

Newsletter Sep 05 Vol 2

1st Cav Reunion Revisited

When we last talked about the reunion we had described the 30th Arty portion of the event. We said we would report on the Cav activities in this newsletter.

I described our Association banquet. In that edition I noted Alice Rich received the Molly Pitcher Award. One sharp-eyed reader alerted me that it was actually Alice Jones who received the award. I would like to note the correction. Sorry, Alice. Frankly I was glad to get the correction. Now I know at least one member read the report.

Our activities were conducted on Thursday. The Cav activities were Fri. and Sat. On Fri. there were luncheons for each of the various wars the Cav has participated in: WWII, Korea, Vietnam, The Gulf War. We attended the Vietnam Luncheon held in the Plaza Hotel. There were at least 1200 registered for the reunion. I think at least half were at the Vietnam lunch.

The service staff handled the lunch efficiently, despite the large group, not only that, they were cordial. I don't remember what lunch was, pretty much standard fare for an occasion like this. Iced tea was offered, sweet tea, or regular.

After lunch a Colonel from the Cav gave a presentation of the Cav's activities in Iraq. It was a detailed presentation. The information was dense. There were many unit names, AO names, and military terms. It was a large room. There were large screens spotted around on the walls. Obviously there were a lot of preparations associated in putting on this presentation.

Given at the advance course or command and staff school I'm sure it would have been well received. In a large room, after lunch it was a stretch. It got warm in the room. From my experience in the briefing

business the slides would have been described as busy. Never the less the Colonel soldiered on, and so did some of the audience.

In summary the Cav conducted what were termed, Information Operations. The goal of these operations was to make progress in restoring security, governmental functions, and restoration of services. The idea was to do enough, if not earn the support of the population, at least to keep them from turning to support of the insurgent and terrorist elements.



Top and a Cav buddy pay rapt attention to pitch on Information Operations

These goals were to be accomplished by conducting 5 Lines of Operations as appropriate.

1. Conduct combat operations.
2. Conduct Civil Affairs
3. Train and employ Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).
4. Reestablish essential services.
5. Promote governance.

Needless to say that the 1st Cav, organized and trained as a conventional mechanized Division had some major changes to make. To think that they could make the adjustments required in organization and training; then to successfully complete their mission is difficult to comprehend. The facts bear out that they did just that. They were very successful. What they accomplished is a great

testimonial to the effectiveness of the leadership, and the soldiers of the division.

Early in the evening there was a Texas barbeque on post at Ft Hood. Those who attended had a good time. Later the Cav presented their traditional Historic Tableau. In this event soldiers in period uniforms reenact storied events from the Division's past. The production was well planned and rehearsed. The result is a presentation that is memorable and rewarding. Many considered it the highlight of the reunion.

Saturday started with a Division Run. Reunion attendees were invited to participate. I'm not sure how many attended. I know quite a few who did not. After the run breakfast was served in a post mess hall. After breakfast selected Cav units held open house. It was a good opportunity to see how the troops live today, and to ask questions about what was happening in the division.

Starting at 9AM the Division hosted an equipment display at the Cav Association Museum. For those have been out of the service any length of time, it was a revelation. I retired in 1978, so almost everything was new to me. I did recognize the M109 Howitzer, and an M113 APC. They have been around awhile.



Jim Harris and friend check out the M109

I was particularly impressed by the attitude of the soldiers. They were invariably friendly, courteous, and upbeat. Somewhat

different than some soldiers I remember from earlier days.

The museum itself is worth a visit. If you just happen to be in the Killeen area you should stop by. It presents an excellent display of the Division's activities over the years. I was with a group of several people. All remarked about the quality of the displays. I think the artwork and depiction of events was a cut above the average Army museum. The Division, and the 1st Cav Assn have done a commendable job.

During the morning the 1st Cav Vietnam Veterans Monument was dedicated in front of the museum

At noon there were a series of luncheons sponsored by divisional units. The 30th Arty hosted the Div Arty Luncheon. Typical lunch, but as I mentioned in the interim report there was a little mix up in the scheduling of the food service. I do remember they had iced tea, but you had to be resourceful to get it. After lunch guess what? We had a speaker from Div Arty who told us about what Div Arty did in Iraq.



Barb Harris is just astonished at tale how an artilleryman saved the firebase,

I don't mean to make light of this. It's just that by now you're probably saying, "Come on Dick. We get the picture."

The Div Arty story is a little different though. What happened to Div Arty was very unconventional. Since The Cav was a follow

on unit, and the war ended so quickly there was not an urgent need for artillery after the Iraqi Army disintegrated. There was an urgent need for maneuver units. As a result the Div Arty was reorganized as a maneuver unit. They were designated the "5th Brigade", and assigned an AO. They conducted Information Operation just like the other brigades implementing the 5 Lines of Operations just like the standard brigades.

The artillery has always had the secondary mission to serve as infantry if required. I know we sometimes even did a little rudimentary training in units I have been in. It's not unprecedented for artillery units to get infantry like assignments. 1st Cav Div Arty had the responsibility for defense of the Phouc Vihn Base in Vietnam. Still they had their artillery function as a primary role.

It is quite another thing to reorganize, reorient, retrain and make yourself into a maneuver units, it is particularly difficult to do these things concurrently with conducting operations in a combat zone.

If you look at those 5 Lines of Operations you don't find much there that artillerymen are trained to do i.e. conduct infantry operations, civil affairs, governmental affairs etc. It is a daunting task the soldiers were given to do. They may do a project in one line one day, and a project in a different line the next day. That's flexibility, agility, too.

The artillerymen responded. They began by conducting security ops. They added other projects as time and conditions permitted. They persevered, became proficient in their tasks, and were very effective in accomplishing their mission.

I must say I have tremendous respect for what they accomplished. They did all this, and all we hear about is another IED, or suicide bombing. This country owes these men a great debt of gratitude.

This is how MG Chiarelli characterized Div Arty's efforts in Iraq. "If you were to read each of [the Div Arty's] soldiers records, you would not see infantryman written on them... But on the streets of Bagdad you couldn't tell the difference. These were professional Soldiers, and they performed magnificently.

Saturday evening was the Grand Final Banquet. I'm telling you this was a big banquet. I think most of the retirees were there, and there was a good representation of active duty personnel.

This banquet was held in the Killeen Civic and Conference Center. It is quite an impressive facility. I'm not sure how many people attended this banquet, but it could be 1000. The catering firm that served the meal did a very good job. Again the service staff was efficient, courteous and friendly. It was a good meal for such a large group. Yes, if you're wondering iced tea was served, both sweet tea and regular tea.

I'll skip a description of the formalities. This is getting too long; you all have been to this type function. I would just like to conclude with a few words about the speaker, MG Peter Chiarelli, CG of the 1st Cav Division. I don't know this man. I have never talked to him, but I think he is an impressive guy. To have guided the Division through all they went through. To have had the success they did, he has to be an impressive leader.

He gave an impassioned, comprehensive talk about the Division in IRAQ. He spoke from notes, but did not read. He knew in intimate detail what he was talking about, and was articulate in making his case.

To summarize his speech, he made these main points. One, the Division had a difficult mission. It was assigned the city of Bagdad as its AO It responded to the challenge and made significant achievements in all categories. There were

reduced violent incidents; conditions within the civilian sector were improved etc. Much remains to be done. Two, the Division was able to accomplish the mission because of effective leadership at all levels of command, and the flexibility, adaptability, and resilience of the soldiers, with emphasis on the latter. Three, the Tank proved to be a most effective in urban combat, I am not sure this is a reference as to how the reformation of the Army is going or what. Finally, though he didn't dwell on this; divisional units made significant achievements. However this message does not seem to make it to the American public.

It is hard to keep the attention of a large audience at the end of a long evening. He did a very commendable job. He is a very effective spokesman for the welfare of his men, and the Army. Too bad his message does not make it to the public. The soldiers deserve that.

What the Cav is Doing Now



At the current time the 1st Cav is reorganizing from a Mechanized Inf Division to the so-called modular division.

In the new organization the Division will have 4 maneuver brigades. It will lose The Division Artillery, Division Support Command, and the Engineer Brigade. Also gone are the Signal Battalion, the MI Battalion, the MP Company, and the Chemical Company.

It will gain a maneuver brigade, and add 2 battalions in the aviation brigade. A support brigade will replace the support command.

The division will look like this when the reorganization is complete.

1st Cav Div
HHC
Div Special Troops Bn
Signal Co
Div Band
Horse Cav Det

4 Maneuver Brigades
Bgd Hq
3 Cav Sqdn
1 Arty Bn
Special Support Bn
Special Troops Support Bn

Air Cav Bdg
4 Avn Bn
Air Support Bn

Support Brigade
Hq
Mat Mgt Ctr
Personnel Support Bn
Bigade Special Troops Bn

There is no longer an artillery command structure at division. Instead each brigade has an artillery battalion assigned as an organic unit. Each Artillery Battalion will contain 2 firing batteries. Who performs the roles of Div Arty has to be the subject of a later newsletter.

The artillery role as we knew it has changed. The missions of Direct Support, Reinforcing, General Support, General Support Reinforcing will obviously not take place at Division.

It would appear the role of the artillery has been diminished. That's just an impression. I do not have extensive knowledge of this.

This quote from the Artillery Journal seems ominous.

“The Army’s modular force emphasizes new efficiencies in command and control (C2). And the seamless integration of joint fires as essential enablers. In consonance with this strategy, the Army is divesting itself of some of its organic indirect fires assets, and leveraging the capabilities of other services’ joint fires. Close Air Support is one of the most significant of these capabilities”.

Is this good policy? I don't know. I recently heard an Army General who said about TV military pundits 'If you've been out of the Army more than 6 month you don't know what is going on". Well

I'm a retired Cold War hack. I don't have any access. What do I know? Well I do know the artillery is timely, right now, 24/7. Air support has tremendous firepower, and gee wiz weapons. I'm not sure about the timely, all the time.

This report got a little long. I had 3 things in mind. One to describe a Cav Reunion in some detail. I thought perhaps if people who have not attended knew they could meet a lot of old friends, and catch up with what the Cav has done recently, and is doing now you might b inclined to attend.

Second we didn't hear much of what the Cav did in Iraq in the the media, I thought perhaps a summary discussion would be informative.

Finally, why all the emphasis on iced tea? I just think that is a interesting difference between customs in the north and the south. In the south iced tea is ubiquitous. Almost every restaurant offers it either regular or sweet. It always seems to be free.

In the north you rarely see iced tea offered free. In a lot of places you have to ask to get water. It's an environmental conservation thing. You might be able to get iced tea sometimes, but you have to pay for it .I am from Maine. I used to be proud of that. Now it's an embarrassment. I like the southern custom better. It just seems to be more hospitable.

Iraq War Reporting

Gen Chiarelli in his talk at the IST Cav reunion alluded to his disappointment with the national press coverage of the war. That is, they accentuate the casualties, but ignore progress made by the American soldiers.. That topic has been current in the national press this past week. Newspaper editors have been receiving letters from returning soldiers for some time complaining that the news of progress in Iraq is not being reported. Many newspapers rely on the AP for basic reporting of news incidents. The AP has been criticized by many military as having a biased anti war outlook. As the objections by actual participants in the war has accumulated, editors have reviewed their own coverage, and challenged the AP to review it's reporting to see if it is presenting a complete picture.

The AP has reviewed their procedures, and published a report recently, essentially absolving them selves of any culpability. Last week the publishing officials of the nations leading newspapers met to discuss this topic, and review their procedures. A report of their meeting was published in the New York Times. Before you get the idea that our press is finally getting it, and is about to correct the situation adding more balance, relax, nothing much has changed.

In discussing the issue the press representatives reviewed their current reporting, and came up with a list of reasons why the reporting on Iraq is the way it is. As is usual when the press reviews itself in the end they could identify no evidence of unobjective reporting of events in the Iraq war. In the first place they saw their role as one of informing the public of events in a wide range of topics. In the second place they decided they attempt to report the news people pay attention to. In this case the operative phrase is, "if it bleeds it leads". That is, studies have shown that this type of article gets more attention than others. That is why we see a progression of fires,

murders, and robberies etc.and so forth on the local news. The same applies on a national scale. The unsensational news just doesn't sell as well. Third they decided that Iraq was just too dangerous for reporters to get out in the countryside, and report on all the good things the troops are doing. The reporters have to stay in Baghdad in the big hotels near the Green Zone to be safe. We don't want our reporters to get hurt reporting the news. Finally they don't see their role as one of shilling for the government. Their role is to report the actual results of government policies so the governed can make informed judgments as to the value of government programs. The government is as well suited, as they are to shill for itself in the view of the media.

You can find an example once in a while of good news from Iraq. The other morning my wife went to the gym to work out. I took advantage of her absence to flick thought the TV channels for a moment. I ran across a very dignified 2 Star holding a press conference on CSPAN. You might ask why wasn't I going to the gym? Why am I setting around watching daytime TV, but that is another story. Any way this General knew what he was talking about. The reporters asked all their annoying leading questions, but the General was well prepared, and knocked most of the offerings out of the park. Unfortunately, almost nobody watches CSPAN.

The generals name is MG Taluto. He is CG of the 43 Inf Div. Their AO is in North Central Iraq including Tikrit. He is also CG of the combined coalition force there. His command in addition to US forces includes 2 Iraqi Divisions of 5 Brigades, with a total of 18 battalions. He gave a fairly upbeat presentation of the situation in his AO. I particularly liked the way he handled the reporters who took the usual mode of asking leading questions with a negative connotation. Gen Taluto was able to convert them to a positive answer. In the interest of brevity I'll only mention 3 questions. One stalwart asked "Isn't it true

the Iraqis are not making much progress in their training, and are not effective in operations”, Gen Trout answered. “No that is not true,” He went on to note that two of the brigades and approximately half of the battalions were now proficient in conducting security operations. He said the US routinely conducts joint operations with the Iraqis. Some Iraqi battalions conduct operations: patrols, raids, cordons, roadblocks, etc on their own. He said two Brigades were now ready to be assigned their own AOs for security operation, freeing up American units to do other things He said the Iraqis are not as proficient, nor as professional as US troops, but they are improving.

Another enlightened scribe asked. “Isn’t it true the country is vulnerable to reverting to civil war?” The general answered, “We do not see any evidence of that in this AO.” He went on to say they keep statistics on a number of indicators concerning the mood of the population. He said they see no significant indications of the violent activity now converting into civil war. The general population does not generally support the violence, in fact they resent it.

Finally Jim Milklishovski (SP) of NBC asked. “Isn’t it true you have been ineffective in preventing violent attacks, and bombings. Gen Trout answered, “No, you have not heard about the incidents we have prevented.” He continued, the violent attacks are spectacular. They catch the attention of the press, and are widely reported, but the overall number is down in our AO. Then Mik followed up with: “Isn’t it true the people are intimidated by the violence, and your civilian tip lines are receiving fewer tips?” Again the general scored. He said, I have just finished reviewing the stats on tips over the past two months. Tips have increased each month.

I wrote all this to illustrate there are two sides to reporting on this war. Regardless of the media’s findings of their own reporting; the positive side is not widely circulated. It doesn’t fit their template for what is going on.

There continues to be a lot of talk about Iraq being another Vietnam. The comparisons fail on almost every issue. The only thing that does match up is that the media did not approve of the Vietnam War. They reported in a manner that matched their outlook. They are doing the same this time. HELLO! By this time in the Vietnam War we were fighting mostly the NVA. They were a damn good army, backed by an established country with a strong ideology, and inspired leadership. They had strong support from world powers China, and the Soviet Union. Still we were kicking their ass.

Henry Kissinger said about Vietnam: "Military success is difficult to sustain unless buttressed by domestic support." The unrelenting negative reporting by the press; eventually eroded support for the war in Vietnam. Lacking public support the politicians caved. It wasn't us that quit then, and it will not be Army that does this time. I don't think W will give up, but I'm not sure about the other politicians, especially with an off year election next year. Iraq is not Vietnam, but this reporting dynamic is the same, and it could be the showstopper. Ed.