



To: Company Commanders

From: Company Commanders of 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team,
1st Cavalry Division (Iron Horse)

Partnering with Kuwaiti Land Forces

Deployments to Iraq may have ended, but deployments to the Arabian Peninsula have not. Last December, we—the troopers of 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division—were among the last American forces to depart Iraq. Reunions with our families were postponed for six months, however, when we received the mission to become the first brigade to partner with Kuwaiti forces in support of Operation Spartan Shield.

We immediately established our footprint on Camp Buehring, Kuwait, and began to partner with all four maneuver brigades of the Kuwaiti land forces [KLF] as well as its field artillery regiment. On our own initiative we put together a book as a way to share what we've learned with the commanders who will follow in our footsteps. What follows are excerpts from our *Iraq and Kuwait Commander AAR Book* [after action review].

Leaving Iraq

CPT Michael Gensert

C/2-8 CAV

I was surprised by my interactions with the Iraqi people. During my first two deployments most of my interactions with the populace were not positive. The local populace did not want us there and they let us know it. This time, however, the number of positive interactions with the populace was astounding. Many of them genuinely appreciated our presence, were thankful for everything that the United States had done for Iraq and wanted the United States to stay longer in the country.

CPT Timothy Martin

A/1-82 FA

The general attitude of the Iraqis toward U.S. forces during the final days of Operation New Dawn was a sea change from previous deployments. The general feeling was that the Iraqi security forces [ISF] were trying to “hedge their bets” in advance of the U.S. withdrawal. Also, as the CERP [commander's emergency response program] funds began to disappear, the Iraqis realized that there was little to gain through assisting U.S. forces, so they thought to mitigate their risk by disassociation. In previous deployments, the prospect of infrastructure development projects forced the ISF to be engaged; this deployment was significantly different.

CPT Douglas McDonough

A&G (FSC)/1-82 FA

The defining moment for me during this deployment was the tactical road march out of Iraq. It was significant on multi-

ple levels. First, it was a time of reflection. The seven years of my career have been consumed by the conflict. I have lost friends and Soldiers. I have seen the extremes of humanity—moments that made me extremely proud of my fellow man, and moments of shame and despair. There are memories from Iraq that will stay with me for a lifetime: the day the gunner of my truck was killed by an IED [improvised explosive device] strike after he volunteered to go on a mission with another platoon; the days spent training the Sons of Iraq; the smell of cooking oil as an Iraqi family prepared dinner while I searched their home with my platoon.

Iraq changed me as a leader and as a man. I matured as a leader. Iraq forced me to make tough decisions, and it forced me to discipline my Soldiers. In garrison, I had shied away from discipline, leaving that to my NCOs [noncommissioned officers]. In Iraq, a lack of discipline results in a significant emotional event (e.g., mass drug use, lost sensitive item, casualties). I quickly realized that all leaders have a part to play in ensuring good order and discipline within their formations. I no longer shied away from making on-the-spot corrections, and I conducted my PCCs/PCIs [precombat checks/precombat inspections]. I found that my Soldiers and NCOs respected me more for enforcing good order and discipline rather than for being the nice guy.

On another level, the road march was a source of great pride. We closed out Iraq with dignity and honor. There were no images of helicopters being pushed off aircraft carriers or civilians climbing onto one of the last helicopters leaving the country. In fact, there were very few images at all. We properly closed out Iraq: We left with all of our equipment and in an orderly fashion. The road march itself was very smooth. Our task force had a plan, we rehearsed the plan and we ex-

ecuted flawlessly. It made me proud of the Soldiers and NCOs within my command. In short, this was a culminating event not only for our country, but for each Soldier who participated in it and for our Army as a whole.

Working with the Kuwaiti Land Forces

CPT Jonathan Doersch

B/1-7 CAV

As a troop, we worked fairly extensively with Kuwaiti land forces while stationed at Camp Buehring. It is something that I highly recommend to anyone who has worked with Iraqi or Afghan forces; you will find the experience rewarding and nothing like working with ISF or Afghan national security forces [ANSF]. The interaction is much easier, with Kuwaitis being fairly modern and western, and many of them speak fairly good English, which makes communication much easier. One thing to note on communication is that they will often pretend not to speak English as well as they actually do, either due to modesty or to eavesdrop. When dealing with their officers, the best bet is to treat them as you would someone of the same rank in the U.S. Army. Most of the KLF senior officers have combat experience and have completed a lot of the same schooling as U.S. officers of the same grade. You don't need to be overly gracious or worry about too many of the Arab world's unique customs. Just be polite and act like you are in someone's office back in the States, and you will be fine.

From a training standpoint, dealing with the Kuwaiti Army is also a fairly good experience. I have seen only a select few Afghan soldiers (whose lives depended on it) take training as seriously as the Kuwaitis did during our partnered training. The Kuwaiti officer corps is very competent and professional, and many of them are trained at western schools and military academies. More often than not, you are able to use the standard U.S. military doctrinal language when talking with them about training and operations, and even when the translation is a little off, explaining what you mean is not very difficult. Kuwaiti soldiers, for the most part, are decent, although there seems to be a cultural ADD [attention deficit disorder] that makes training with them more difficult than it would be if you could keep their attention. The key to making training events effective with Kuwaiti soldiers is getting through to them in a way that keeps their focus. Hands-on events are far more successful than having them sit through a PowerPoint slide show or a lecture on a whiteboard.

The one thing that is difficult when training with Kuwaiti forces is that they sometimes come across as acting extremely lazy. Their training days are very short, starting around 0800 and only going to about 1300. There are breaks for prayer and a late breakfast during their day, and if it's too hot or cold, they won't train. By the beginning of May, it is mostly too hot for them to do much training, and getting them to do much of anything outdoors is a lost cause. Also, most of them are out of shape, as their PT [physical training] involves walking with lots of talking and cigarette smoking. This negatively impacts their ability to train iteratively, as they become



1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, partnered with Kuwaiti forces.

too tired to train with rapid turns or recocks. When they are training, however, they are very good. They are able to conduct live fires and ranges safely and on their own, with leaders taking charge and ensuring things are done right. There is quite a bit of untapped competence within their NCO ranks as well. Their culture is such that NCOs don't have the ability to make things happen as ours do, but for the most part, if you can get them to come to the forefront, you will see that they know what to do and are good at it.

CPT Mike Kiser

A/1-7 CAV

The Kuwaitis are more professional than the ISF and much easier to partner with effectively. Their command structure, however, is much more commander-oriented than we are used to. A battalion commander has a virtual blank training calendar to work with, and how it gets filled is generally entirely up to him. This makes each battalion unique.

My particular partner battalion had a commander who was not interested in partnered training, so my troop did only a few limited events with the KLF. My sister troop, on the other hand, was partnered with a KLF battalion whose commander was extremely interested in joint training. They conducted partnership events weekly, including a two-week density with daily activities.

The KLF is extremely officer-centric. NCOs have virtually no authority and are best compared to the old specialist 5/6 ranks in terms of responsibility. To be effective, all joint training needs to involve the Kuwaiti platoon leaders and company commanders. The average company is roughly the size of a rifle platoon (40–50 people), and training is centralized and directed through the battalion headquarters.

The Kuwaiti work week is Sunday to Thursday. This is reflected in the Udairi Range Complex's operations in that no



Kuwait offers little variation in terrain or elevation, but the wide open space provides plenty of opportunity to practice mounted maneuver. The climate affects operations in the country; sudden dust storms halted operations many times.

firing of any caliber is permitted on Friday or Saturday when the Kuwaiti liaisons are off work. To better facilitate training and partnership, units need to align their work week to the Kuwaiti work week and consider Sunday to Thursday prime training days, with the weekend being Friday and Saturday.

CPT David Sherck
B&D (FST)/1-7 CAV

Across all levels we found the quality, professionalism and knowledge of the Kuwaitis to be far higher than what we had come to expect from working with the Iraqi army. As we discussed leadership and logistics with the Kuwaitis, we discovered that their systems are very similar to ours, and that they have many of the same issues and challenges that we face. The Kuwaiti systems are established and functional enough, and the NCOs and officers knowledgeable enough, that there was a true professional discussion and exchange of TTPs [tactics, techniques and procedures]. The Kuwaitis want U.S. approval of what they are doing and often feel inferior, wanting to push the United States into the lead in the relationship, even if what they are doing is of high quality. It is difficult to get them confident enough to participate as equal partners, but it's worthwhile when they do. A particularly good exchange was when our small-arms repair NCOs did M2 .50-caliber machine-gun maintenance with the Kuwaitis. At first the Kuwaitis just wanted us to teach them what we knew, but it was clear from the interaction of their NCOs and soldiers and the questions they asked that they had a high level of expertise. We guided the training to exploit this and ended up with both the Kuwaiti NCOs and our NCOs evaluating Soldiers of both armies on the tasks we were training.

Training in Kuwait

CPT Micah J. Chapman
B/2-5 CAV

Upon first glance, Kuwait appears to offer little training value to a mechanized infantry company. A commander, however, who has a clear vision for training and what he expects to accomplish during a rotation to Kuwait can effectively complete about three times the training that could be completed at any home-station location in the same time period. Kuwait offers little to no variations in terrain or elevation, but micro-terrain that covers the barren desert provides fantastic opportunities to train mechanized infantry. The wide open terrain offers excellent opportunities to practice mounted maneuver, enabling platoons to utilize movement formations and vary movement techniques while doing traveling, traveling overwatch and bounding. A few of the training areas surrounding Camp Buehring are capable of supporting company-sized movement formations; the length of the movement, however, is restricted to approximately 15 kilometers. The micro-terrain allows Bradley Fighting Vehicles to employ berm drills and conduct reconnaissance. A leader's reconnaissance becomes critical when planning training because quality terrain on which to emplace an enemy objective or to employ dismounted infantry is sparse at best. Tailoring missions to the terrain available is critical to conducting valuable training.

CPT Benjamin A. Welch
C/1-7 CAV

The weather in Kuwait, for the most part, remains dry and warm, but the atmosphere can change very quickly. In your planning process, focus on the second- and third-order effects that dust will have on your operations. Many times, op-



Clockwise from left, Micah J. Chapman (left), 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, found that “quality terrain on which to emplace an enemy objective or to employ dismounted infantry is sparse at best.” The micro-terrain in Kuwait allows Bradley Fighting Vehicles to employ berm drills and conduct reconnaissance. A gun crew prepares for action.



days into your training schedule. The heat and sandy terrain also play a major role in how we plan training and operations. We moved PT to 0500 in the morning due to the temperatures rising early in the mornings. The soft sand has proven to be a hindrance in the deployment of some of our equipment on missions outside of the camp. Our HET [heavy equipment transporter] systems that haul M1 tanks, Bradleys and other heavy equipment are greatly restricted on where they can safely travel. These restrictions have caused us to work even closer with the units we are supporting to coordinate link-up and drop-off points for their equipment. The second- and third-order effects of the terrain have greatly altered both our planning and our execution of various missions.

Leading Soldiers and Families While Deployed to Kuwait

CPT Concho Moore B/2-8 CAV

One of the most difficult things about being deployed to Kuwait is that it is similar to a home-station environment in every aspect except the mission. Soldiers must understand the mission and why it is so important for them to be here, or else morale will fade once the newness of the situation erodes. It is hard for Soldiers to comprehend the importance of being here because they cannot see their impact. They have to be told how they are influencing the strategic objective and exactly how they tie into the big picture. Events that Soldiers would normally be allowed to take leave for—such as a death in the family that does not meet emergency-leave criteria—will not necessarily be approved. This will weigh heavily on their minds and will breed discipline issues if they cannot understand their individual roles and purpose here. It is up to leaders to ensure that we provide our Soldiers with a sense of purpose in order for them to take ownership of the mission.

operations were halted due to sudden dust storms. The first day our squadron gunnery was completely shut down due to high winds and dust. The moment my troop occupied the range, winds kicked, creating a dust wall that limited visibility to about 25 feet. Gunners could not identify targets to bore-sight their weapon systems. Targets were blown away, causing a very slow throughput on the range. Air medevac [medical evacuation] and road CASEVAC [casualty evacuation] went red, causing our element to be fixed on the range until a “red air memo” was produced. Leaders training in Kuwait should plan for the dust to impact their operations and have red-air documentation and alternate ground-CASEVAC plans in place prior to execution.

CPT Thelma L. McQuarley A/115 BSB

The sandstorms have been a huge challenge. When storms get bad enough, the roads close and air assets go red, so all training and support missions are suspended. In the planning process, it is very important to build makeup

Soldiers dismount their Bradley at the end of a training exercise. Leaders found that having many different training opportunities available to their soldiers at Camp Buehring helped combat the complacency some troops developed from the apparent lack of a mission in Kuwait compared to Iraq.

CPT Benjamin Welch

C/1-7 CAV

Manage time! Emplace time-management battle rhythms in your organizations to define when the normal workday is and when individuals have time off. Yes, I know time off is like nails on a chalkboard for most leaders, but if you think the majority of your unit will sustain 24/7 operations while in Kuwait, you might want to rethink your position. Soldiers need down time, but if you don't specify when that time is, they will gladly identify it for you. What worked best for our troop was maintaining a battle rhythm that had only one formation a day, at exactly 0845. Any time prior to 0845, platoons could do PT, personal hygiene, chow and even laundry. Following troop formation, at approximately 0900, the workday promptly began and did not end until after evening chow at approximately 1930. The time from 1930–2200 was set aside for personal time, focusing specifically on Soldiers contacting their families. Soldiers were encouraged to call, Skype, chat or even write letters during this time. Simply put, leaders left them alone. I'm not saying to let standards go out the window, but give Soldiers some space. If you manage what time they have off, during the workday your organization will execute like a well-oiled machine.

The importance of your Family Readiness Group [FRG] cannot be overlooked prior to deploying. Many units kick off deployments focusing all their organizational energy on their organic formations (platoons and sections). This surge is perfectly normal, but sooner rather than later you'll need to get your FRG back in the fight. One concept I adopted was to look at my FRG as another platoon in our formation. If you do this and feed your FRG leaders the majority of the information you would give to your leaders, obviously applying OPSEC [operations security], it will unite your organizations both forward and in the rear. The cohesion of your FRG will not seem very important during the first quarter of your deployment, but by the second and third quarters, having free-flowing information from the rear will become very useful. Soldiers' issues will begin to bubble to the surface, and an effective FRG will keep you informed and allow you and your leaders to identify and resolve issues in the troop before they become very serious.

CPT Mark A. Renteria

HHC/115 BSB

Complacency has been a big issue since we arrived in Kuwait. Every Soldier in my company was used to having a mission while in Iraq. Since arriving in Kuwait, many of these Soldiers have not been as engaged as they once were and find it difficult to find their lot in life. We have combated complacency by having many different training opportunities for the company and providing outlets for all Soldiers at the MWR [morale, welfare and recreation] activities.



Know your Soldiers and cross-train. Many Soldiers have issues that pop up at the last minute that you are not aware of, and the company is affected when they are taken out of the fight. Losing one individual, regardless of rank, should not affect the entire unit, but by cross-training and building depth in all slots, the unit will be better prepared for execution of all operations.

You can read all 30 commanders' entire AARs in the Iraq and Kuwait Commander AAR Book (1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division), which is available online in the CompanyCommand forum (<http://CC.army.mil>) and the Center for Army Lessons Learned (<https://call.army.mil>). If your unit would like assistance developing your own company-level commander AAR book, contact the CC team at cocmd.team@us.army.mil.

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A graphic featuring a globe as the background. In the foreground, two soldiers in full combat gear are shown. One soldier is looking at a laptop screen, while the other is looking towards the camera. The text "CC.army.mil" is overlaid on the globe.

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Art by Jody Harmon

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