

Operation Desert Storm—

Mobilization and Deployment of the 142d Field Artillery Brigade

REDLEGS
IN THE
GULF

by Colonel Charles J. Lynch, ARNG

Many people have asked what it was like—what were the problems and what effect did being “called up” for Operation Desert Storm have on the 142d Field Artillery Brigade, Arkansas Army National Guard. The easy answer could be in the old saying, “He who rides the tiger cannot dismount.”

*Once the activation order came, our only option was to adjust mentally and then rapidly transition from citizen soldier to full-time soldier. The physical and mental change to active duty was relatively easy. The emotional transition of leaving family, homes and jobs, then entering the stress of a different life style, facing the high probability of combat and other unknowns was not easy. However, since World War I, the brigade’s motto has been “**Answers the Call**,” and that is what we did.*



Our mobilization, deployment and combat assignment uncovered only a few more problems than active duty units encountered. Equipment shortages were our major “warstopper.” All other problems required an adjustment in the methods and procedures we used in training. The lack of major problems can be explained by describing how the 142d trained prior to Desert Storm, how the Arkansas’ Adjutant General and his staff supported our training program and how Fort Sill, III Corps Artillery and VII Corps assisted and accepted us on active duty.

Training Strategy

The 142d had just completed a five-year training strategy adjustment. In 1984 we studied the Army training and evaluation program (ARTEP) and training guidance for combined arms operations. We concluded that only howitzer batteries of armored cavalry units fought as batteries. As general support (GS) artillery units, we would be expected to mass fires as battalions or brigades. It was apparent that we needed to increase our training level, develop strong battle staffs and fully functional tactical operations centers (TOCs).

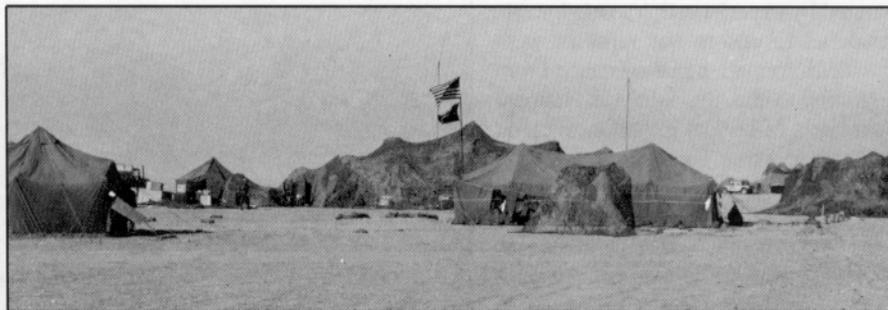
It took three hard training years to take control from the batteries and develop

competent battle staffs. TOC operations did not jell into real teamwork until the third year.

The 1st Battalion, 142d Field Artillery (FA) conducted a mobilization and deployment exercise to Camp Grayling, Michigan, for Annual Training (AT) 87. All equipment was shipped by barge or flown by C-5A. The troops were transported by National Guard C-130 aircraft on a training mission. The mobilization exercise, barge tie-down and loading, along with manifest preparation for the aircraft, was an experience that carried over to follow-on deployments. In Training Year 88, we increased our training level to brigade operations and conducted all field training as a two-battalion brigade.

AT 89 was conducted at Fort Carson, Colorado, as an FA brigade. This time all equipment was rail-loaded and troops were transported by bus. All mobilization and deployment requirements were again practiced. Our transition to brigade-level operations actually took two years to get a real feel for execution time and space management. Command and control of two FA battalions and a target acquisition battery (TAB)(-) proved to be more difficult than during a command post exercise (CPX).

In addition to scheduled training, we managed to send more than 200 soldiers on key personnel update program (KPUP) tours to the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California. We deployed a 55-man cell to the NTC in February



The 142d Field Artillery Brigade's TOC in tactical assembly area (TAA) Hog.

1989 to form a reinforcing battalion TOC for the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) rotation and had another 55-man cell in a train-up with the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment when Desert Shield started.

The lessons learned from deploying the brigade to distant training sites and to the NTC were applied to training at all levels in the 142d. We trained with units from III Corps Artillery, the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) and 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. We studied how these units operated, what their terms and graphics meant to them and, most of all, how we fit into the combined arms team. When the 142d was activated, our soldiers were confident in their training and at least some active units knew who we were and had accepted us as a combat multiplier.

Arkansas Support

None of our deployments or training events would have been possible without the total support of the Arkansas Adjutant General and his staff. Training funds were always in short supply, and many times it took a mad scramble for the state to secure adequate funding. State logistics personnel came up with innovative methods to transport troops and equipment. Arkansas provided departure airfield control group (DACG) and arrival airfield control group (AACG) teams on both ends of our deployment exercises. The state mobilization officer concentrated on mobilization plans that required all deployable units to mobilize with very little external assistance.

When the orders came for the 142d to activate, several key officer positions were filled from state assets. The state immediately assisted in issuing the contingency stock of mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP) suits, clothing and TA-50 equipment. When we departed from home station, each of our 11 armories were manned by experienced, knowledgeable personnel to ensure our families were provided information and assistance. From beginning to end, the Arkansas National Guard was of critical importance in our ability to be a true Total Force entity.

So we had trained to standard, conducted realistic mobilization and deployment exercises, received tremendous support and were as ready as any under-equipped National Guard unit could be. When the orders came, we had three days at home station to complete our mobiliza-

tion packets, cross-level within the brigade, pick up our contingency stocks, pack and load equipment, send out our advance party and prepare 500 vehicles and 1,200 soldiers for the 400-mile convoy to Fort Sill.

Our pre-planning proved to be adequate and flexible enough to handle surprises. We were told not to bring any vehicles to the mobilization station that required mogas. This caused some adjustment to load plans and transportation of personnel. The change over to Army supply requisitions was not as painless as we had been led to believe. Our first problems occurred in the changeover to the Army's logistics and personnel procedures. The tactical Army combat service support computer system (TACCS) was new to us; however, once we learned to use it and got the right data entered, most of the problems were solved.

Active Army Support

The convoy to the mobilization station was uneventful and verified our maintenance program. Fort Sill was completely ready for our arrival and had a clear program for us to follow. Fort Sill military and civilian personnel, along with III Corps Artillery, welcomed us as a new unit on post. They immediately went to work to ensure we received any additional personnel, equipment and training needed to deploy. Brigadier General Frank L. Miller, Jr., then-Commander of III Corps Artillery, and his staff led, directed and kept us on a "zero miles" course through preparation for overseas movement (POM).

Although we were a C-3 (unit status level) unit by Department of the Army and National Guard Bureau standards, a quick look at our equipment shortages disclosed that only a fool or a desperate person would commit us to combat. We had about 50 percent of the required communications equipment, 20 percent of

required communications secure devices, an antique meteorological station, 50 percent of our fuel tankers, 18 of 24 howitzers, 20 percent of our night-vision devices and were short 30 high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs). We did not have any digital artillery automation capability at the battalion or brigade headquarters. In addition to modification table of organization and equipment (MTOE) shortages, we had been instructed by the National Guard Bureau to leave our computers, copy machines and secure-voice capable (STU III) telephones at home station.

Brigadier General Miller and the Field Artillery School department directors at Fort Sill, along with our logistics personnel and commanders, worked 24 hours a day from 23 November to 15 December to fill equipment shortages. Fort Sill's goal was to equip the 142d as well as they had the 75th and 212th Field Artillery Brigades, which were already in Saudi Arabia. This was the most hectic 23 days of my life. In addition to equipment procurement, we completed POM, picked up the 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery as our third battalion, had 850 vehicles painted desert sand, conducted individual training, rail-loaded all vehicles, packed 38 military-owned demountable containers (MILVANS) and started classes on the lightweight tactical fire direction system (LTACFIRE) and meteorological data system (MDS).

On 15 December our equipment left for the port. The next 30 days were filled with individual training, becoming proficient with LTACFIRE and continually receiving and packing supplies for shipment.

I briefed Brigadier General Creighton W. Abrams, Jr., Commander, VII Corps Artillery, in December of 1990 and was impressed by his attitude toward a National Guard artillery brigade. He indicated that he didn't see a National Guard unit,



Brigade members unload tracked vehicles in the TAA.



The Brigade's howitzers and launchers arrived on host-nation vehicles five days before the war started.



142d FA Brigade howitzers firing a combat mission.

just an FA Brigade he needed to accomplish his mission. Our goal had always been to look like, act like and fight as well as any active brigade. Our job was to get there and fit into our small slot in VII Corps. In return, VII Corps gave us the same attention and assistance everyone else received.

Our first units arrived in Saudi Arabia on 14 January 1991. All of our personnel were in country by 28 January. The majority of our wheeled vehicles and supplies arrived during our first week in Daharan. Then the bad news came—the ship with our howitzers and two-thirds of our multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) launchers had put back into port for repairs and would be 20 to 30 days late in arriving. I now had a major decision to make. Should we stay in the relative comfort of Daharan or get out of “Scud Alley” and move to the desert?

Two important NTC lessons influenced my decision to move to the desert. First, it takes time for soldiers to acclimate and learn to live in the desert. Second, the most difficult parts of combined arms operations are communication links and completely understanding the commander's intent. With this in mind, I asked for an assembly area in the vicinity of VII Corps' planned western move. The area was far enough west that I wouldn't need to move again when the corps started its swing west.

My next concern was losing personnel and equipment as fillers because we didn't have our howitzers and rocket launchers.

My previous training with active units taught me to be aggressive and not wait for someone else to decide my fate.

My staff went to work and developed a training plan that would allow the brigade and battalion TOCs to continue coordination and planning with VII Corps Artillery and give our logistics people the opportunity to enter the logistics system. We also offered to form three provisional transportation companies with our heavy expanded-mobility tactical truck (HEMTT) and five-ton assets. These could be used to augment the other brigades in VII Corps Artillery for their move west. The plan was accepted by Brigadier General Abrams, and we became a provisional transportation headquarters until our primary weapons systems arrived.

The next three weeks we conducted brigade and battalion CPXs, finalized planning with VII Corps Artillery and the 1st Infantry Division Artillery (Div Arty), hauled equipment and learned to live in the cold winter desert.

Our howitzers and rocket launchers finally arrived five days before the war started. We immediately called in our trucking companies and moved north to the Iraqi border to fire in artillery raids. When I received our mission for D-Day, I knew we still had the confidence of Brigadier General Abrams. He had not given us a simple mission; instead, it would require flexibility and good coordination to pull it off. Our mission was general support reinforcing (GSR) to the 1st Infantry Div Arty, on order reinforcing

the 1st Cavalry Div Arty, on order reinforcing the 1st (UK) Armored Div Arty.

We fired in the preparation to breach the minefields for the 1st Infantry Division, then received the on-order mission to reinforce the 1st (UK) and prepare to receive A Battery, 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery (MLRS) and two radars. For the next three days, we kept up with the Brits and fired every mission they required. The 142d traveled more than 300 kilometers while delivering 422 tons of cannon and rocket munitions on the Iraqi Army. Our operational readiness rate never dropped below 95 percent. Our LTACFIRE and MDS gave us capabilities we never dreamed of during peacetime training.

Post-mobilization

The 142d has been home almost two years now, and Desert Storm has affected all of our lives in some way. Approximately 10 percent of our soldiers retired or did not choose to re-enlist. They have been replaced by good young soldiers who will carry on the 142d tradition. All units of the 142d FA Brigade are at or above 100 percent strength, morale is high and many war stories have been embellished to the point of sounding like new stories.

We had a lot of good luck, tremendous support and were fortunate to bring all of our soldiers home. We worked hard and completed our mission in a professional manner. Fort Sill, III Corps Artillery and VII Corps accepted us as part of the Total Force. For that, we will always be grateful and proud. The 142d FA Brigade, Arkansas Army National Guard, is again ready to *Answer the Call*.



Colonel Charles J. Lynch, ARNG, is the Commander of the 142d Field Artillery Brigade, Arkansas Army National Guard, which he commanded during Operation Desert Storm. His previous assignments include S3 and S4 of the 142d Field Artillery Brigade and Commander of the 1st Battalion, 142d Field Artillery. He has held many National Guard positions, including Communications and Electronics Staff Officer, Liaison Officer, Fire Direction Officer and Operations and Training Staff Officer. He also commanded A Battery, 2d Battalion, 142d Field Artillery. He's a graduate of the University of Arkansas and is self-employed as co-owner of a real estate agency.