

Former Commanders, Command Sergeants Major, and Panther Association members,

Although I am sending this with another belated Happy New Year, it is remarkable how fast time flies as it has been a year since I last sent an update. As I am sure it is no surprise to you, the Panthers have had another busy and successful year and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the amazing feats accomplished by the Paratroopers of this great BCT. Please feel free to forward to others that you know would like to keep up with what the Panthers are achieving. As you are well aware, myself and the other leaders of 3BCT are always amazed at what our Paratroopers do on a daily basis and what they will continue to do in the future.

First, I would like to share that we had a new Brigade Command Sergeant Major join us mid-deployment. As was expected, CSM Daniel Gustafson immediately hit full stride with the Panther Team – having not been a stranger to the 82nd and served in 4th BCT most recently.

Right around this time last year, about 1300 Paratroopers from the BCT were deployed or deploying to Iraq in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. Although an extremely challenging mission, at the end of September we handed over something better to the Warriors of 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. Looking back, there was a lot to be proud of while deployed, especially when we consider the conditions when we arrived last January. Daish had



A Paratrooper teaches an Iraqi army Soldier marksmanship skills at one of the training locations during OIR.

made significant gains and was still threatening Baghdad; we came back into an Iraq that was very different from any of our previous deployments, and it was certainly surreal to be back on some of our old Forward Operating Bases. Over the course of the deployment, however we gained and maintained momentum.

Paratroopers secured and improved a variety of key infrastructure; trained more than 10,000 Iraqi Army soldiers (all of which went on to succeed in combat operations); assisted in limited operational expansion to support operations; successfully advised a variety of different Iraqi Army echelons in both garrison and combat operations; enabled Iraqi forces through ISR and joint fires; and brought structure to a variety of complex partnerships. Most importantly, we helped the Iraqi Army “see itself” and provided straight forward and focused feedback that improved the forces. We also saw the Iraqi Army resume the offense, and make steady progress in operations. Forces we trained and advised were part of recent operations in Ramadi and fought well. As we left, we felt that our presence brought hope to the Iraqi Army and combined with our assistance, tough training, and the new equipment we introduced, we indirectly contributed to building their confidence and will. All those deployed gained a tremendous amount of mutual respect for our Iraqi partners. As I’ve said previously, the mission was “tough but not impossible,” and we realized that none of it would have been possible without the great leaders

and Paratroopers we had who demonstrated tremendous agility, competence, and excelled daily in positions of responsibility one or two levels above their pay grade. It was awesome to watch even our most junior Paratroopers develop further into the leaders of tomorrow.

However, just like those deployed, our adaptive and agile leaders and Paratroopers that stayed at Fort Bragg as part of our Surge Ready Force continued to accomplish outstanding feats despite having leaders at all levels work one or two levels above their pay grade as well.

Throughout the BCT (-) deployment to OIR, the over 2500 Paratroopers at Fort Bragg (led by LTC Al Paquin and CSM Rob Williams) ensured that the Brigade remained highly trained. Not only did they guarantee that our new Paratroopers were integrated and trained properly to support additional deployers as needed, they also trained up to the Squad level collective training. In addition, they participated in the Expert Infantry Badge training with 1st BCT, 2nd BCT, and the Old Guard; the Expert Field Medical Badge with the Sustainment Brigade; conducted Interoperability training during Exercise Jade Helm 15 with Special Forces; conducted Operation Federal Eagle – an Interoperability training event and wing exchange with our German partners; and even deployed small organic units to JRTC twice to serve as OPFOR. All of these events allowed us to continue to hone our skills at the small unit level and make sure we remained READY!



Paratroopers assigned to 1-319th fire the Killer Junior round during a training event.



Paratroopers assigned to 2-505th conduct advanced rifle marksmanship training.



Paratroopers from 307th BEB conduct medical training in preparation for Expert Field Medical Badge Test.

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Barbara Gavin Fauntleroy, daughter of Lt. Gen. James Gavin, visits the 3rd BCT headquarters during AAW.

American Week this past year was another great event and I know that many of you visited Fort Bragg. We hosted our annual Regimental Picnic, where we were honored to have many Gold Star Families and Veterans attend and inducted new members as Distinguished Members of the Regiment. One such visitor, Barbara Gavin Fauntleroy (daughter of LTG(R) James Gavin) even honored us with her book *The General and His Daughter*. This past All American Week was also special because we finally had the opportunity to dedicate our new BCT Headquarters building. After three years of construction we were able to dedicate it to LT Waverly W. Wray (D/2-505 PIR Executive Officer during the Normandy Invasion). The dedication capped off a great week of activities and visitors.

In July, our Paratroopers at Fort Bragg began to serve as the Outload Support Battalion (old DRF 9) and ensured they were capable of supporting any outload requirements for the rest of the

Division; and in fact conducted several outload missions for Division level EDREs and JRTC deployments – all with astounding success. What made this mission unique was the fact that once again, our young leaders and Paratroopers were coming together from different Battalions to support the required deployment nodes – and they never failed! Unfortunately, we did lose one Paratrooper during an Airborne Operations – SPC Nicholas Roberts from 1-505th. As unfortunate as the accident was, as expected, the unit did an outstanding job supporting the family through the ordeal and did a phenomenal job with the unit memorial.

Due to the fact the 1-508th had re-deployed from Afghanistan in October 2014, they did not deploy with us to OIR and were attached to 2BCT and continued an aggressive training path and leadership development program. Companies focused on weapons qualifications, individual warrior tasks, and preparing for the EIB and EFMB. Twenty-two Paratroopers from 1 Fury earned the coveted EIB and two medics earned the sought-after EFMB. 1 Fury then commenced a three-month intensive training cycle that started with Team and Squad Live Fires and ended with a two-week Platoon Live Fire and Situational Training Exercise. Following the Battalion's participation in Jade Helm 15, they executed Company Live Fires and were ready for their JRTC rotation with 2nd BCT, where they executed a Battalion Live Fire Exercise and served as 2nd BCT's main effort during the final offensive operations.



Paratroopers assigned to 1-508th conduct a combined arms live fire exercise.

Once the Brigade was together again at Fort Bragg and complete with our Reintegration in October, we again turned to esprit-de-corps events to bring our Team back together. 307th BEB conducted their annual Waal Crossing competition to highlight the great achievements of the 307th during Operation Market Garden. The Brigade also executed a BCT run and its second annual Prop Blast and Dining In to close out 2015. This year's Prop blast continued to build on the history of this great Brigade with over 200 Panther Officers – from WO1 to MAJ – going through. Our Dining In this year welcomed back LTG(R) James Johnson and CSM(R) Ted Gaweda (505th Honorary Colonel and CSM) and enjoyed CSM(R) Rock Merritt (508th Honorary CSM) as our guest speaker, in honor of the "Golden Brigade" years. His words were inspiring and you could hear a pin drop across the room when he spoke to the leaders of the Brigade. Both events were just another great way to not only increase the esprit-de-corps but share the rich history of this great Brigade and Division with future leaders.

Finally, as no different in years past, many of our Paratroopers and units continued to excel and win both individual awards or recognition: SFC Cheri Lee (307th BEB) won the FORSCOM Career Counselor of the Year (after winning the Division and Corps awards); SPC Terri Bluebird (C/BSB) won the Division Trooper of the Year; SGT Sanchez (5-73 CAV) won the Division Best Medic

competition; SPC Oropeza and 1LT Seaman (307th BEB) won the Outstanding Engineer Soldier and Platoon Leader award for the Division while SFC Wilkens (also of 307th) was the Division and Corps winner of the Outstanding Engineer NCO; SSG Grant (D/307th BEB) was recognized as the FORSCOM Language Professional of the Year; and our MI Company (D/307th BEB) won the MG Dillard Award as the best MI Company in FORSCOM. 1-319th also performed well again in last year's Best of the Best competition – an artillery contest comprised of a series of tests to evaluate Soldiers' physical strength, weapons system knowledge, land navigation skills, artillery proficiency and endurance. They won the Best Fire Direction Center (C Battery), Best Big 3 - tasks the PL, PSG and Gunnery Sergeant perform to lay the battery (1st PLT / B Battery), Best PT Test (LT Penn), and Best 20km ruck march (LT Tunstall). As you are aware, the list of great things our Paratroopers continue to achieve could be endless – we are fortunate to have such dedicated Paratroopers serving in this great Brigade.

Throughout every unit, leader transition is inevitable and we also saw five of our seven Battalion Command Sergeants Major transition throughout the year – 1-505th (CSM Cliff Burgoyne is headed to 3/101 and replaced with CSM Andrew Bristow), 2-505th (CSM Frank Velez is off to the 173rd and replaced by CSM Erick Ochs), 5-73 CAV (CSM Michael Ames is the Commandant at the Ft Benning NCO Academy and replaced by CSM Walter Kirk), 1-319th AFAR (CSM Robert Williams will be the Commandant at Ft Campbell NCO Academy and replaced by CSM James McGuffey), and 82nd BSB (CSM Chad Peters took over another Support battalion in Wisconsin and replaced by CSM Nickia Haynes). We wish the outgoing CSMs the best in the future and are glad to have the wealth of knowledge and experience that the new CSMs will bring to the Team to make us even better.

We are all looking forward to a great 2016. Unfortunately, many leaders across the Battalions and the Brigade will also transition beginning in May. Five of our seven Battalion Commanders will change command in May, and I will change command with COL Greg Beaudoin just before All American Week, tentatively ~ 20 May. For your planning consideration, All American Week this year is from 23-26 May 2016. Despite the changes that will occur however, we are all committed to continuing the legacy of this great Brigade past our tenure and have a great training path established between now and when the Brigade executes it's next JRTC rotation in August.

Attached you will find our 2015 Year in Review "Static Line." The "Static Line" is published monthly and accessible via our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/panther.brigade>.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to the BCT and continued support of the Paratroopers and Families of the Panther Brigade Combat Team! Please feel free to contact myself (curtis.a.buzzard.mil@mail.mil), CSM Gustafson (daniel.l.gustafson.mil@mail.mil), or our

DCO LTC JC White (john.c.white11.mil@mail.mil) and also know that you are always invited to stop by and see the new the headquarters if ever on Fort Bragg.

All the Way, Airborne....H-minus!

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