

Iron Soldiers: Mission complete

By 1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Task Force 1st Armored Division is on the way home after 15 months of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

After casing their colors July 4, the task force Soldiers have begun their last mission: redeploying to their home stations in Germany, Fort Polk, La., and to Army National Guard and Reserve centers throughout the United States.

The division and task force marked some major “firsts” during the deployment. For Soldiers of the 1st Armored Division, this was longest deployment of any division in Iraq.

Task Force 1st Armored Division was the largest division-based task force in U.S. Army history. Units serving with the Task Force included brigade-sized elements of the 82nd Airborne and 3rd Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions, the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 124th Infantry Battalion, the 18th and 89th Military Police Brigades and 168th MP Battalion. Engineer units serving with the task force included the 153rd, 203rd, 389th, 439th, 535th, 842nd and 1457th Engineer Battalions, the 493rd Engineer Group, and the 249th and 671st Engineer Companies. Also serving in the task force were the 55th Personnel Service Battalion, the 8th Finance Battalion, the 350th and 354th Civil Affairs Battalions, the 315th and 345th PSYOP Battalions and the 16th Corps Support Group.

At its height, there were more than 39,000 Soldiers were part of the task force.

The task force secured some of Baghdad’s roughest neighborhoods and brought stability to the city and its surrounding countryside.

In addition to combat, task force Soldiers protected and improved the quality of life for over 5 million Iraqi residents in the city of Baghdad. The task force also trained Iraqi police and national guardsmen, renovated schools, established neighborhood councils and spent over \$60 million on these and other projects.

“We learned that people experiencing freedom for the first time may not understand how fragile it can be and how much sacrifice may be required to earn it and preserve it,” said Maj. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the task force’s commanding general during the



Staff Sgt. Aaron Owen, B Company, 16th Engineer Battalion squad leader, provides his Soldiers with covering fire while on dismounted patrol in Karbala, Iraq in support of Operation Iron Saber. Photo by SPC Andrew Meissner, 1AD PAO.

deployment.

In Baghdad, the task force faced off against a counterinsurgency war with more than a dozen guerrilla cells, successfully dismantling many and capturing numerous rebel leaders and financiers.

Fifteen months ago,” Dempsey said, “Iron Soldiers of 1AD and Dragoons of 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment formed a Task Force and set out to make the world safer for their fellow Americans and provide an opportunity for the Iraqi people to be free. They did that.”

After turning the city over to the 1st Cavalry Division April 15, the task force headed south to pacify the cities of Najaf, Diwaniyah, Al Kut and Karbala.

“Three months ago,” Dempsey continued, “the same group of Soldiers were asked to remain in Iraq to defeat militia uprising and preserve the path to an Iraqi sovereignty. They did that, too. I hope you are as proud of what you have accomplished as I am of you.”

Extended for 120 days to tackle the new mission, elements of the task force moved south and took on over 17,000 square kilometers in southern Iraq to dismantle a radical militia that had taken control of a number of cities and was trying to discredit its nation’s new-found freedom. In 60 days of combat operations, Task Force 1st Armored Division defeated the militias and

restored stability to the nation’s southern region.

Among the Task Force’s accomplishments during its 15 months duty included planning and executing Operations Iron Hammer, Iron Justice, Iron Grip, Longstreet, Iron Bullet, Iron Promise and Iron Sabre. During these task force operations, Soldiers captured more than 700 criminals and former regime insurgents. They also confiscated thousands of rockets, mortars, tank rounds, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms.

Task Force 1st Armored Division’s Iron Soldiers have also supervised an estimated \$2 billion in community improvements to Baghdad, rebuilt the failing infrastructure, and restored public utilities, facilities and services, refurbished war-damaged buildings and repaired roads.

Those mission successes and achievements did not come without cost. Since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 133 Iron Soldiers lost their lives while serving in Iraq and 1,111 were wounded in combat.

“When our nation needed us, we were there,” Dempsey said. We did our duty with courage, discipline, and determination. We lived up to our name-- Iron Soldiers!”



Iron Soldiers!



Signal Soldiers from Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, play cards during some downtime. Photo by Sgt. Christopher Stanis, 1AD PAO.

Task Force Operations Totals:

- 758 Battalion-Level Combat Operations
- 2,709 Enemy Captured

Weapons & Ammunition Captured:

- 432 Rockets
- 33,854 Artillery/ Mortar Rounds
- 229 Rocket / Mortar Tubes
- 68 Surface-to-air missiles
- 247 Rocket-propelled grenade launchers
- 1,916 Rocket propelled-grenade rounds
- 1,725 Rifles
- 19 Shotguns
- 18 Machineguns
- 260 Pistols
- 10,665 Grenades
- 31,860 Anti-aircraft artillery rounds
- 2,622 Tank Rounds
- 16,781 Small arms rounds
- Improvised Explosive Device materials
- Hundreds of pounds of explosives



A paratrooper attached to 1st Armored Division from 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, stands ready with a 50-caliber machinegun during "Operation Devil Clinch." Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Bell, 372nd MPAD.



Iraqi National Guard soldiers celebrate the completion of the inaugural Primary Leadership Development Course with one of their instructors, dill sergeant Staff Sgt. Carlos Clark. Photo by Sgt. Susan German. 122nd MPAD.