

A/1-9 FA Wins 2003 Knox Best AC Battery Award

Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery (A/1-9 FA), part of the 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized) Artillery, Fort Stewart, Georgia, won this year's Henry A. Knox Best Active Component (AC) Battery Award. The annual award is named after the first Chief of Field Artillery Major General Henry A. Knox, a Revolutionary War hero, and recognizes an outstanding AC battery based on specific criteria and a narrative of performance. A similar award was established in 1924 and phased out in 1940 as World War II loomed. The Best Battery Award was reestablished in 2002. (For more information about the award and application and deadline for 2004, see the website "Knox, Hamilton and Gruber Awards" on the Fort Sill homepage at <http://sill-www.army.mil/awards/default.htm>.)

The *Assassins* honed warfighting skills in the swamps of Georgia and the deserts of Kuwait and then unleashed their awesome firepower in support of the 3d Infantry Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

While deployed for 301 days of FY03, the *Assassins* culture of personal and professional pride and selfless service kept the battery highly motivated and ready for any challenge.

The true character of the *Assassins* was demonstrated clearly during the long, difficult and highly successful journey to victory in OIF. On 20 March 2003, after a safe deployment and many months of combat training in Kuwait, Alpha Battery's fires destroyed two Iraqi observation posts (OPs) along the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border, facilitating the attack of the division's lead elements into Iraq.

The 3d Division Artillery (Div Arty) immediately placed A Battery in direct support (DS) of the division's cavalry squadron, 3d Squadron, 7th Cavalry (3-7 Cav), for the duration of major combat operations. More than 350 miles and 48 hours later, the battery was in position and ready to fire in support of 3-7 Cav that was encountering heavy resistance from enemy dismounts and mortar near As Samawah, Iraq. The speed, accuracy and effectiveness of A/1-9 FA's fires



enabled 3-7 Cav to destroy the enemy and continue the attack.

On 25 March, after battling through several ambushes, the *Assassins* received an urgent call-for-fire from 3-7 Cav. B Troop was cut off and under vicious attack south of An Najaf. With no other option, the troop fire support officer called for fire close to friendly forces. As tracers crisscrossed their positions, the *Assassins* fired danger close to the troop, causing the enemy to seek cover so the unit could recover its soldiers and move to a better position. Later that night, A Battery laid down a continuous wall of fire for C Troop as it repelled another strong Iraqi assault.

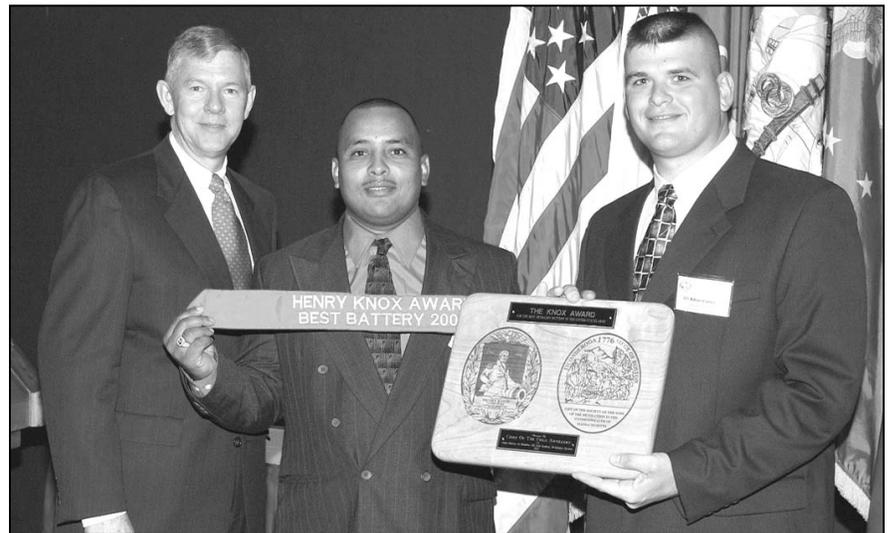
On 4 April, Alpha Troop called for fire on a Republican Guard tank battalion near the Baghdad International Airport. The *Assassins* responded with dual-

purpose improved conventional munitions (DPICM) and the sense and destroy armor munition (SADARM), resulting in devastating effects on the enemy.

Although the *Assassins* encountered both indirect and small arms fire on numerous occasions during the 650-mile journey to Baghdad, they sustained no casualties and lost no vehicles to enemy contact.

Immediately after the fall of Baghdad, A Battery returned to battalion control. 1-9 FA assigned the *Assassins* the mission of establishing the stability and security of a four-square-kilometer sector in downtown Baghdad. Alpha battery conducted countless mounted and dismounted patrols and established checkpoints and fixed-site security around high-value targets in its sector. The battery followed-up these successes by restoring order to a 90-square-kilometer sector in the vicinity of Fallujah, a contentious stronghold for loyalists of the previous regime. Battery A redeployed to Fort Stewart in August 2003 and, after a short leave period, began sharpening its critical warfighting skills.

During 2003, A/1-9 FA trained in peace and was tested in war while consistently performing at a level of excellence making it worthy of inclusion with the finest units in the Field Artillery.



Chief of Field Artillery MG Michael D. Maples (left) poses with 1SG Joseph A. Henry and CPT William P. Brodany of A/1-9 FA to whom he just presented the Knox Award on 23 October during the FA and Joint Fires Conference at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.