company fire support officer (FSO). Unfortunately, the expected number of C-5 aircraft available precludes



3-41 FA fire support team vehicles returning from Saudi Arabia. The port at Savannah is to the 24th Division what Pope Air Force Base is to the 82d Airborne Division.



3-41 FA conducting operations in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield.

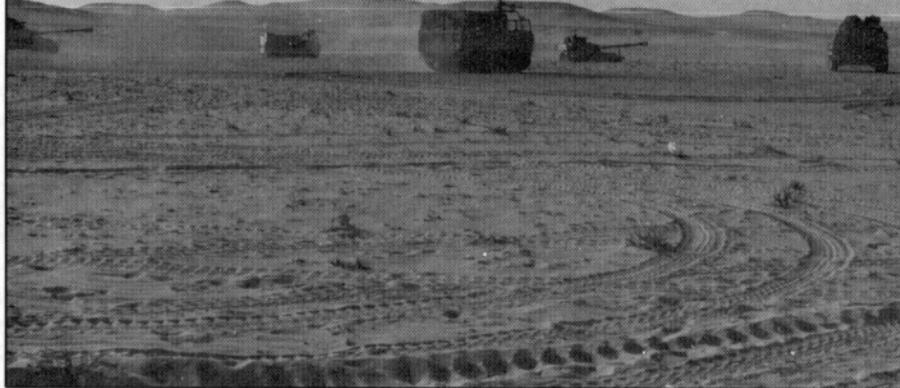


The training program in Saudi Arabia included battery and battalion field training exercises, battery external evaluations and small arms qualification.

taking a fire support team vehicle (FISTV). The DRF flyaway, DRF sealift and DRB packages include the normally associated fire supporters and equipment.

Several additional air and sealift deployment modules exist to enhance the capability of the basic DRF/DRB force. Field Artillery air modules include a howitzer platoon, a multiple-launch rocket

system (MLRS) platoon with AN/TPQ-37 Firefinder radar, a meteorological section and a DS battalion command and control element. All air packages also can go by sea with the option of increasing their size to include the complete parent unit. Other combat support and service support modules exist to provide the force commander the greatest flexibility pos-



Early fire support rehearsals ensured an effective defense of assembly areas. Tactical rehearsals at battery through division levels honed plans and trained units to execute them.



The ports of Savannah, Charleston and Jacksonville are all close to the division, providing a strategic launching platform for sea-deployment.

sible in selecting the appropriate force to respond to the crisis at hand.

Deployment Readiness

Readiness requires a great deal of work and practice. The deployment effort includes ensuring family support groups are informed, family care plans are prepared, battle rosters are established, soldier readiness processing is completed, task force reports are accurate, non-deployables are tracked, personnel shortages monitored, rear detachments prepared and manifests set. Movement officers have to be experts, and automated unit equipment lists must be tracked meticulously.

Practice includes not only the ready unit's rehearsing actions, but all units practicing their parts in the alert sequence. Twice annually the division performs a day-long deployment exercise (DEPEX) for key personnel. The DEPEX runs through all actions for all contingencies,

starting from both Fort Stewart and Fort Benning, Georgia, and ending at Hunter Army Airfield and the port of Savannah. Besides 24th Infantry Division soldiers, participants have included representatives from the Military Traffic Management Command, Army Staff and Coast Guard.

As a result of its work, the division has exceeded expectations. The 24th has deployed the IRC twice, beating its time line both times. We also practice these deployment procedures for rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, and for joint exercises like Ocean Venture, and we've proven our capability to get heavy forces to critical areas in a timely fashion.

Continuous Effort

The division and Div Arty continue to refine these force packages and revise plans. Ammunition, for example, must be carefully worked. We're currently

reloading basic loads and upload procedures. Because all ammunition is transported to a central location where Bradleys, tanks and artillery vehicles unload, the plan has to be developed carefully for safety, speed and efficiency.

Artillery vehicle loads have to be tailored for proper ammunition, propellant, fuses and small arms. Projectiles and powder have to be broken down by square weight and lot, and calibration data kept for lots on hand. This data has to be tracked carefully as ammunition is rotated.

We're also looking at increasing the number of FISTVs in the early air packages. FISTs with ground/vehicular laser locator designators (G/VLLDs) can prove effective in unstable circumstances where Navy and Air Force, as well as Army, weapons are available.

In the future we will continue our efforts. If heavy forces are needed, either to reinforce units already on the ground or to provide massive ground firepower, the Victory Division is ready. The division will provide heavy forces wherever and whenever needed.

We of the Victory Division are proud of our history and are dedicated to playing our part. *First to Fight!*



Colonel William J. Lennox, Jr. commands the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) Artillery, Fort Stewart, Georgia. His previous assignments include commanding the 5th Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Carson, Colorado. Colonel Lennox has served as Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Army and as a White House Fellow, both in Washington, DC. He also has held many Field Artillery command and staff assignments in Europe and in the continental US.

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