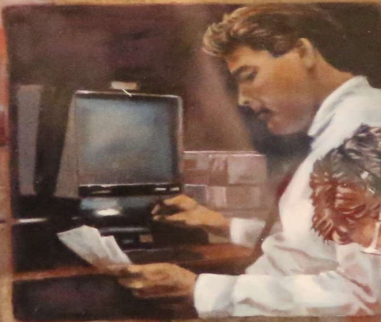


BOOTS IN THE SAND

The Louisiana National Guard's
Role in the Liberation of Kuwait
1990-1991



AOC



Operation Desert Storm
17 Jan 1991 - 28 Feb 1991

Operation Desert Shield
2 Aug 1990 - 17 Jan 1991

DHAHRAN



BOOTS IN THE SAND

Operation: Desert Storm New Era, New Threats

By the late 1980s, international security concerns shifted from Communism to “rogue nations.” Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq, became more aggressive in the Middle East. In 1990, Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait.

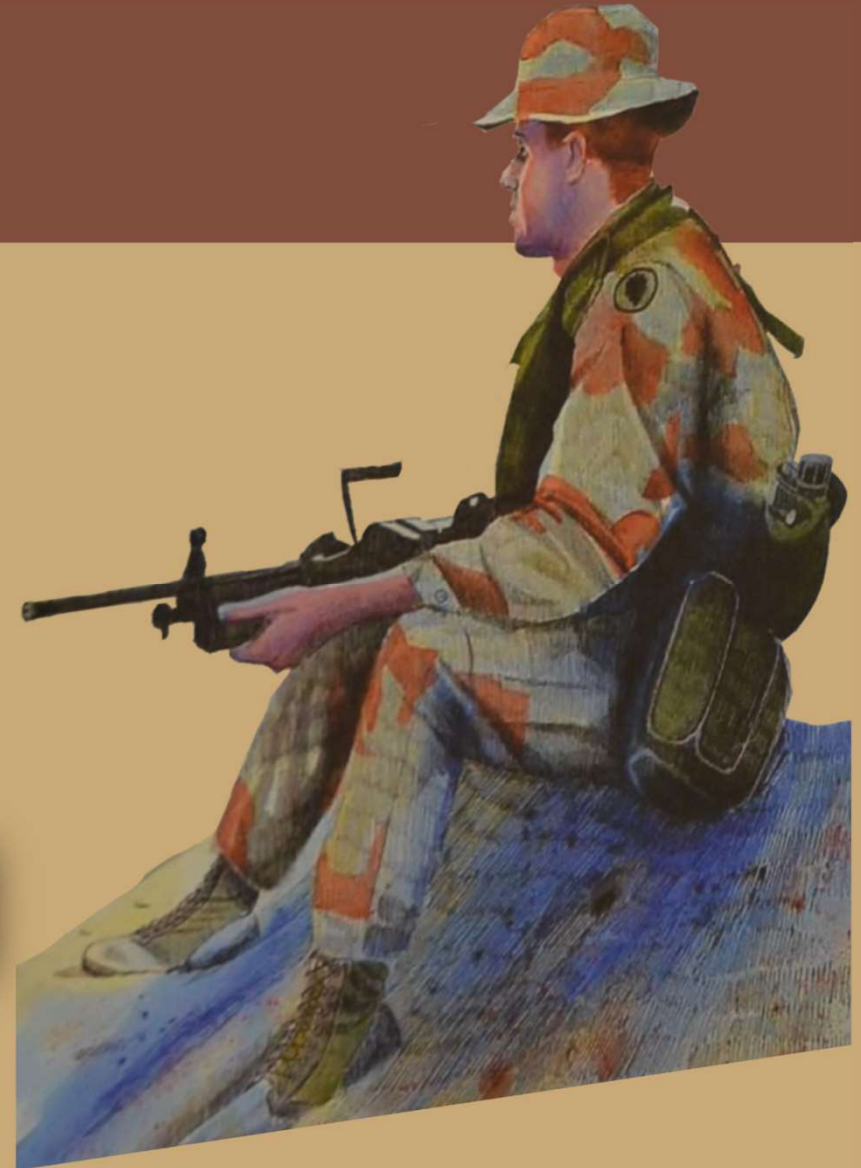
The United Nations immediately condemned the invasion and demanded withdrawal. Seeking to protect U.S. allies in the region and protect the sovereignty of Kuwait, U.S. President George H.W. Bush initiated “Operation: Desert shield,” a mobilization of the U.S. military. The administration pulled together a coalition of 36 nations to provide troops, supplies, bases of operation, money, and airspace.

Hussein ignored a UN ultimatum to leave Kuwait by mid-January. “Operation: Desert Storm” was implemented on January 17, 1991. It began with the bombing of Iraqi military targets. Iraq countered with Scud missile attacks on Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Establishing air supremacy, coalition forces launched the ground war in late February. Kuwait was liberated within days. Despite the large size of the Iraqi army, units near the border all but evaporated in the face of concentrated and technologically superior allied forces. Coalition forces quickly entered Iraq as the regime submitted and a cease-fire was declared.

Saddam Hussein

Saddam Hussein rose to power in Iraq in the 1970s, officially becoming President in 1979. He consolidated his authority through intimidation and sheer brutality. In the 1980s, Iraq was seen as a counter-balance to neighboring Iran, another U.S. enemy. By the end of the decade, however, Hussein had become a threat to the entire Middle East region.



CRITICAL PARTNERS

256th Infantry Brigade

Over 4,000 soldiers of the 256th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) were alerted for duty in November, 1990, and began mobilization at Fort Polk, Louisiana. The 256th, commanded by Brigadier General Gary Whipple, was a round out brigade for the 5th Infantry Division. The ground war ended so quickly that the 256th never made it overseas before demobilization orders came out.



1090th Transportation Company, Pineville Deployed: 18 Sep 90

10 Soldiers of the 1090th assisted in loading and unloading equipment in port operations at Ad Dammam, Saudi Arabia.



1083rd Transportation Company, Jonesville Deployed: 21 Nov 90

With 61 Soldiers, the 1083rd operated in direct support of the 24th Infantry Division northeast of Al Mubarraz. Operations included heavy equipment support.



39th Military Police Company, New Orleans Deployed: 8 Feb 91

Under the Command and Control of the 800th MP Brigade, 117 members of the 39th operated in Kuwait for security of hospitals, airfields, and Command and Control centers. After the ground war commenced, they diverted efforts to escort and processing of POWs. Areas of operation included Dharain and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and occupied zones of Iraq.



Soldiers of the 39th Military Police Company engage in NBC training at Fort Polk in preparation for their final destination (photo by SPC Kristi Moon, 241st PAD).

CRITICAL PARTNERS

1086th Transportation Company, Jena Deployed: 21 Nov 90

179 Soldiers of the 1086th, stationed at King Khalid Military City, transported water and other critical commodities to support combat and occupation operations on the main supply routes.

1086th TRANS CO

Gen. Stroud spoke with Capt. Raymond Scott, of 1086th, on Mar. 15, and the count of total gallons of water transported was 16 million 760 thousand and they had traveled 1 million 942 thousand miles. The unit was in Riyadh for a few days of R&R.



MAJ Dennis J. Fawcett, Commander of the 820th Medical Company, accepts two Zephyrus units and two ZEPHYRUS from Sgt. Carlos 'The Magician' Galt, a head soldier in New Orleans. Bluebird Value also donated 25 units to the aviation company in connection with Camp's gesture. (Photo by SFC Kristi L. Meach, 242d Pz)

812th Medical Company, New Orleans Deployed: 12 Feb 91

With 83 Soldiers, the aviation unit logged over 723 hours in Iraq, over a third of those hours at night. This included over 50 medevac missions, 100 hospital transfer missions, and 45 POW transfers.

3673rd Maintenance Company, New Orleans Deployed: 30 Nov 90

Assigned to an area support battalion at an airbase in Dharain, Saudi Arabia, the 3673rd processed soldiers into the theater of operations. This included, but was not limited to, incoming troop facilitation, unloading of equipment and material, mail distribution, and transportation of troops. Other duties involved requisitioning, accounting, and distribution of repair parts. After combat operations, the 3673rd processed units and soldiers for redeployment. Another task involved transportation of food, water, and supplies to Iraqi refugee camps in Kuwait. The unit consisted of 247 Soldiers.



1087th Transportation Company, Vidalia Deployed: 20 Jan 91

131 Soldiers transported supplies to line units and assisted the evacuation of POWs to camps.



TENT LIFE

Everyday Living in Saudi Arabia

The day to day living conditions in a war time environment had improved since the earlier Cold War conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, but were spartan by current standards. Canvas tents, with dirt floors, housed up to a dozen Soldiers. Garrison space heaters were sometimes available at night but no air conditioning was present to combat the daytime desert heat. Field sanitation standards were austere and bathing was a rarity. Dining generally consisted of the same rations over and over again.

While the living conditions were sparse and the potential for hazards existed, the overall threat level was ultimately mild in comparison to the 21st century occupation of Iraq. While no Louisiana Guardsmen were killed, 294 U.S. service members lost their lives.



Saddam Hussein's regime was known to use gas attacks on its own people. Our Soldiers and Airmen had to live with the constant possibility of a chemical attack. MOPP gear was provided for protection against toxic environments. MOPP is an acronym for "Mission Oriented Protective Posture." It was worn at "Level 4," the highest level of protection, meaning all equipment available was to be used. The roar and explosions of Patriot missiles, countering Scud missile attacks, regularly loomed over the heads of American forces. The Scud attacks were dangerous, but no chemical weapons were used against U.S. troops.

ALICE PACK

All-Purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment

The All Purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment (ALICE) pack was adopted by the U.S. Army in January 1973. It was in use until 2001, when it was replaced by the Modular Lightweight Load-Carrying Equipment (MOLLE).

One System, Two Loads

The ALICE system utilized the concept of separate **fighting** and **existence** loads, with the soldier carrying only the items necessary to complete the immediate mission at hand. The specific items in each of the loads is determined by the Unit Commander. Even with this lighter and more evenly distributed load, these packs would often weigh between 40 and 85 pounds.

The **existence load**, carried in the ALICE Field Pack, consisted of items which were required to sustain or protect the soldier, such as extra clothing and boots, a bedroll, and rations. When possible, the existence load items were transported by other means. Otherwise both the fighting and existence loads were carried by the soldier.



ALICE Equipment Belt

The **fighting load**, carried on the ALICE Equipment Belt and Suspenders, included items such as a canteen, entrenching tool, first aid kit, small arms and ammunition, and any other items that were essential to the accomplishment of the immediate mission of the foot soldier.



ALICE Field Pack



"Don't Mess with the 101st"

Artwork by SFC Peter G. Varisano, U.S. Army Collection

527th ENGINEER BATTALION

With Pride We Build

Activated for deployment in December 1990, the 527th consisted of 700 Soldiers and 400 pieces of heavy equipment, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bennett C. Landreneau.

Originally mobilized at Fort Polk, they moved to the Port of Houston for additional training.

Training included:

- Nuclear Biological Chemical (NBC) proficiency
- Individual and crew served weapons training
- Laws and customs of Southwest Asia
- Desert warfare training
- Mine warfare training

Ground War

As the ground war commenced, the 527th began minefield breaching operations to clear the route of attack for U.S. ground forces. On 24 February, Soldiers of the 527th were among the first troops to cross the border into Iraq. They cleared a 50 mile lane for the coalition forces. The engineers were escorted by Bradley fighting vehicles and Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) rockets firing over their heads. The VII Corps commander awarded four members of the breaching team Bronze Stars, and one member an Army Commendation Medal.

MSR Construction

The Louisiana engineers constructed and maintained the Main Supply Routes (MSRs) in the area of operation during and following the ground war. There were 15 MSRs, covering roughly 2000 miles, and six combat heavy engineer battalions in theater for support. Immediately after the ground war ended, U.S. Army's Central Command (CENTCOM) began redeployment operations. As a result of the rapid redeployment of the other engineer units, the 527th ended up the only engineer battalion to maintain roads.



527th ENGINEER BATTALION

“SMILE AS YOU ROLL THROUGH HARMS WAY”

Saudi Arabia



The advance party departed for Saudi Arabia 22 January. Within 2 hours of their arrival at King Fahad International Airport, they witnessed a Scud missile attack, countered by the Patriot Missile System.

The remainder of the 527th and their equipment arrived in early February, followed by immediate movement to the Forward Assembly Area near the Iraqi border. The 527th was integrated into the 7th Engineer Brigade and 109th Engineer Group operational scheme, in support of the VII Corps. The unit's first mission was to construct a UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle- recon) landing strip 2 days prior to ground war commencement. General Frederick Franks was concerned about Iraqi special operations units nearby and wanted to maintain surveillance. The 60'X 2000' strip, 12 miles from the Iraqi border, was completed by the 527th within 24 hours.

Other Operations

Despite the end of the war and the closing of the border, missions were not yet completed for the 527th. A redeployment facility had to be designed and constructed for Soldiers returning home. The unit built the “Desert Sands” Redeployment Assembly Area. It included five 65'X 195' tents for sleeping and dining. A Post Exchange (PX) was erected for purchasing food and other items. Morale, welfare, and recreation was provided for the U.S. troops awaiting their ticket home. A movie theater and a fitness center were constructed. Other recreational facilities included billiards and ping pong areas, softball fields, volleyball and basketball courts.



Refugee Relief

As part of cease fire agreement, U.S. forces had to be out of Iraq no later than 15 April. This created a problem as the military and civilian relief agencies had to oversee the relocation of thousands of refugees but had nowhere to put them. The 527th Engineers constructed a refugee camp for 30,000 displaced Iraqis. The unit redeployed back to Louisiana shortly after.



Closing of Border Berm Openings

The Iraqi/Saudi border consisted of a 100 mile long berm of sand. Hundreds of openings were created allowing coalition forces to enter Iraq. The 527th closed 259 openings, reestablishing the border. This mission made the 527th the last unit to leave Iraq in this Area of Operations.

159th MASH



The 159th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (New Orleans) was activated in early December of 1990 and deployed overseas on January 9, 1991. Consisting of 240 Soldiers, the unit was assigned to the 341st Medical Group, acting in direct support of the 3rd Armored Division during ground operations.



159th MASH surgery and patients

The 159th MASH was the first and most forward hospital operating during the active phase of the conflict. After the cease-fire, it was the only treatment facility with surgical capability in support of all ground troops in Iraq and Kuwait. Over 300 patients were treated during this deployment, including many Iraqis.

"Saudi Gras"

The 159th MASH brought a little bit of Louisiana to the Middle East. Members celebrated Mardi Gras as best they could with a makeshift parade and celebration, dubbing it "Saudi Gras."



The 159th MASH celebrates Mardi Gras

Santos Family

The Santos family is indicative of the family ties inherent in the Guard. Three Santos siblings were mobilized, including two in the 159th MASH. Will and Dion were deployed overseas with the medical unit while their brother, Pat, was mobilized with the 141st Field Artillery. Their father, Colonel Earl Santos, remained in Louisiana. It is not uncommon for multiple family members to be serving in the Louisiana National Guard at the same time.



"The 159th MASH is as fine a medical unit as I have ever seen. Its leadership, team spirit, and sustained performance of sheer professionalism were simply magnificent. Many other excellent hospital units supported Operation Desert Storm, but in my view, none was tested as severely or overcame the challenges so well as did the 159th."

--Colonel Michael A Dunn, MC, Commander, US Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense

Iraqi soldiers surrender to the 159th MASH

In a turn of events unusual for a MASH unit, several Iraqi soldiers surrendered to them. Surrendered AK-47s were made inoperable by welding and brought home with the 159th. Some of these weapons can be seen here at Jackson Barracks in the MASH display case



Surrendered Iraqi AK-47s

159th FIGHTER WING

AFTER THE STORM

Known as *"The First Iraq War"* or *"The Gulf War,"* Operation Desert Storm resulted in the temporary containment of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. U.S. Military missions continued into the decade under George H.W. Bush and his successor, Bill Clinton.

"No Fly Zones" were created over parts of Iraq to protect portions of Iraq's population that Saddam Hussein might target for punishment. The Louisiana Air National Guard's 159th Fighter Wing took part in these missions.

"We had more firepower at our disposal than most small countries. This was the 'new normal' of global diplomacy through military peacekeeping."

--Maj. Randy Green, USAF



Operation Northern Watch

"Operation Northern Watch," based in the Northern section of Iraq, succeeded Operation Provide Comfort in 1997. It was a joint effort by the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Turkey to continue the protection of the Kurds.

Operation Provide Comfort

"Operation Provide Comfort" was a coalition air operation, immediately after the war, to protect the Kurdish people within Iraq's borders from Saddam's aggression. Its purpose was to shield the Kurds from the dictator's retribution after they supported coalition activity during the war. The operation also provided humanitarian relief to the people in that region.



Operation Southern Watch

"Operation Southern Watch," From 1992 to 2003, was also intended to keep the skies clear of Iraqi aircraft in the Southern portion of the nation. The operation was a response to Iraqi strafing attacks on the Shiite population in that region. Southern Watch continued until just before President George W. Bush's 2003 invasion of that nation.

Economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq throughout the 1990s. President Clinton launched occasional missile strikes against the rogue nation when its dictator threatened more aggression. Saddam Hussein was known to use chemical weapons against his own people. The possibility of the dictator using such weapons of mass destruction eventually contributed to President George W. Bush's justification of the 2003 invasion of Iraq by U.S. forces.

"Patrolling around the airspace of northern Iraq was akin to being a roving Hell's Angels biker gang driving through a small town. By design, intimidation of the enemy through our very presence was a large part of our tactics to force the enemy into compliance."

--Maj. Randy Gordon, USAF

DOMESTIC ACTIVATIONS

The Gulf War was the last large scale combat mobilization prior to the 9/11 terrorist attack on the U.S. in 2001. In addition to Desert Storm/Shield, the Louisiana Guard remained busy throughout the 1990s with state emergency activations. Most were for smaller scale events, but Hurricane Andrew's landfall in Louisiana and the aid to Honduras following Hurricane Mitch were major activations.

Hurricane Andrew: 1992

Hurricane Andrew first hit southern Florida on August 24, 1992, creating a great deal of destruction. It re-entered the Gulf of Mexico and made a second landfall in Louisiana, near Morgan City, on August 26, severely impacting many communities. Eight deaths were recorded in Louisiana along with billions of dollars in property damage. One of the biggest issues facing the affected areas was the shutdown of municipal water systems.

Aviation Soldiers from 1-244th Aviation Battalion and 812th Medical Company provided surveillance and transportation.



The 225th Engineer Group was also activated. The 205th and 527th battalions cleared roads in Houma so that the power company and residents could get where they needed to be. The 769th and 528th battalions did the same in Patterson, Berwick, and Morgan City. The Louisiana Air Guard also participated in the response. The 214th Engineering and Installation Squadron distributed water, food, baby food and supplies in St John the Baptist Parish. The 236th Combat Communications Squadron delivered generators to Laplace, Berwick, Houma, Thibodaux, Patterson, Berwick, Morgan City, Franklin, and Bayou Vista.

The 256th Infantry Brigade sent water purification units to relieve the situation. In Baldwin, the unit set up mobile kitchen trailers to provide the locals with food. Infantry soldiers worked side by side with military police from the 239th Military Police Company to provide security in Patterson, Jeanerette, Franklin, and Morgan City.

The 239th Military Police Company provided additional security for commodity distribution points in the area. Due to lack of an organized system of distribution, some civil unrest broke out. The 239th worked with local law enforcement to regain order and establish a distribution system which ensured that all affected citizens were taken care of.

Hurricane Mitch: 1998

Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras in October of 1998. As part of Task Force Aguan, Louisiana Guard units responded in the U.S. humanitarian assistance mission. TF Aguan was a humanitarian training exercise to help the Honduran people rebuild their infrastructure after the devastating effects of the storm, including bridges, roads, water wells, schools and clinics. The Louisiana contribution came mostly from the 225th Engineer Group, but included support from other Louisiana units and personnel. Linguists from the 415th Military Intelligence Battalion assisted with language barriers. The 236th Combat Communications Squadron provided radio, telephone, networking and satellite communications. Other Louisiana personnel provided force protection, logistics support and medical services.



NOTABLE LEADERS



General Colin Powell

Gen. Powell served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President George H.W. Bush during Desert Storm. Due to his preference for diplomacy over military intervention, Powell was nicknamed "The Reluctant Warrior." He later served as Secretary of State under President George W. Bush.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr.

Gen. Schwarzkopf headed U.S. Central Command in 1990 and served as commander of all coalition forces during the Gulf conflict of 1990-1991. His leadership in what several historians consider one of the most successful military campaigns in U.S. history earned him the nickname "Stormin' Norman."



Major General Ansel M Stroud, Jr.

MG Stroud was the Commander of the Louisiana National Guard during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm where he oversaw the safe mobilization and return of Louisiana's soldiers

Lieutenant Colonel Bennett C. Landreneau

LTC Landreneau commanded the 527th Engineer Battalion. He went on to become Adjutant General of the Louisiana National Guard from 1997-2011.



Lieutenant General Frederick Franks

The 527th Engineers served under the VII Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Frederick Franks. Franks was a veteran of Vietnam, who saw intense combat in that conflict, earning the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal, and multiple Purple Hearts. Despite an amputated leg, he was permitted to remain in combat arms. By the end of the 1980s, Franks was commanding the VII Corps.

VII Corps consisted of 146,000 American and British soldiers and five armored divisions. This consisted of about 1600 tanks, 800 helicopters, and countless support equipment and vehicles. VII Corps routed Iraqi forces at the Battle of Al Busayyah, the Battle of 73 Easting, the Battle of Norfolk and the Battle of Medina Ridge.

Franks mentions the 527th Engineer Battalion in his book, *Into the Storm: On the Ground in Iraq* (collaboration with Tom Clancy). Franks was later promoted to full general, retiring in 1994.

THE HOMEFRONT

Yellow Ribbon

The yellow ribbon is a traditional symbol of support for the troops. In the U.S., the display of a yellow ribbon was a symbol of support for hostages held at the U.S. embassy in Iran in 1979. Yellow ribbons re-emerged as a popular symbol in 1990 as U.S. Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Sailors departed for the Middle East. They could be seen tied around trees, on t-shirts, as lapel pins, and in many other forms. The ribbons came to symbolize the patriotic surge in the American public during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.



*1991 Endymion commemorative
Desert Storm Mardi Gras doubloon*

Welcome Home

In a stark contrast to Vietnam, the soldiers of Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm were vigorously supported by the American populace. When they returned, they were given a hero's welcome.

The short war reinforced the United States' status as a global superpower, despite the end of the Cold War with the collapsed Soviet Union.

Unknown to the triumphant nation, Desert Storm was merely a precursor to the brutal wars in its future. The United States would return to Iraq in 2003 as part of the Global War on Terror.

