



Minnesota Red Bulls Take Charge of Middle Eastern Mission

Sgt. William Boecker
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs
34th Red Bull Infantry Division

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait – Minnesota's 34th Red Bull Infantry Division assumed responsibility for mission command and control of Task Force Spartan from Pennsylvania's 28th Infantry Division during a transfer of authority ceremony held Nov. 12, 2018. Kicking off their nine-month deployment, the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division assumes command of the nearly 10,000 Soldiers from subordinate brigades that are conducting theater security operations in the Middle East as the new division headquarters.

"On behalf of the entire Red Bull Division, I can tell you, we are fully trained. We are prepared to seamlessly step in and execute the mission requirements," said Maj. Gen. Benjamin J. Corell, the 34th's commanding general. "These Red Bulls that I represent are honored to be assuming command of Task Force Spartan."

Several hundred soldiers from both units observed as division leaders cased the 28th's colors, while the colors of the 34th's were unfurled.

Now in its seventh year, Operation



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. William Boecker, TF Spartan Public Affairs, 34th Infantry Division

Maj. Gen. Benjamin Corell, 34th Red Bull Infantry Division commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Hjelmstad uncased the Division colors during a transfer of authority ceremony Nov. 12. The Minnesota National Guard unit's headquarters and headquarters battalion assumed responsibility for the Task Force Spartan mission from the Pennsylvania National Guard's 28th Infantry Division.

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My time as the Task Force Spartan Command Sergeant Major has come to an end. While the 34th Infantry Division Headquarters settles in, I want to take a moment to reflect on the past nine months. I continue to be impressed by the Soldiers of our formation, and could not be more proud of our collective accomplishments during my tenure as the TFS CSM. I am certain that my successor, Command Sergeant Major Joseph J. Hjelmstad, will continue to improve our readiness and advance the enduring mission here in the Middle East. I am confident that the 34th ID HQ is prepared and will succeed in this mission.

I have witnessed many incredible achievements and unique opportunities during this rotation. Seeing members of Task Force Spartan succeed in challenging and austere environments, improving their physical, educational, and spiritual fitness, and competing for coveted badges have been personal highlights of my mobilization. Task Force Spartan has, and will continue to, overcome any adversity and will stand up to any challenge presented by this theater of operations. I am proud of our successes this year, and you should be too.

I encourage all Soldiers of our formation to utilize all resources and benefits afforded to them upon transition back stateside. Remember that you are not alone in your endeavors. Continue to communicate effectively with your leadership, peers, subordinates, family, friends, and employers throughout your transition. I would like to extend a sincere and humble "thank you" to the members of our brigades who will carry on the mission under the 34th Infantry Division leadership, and a "job well done" to the Soldiers of the 28th Infantry Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion as they transition back to Pennsylvania. "Roll On!"



CSM John E. Jones
Spartan 7

Exercise Eastern Action 2019 – Opening Ceremony



UM HATTAH, Qatar – Qatari Army Capt. Hamad Labda, the commander of Rapid Reaction Battalion, Qatar Emiri Land Force, addresses U.S. and Qatari military forces at the opening ceremony of Exercise Eastern Action 2019, Nov. 4, 2018. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)



UM HATTAH, Qatar – U.S. Army Lt. Col. Christopher W. Cooksey, commander of 2nd Battalion, 198th Armor Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi Army National Guard, addresses U.S. and Qatari military forces at the opening ceremony of Exercise Eastern Action 2019, Nov. 4, 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)

UM HATTAH, Qatar – U.S. Army Col. Robert Kuth, commander of Area Support Group-Qatar, addresses U.S. and Qatari military forces at the opening ceremony of Exercise Eastern Action 2019, Nov. 4, 2018. Eastern Action is a U.S. Army Central led exercise conducted between U.S. and Qatari military forces to enhance interoperability and demonstrate our commitment to long-term stability in the region. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)

UM HATTAH, Qatar – Qatari Army Lt. Col. Khalifa Al-Suwaidi, Exercise Eastern Action 2019 director, Qatar Emiri Land Force, addresses U.S. and Qatari military forces at the opening ceremony of Exercise Eastern Action 2019, Nov. 4, 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)

America's Thunder Participates in Black Oryx Exercise

Capt. Jeffrey Dallin Belnap
Task Force Spartan
65th Field Artillery Brigade Public Affairs

AMMAN, Jordan — Soldiers from the 65th Field Artillery Brigade (FAB) and 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery Regiment (FAR) participated in Exercise Black Oryx with the Jordan Armed Forces' (JAF) 29th Royal High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) Battalion in Amman, Jordan, Oct. 24 through 25, 2018.

Black Oryx is an annual bilateral live-fire exercise with the JAF field artillery and the force field artillery headquarters for the U.S. Army's Central Command.

"The purpose of the exercise was to display and increase interoperability between U.S. and JAF [field artillery], increase mission readiness by exercising artillery tables I–VI, and enhance interoperability by utilizing liaison officers at the fire direction centers," stated Maj. Jeremy Williams, the officer in charge of theater security cooperation of the 65th FAB. For many of the Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 121st FAR, Black Oryx was their first experience working with a foreign military.

"It was an opportunity to see how [the JAF] run their operations," said Staff Sgt. Aaron Kumlien of the 121st FAR. The JAF's 29th Royal HIMARS Battalion (RHB) led the exercise, with Soldiers of the 121st FAR in supporting roles.



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Jeffrey Dallin Belnap, 65th Field Artillery Brigade Public Affairs
A High Mobility Rocket Artillery System fires an M31 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GIMLRs) during exercise Black Oryx, in Amman, Jordan, Oct. 24, 2018. Black Oryx, an annual bilateral exercise, is designed to strengthen relationships and military capabilities between the U.S. and Jordan Armed Forces.

The emphasis of the exercise was for the 29th RHB to rehearse fire missions, simulation training, and synchronize communication through their fire direction control (FDC) center with their American counterparts.

"We had two FDCs working together as a group sending fire missions," said 1st Lt. Sean Mayerbock, fire direction officer with the 1-121st FAR. "The FDC was the brains of the operation. They built missions and sent them to the [JAF] launchers," he said.

In addition to the bilateral exercise, Kumlien explained that Soldiers would also build unity by sitting down together for shared meals, and competing with each other

during the exercise. "It's important to keep building that relationship," he said.

Jordan Armed Forces Lt. Col. Amer al-Smadi, commander of the 29th RHB, said the exercise not only increased military capability but also created a shared understanding between the two nations.

"It's an opportunity to learn about the other culture. It's an opportunity for my officers and NCOs to speak English, and for the U.S. Army to speak Arabic," said Amer.

This was the fifth annual Black Oryx exercise between the JAF and the force field artillery headquarters for the U.S. Army's Central Command. The Soldiers of the 65th Field Artillery Brigade and 1-121st FAR, look forward to more exercises.

"It's a way for us to work together and build cohesion between two nations," concluded Kumlien.

Jordan Armed Forces Col. Adam Robinson, right, and U.S. Army Col. Mazen Kenani observe the impact zone of the 29th Royal High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) Battalion live fire during exercise Black Oryx, in Amman, Jordan, Oct. 24, 2018. Black Oryx, an annual bilateral exercise, is designed to strengthen relationships and military capabilities between the U.S. and Jordan Armed Forces.



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Jeffrey Dallin Belnap, 65th FA Brigade Public Affairs

Spartan Shield (OSS) is designed to maintain a U.S. military posture sufficient to strengthen U.S. defense relationships, build partner capacity and execute U.S. Central Command's contingency plans, if necessary. Task Force Spartan represents the army component of OSS.

Lt. Gen. Michael Garrett, U.S. Army Central commander, said the division headquarters at the helm of Task Force Spartan plays an important role in the security of a dynamic region. The complex security environment of the region makes partnership and cooperation with regional militaries and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council ever more important.

"You assume this mission at an extremely interesting time. The U.S. Central Command area of responsibility is by most steps as strategically important as it is vulnerable," said Garrett. "I have every confidence that the Red Bull Division is ready for the challenge coming its way. You will be providing mission command for some seasoned and



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. William Boecker
Maj. Gen. Benjamin Corell, 34th Red Bull Infantry Division commanding general addresses an audience of 28th and 34th Infantry Division Soldiers as well as representatives from regional partners of Task Force Spartan during a transfer of authority ceremony Nov. 12, 2018.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. William Boecker
Soldiers of the 34th and 28th Infantry Divisions, along with representatives from partner-nations, look on during a transfer of authority ceremony Nov. 12, 2018. The ceremony signifies the official transfer of the Task Force Spartan mission from the 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, who took control of the mission from the 35th Infantry Division at the beginning of 2018, to the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division, Minnesota Army National Guard. The 34th assumes responsibility for relationships, training, and actions within the Gulf region.

capable formations."

Garrett welcomed the 34th Infantry Division as the fourth, consecutive National Guard division headquarters to assume the Task Force Spartan mission.

Task Force Spartan is a unique, multi-component organization made up of active Army and National Guard units and rounded out by U.S. Army Reserve support units. Garrett said Task Force Spartan epitomizes a total Army effort and "serves as proof positive that without the reserve components in our force structure, we would long ago have failed as an Army."

Garrett thanked the Guard and Reserve soldiers for their selfless service and the personal time dedicated to being mission-ready. He asked the citizen-soldiers to pass along his thanks to families and employers.

3-2 ADA demonstrates commitment to partnership

Capt. Sallena Samuel
Task Force Spartan
3-2 ADA Public Affairs Representative

AL DHAFRA AIR BASE, United Arab Emirates – The 3rd Battalion, 2nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, currently deployed to Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, consistently seeks to improve partnership with the Emirati Armed Forces. The battalion has facilitated several events to increase coordination and cooperation, including a partnership palm tree planting ceremony, cultural sharing events, a combined noncommissioned officer induction ceremony and numerous key leader engagements, and has facilitated an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) with the UAE. Through these events, the mutual trust is extended with a common goal of enhancing security through the region.

In June 2018, 3-2 ADA celebrated the 50th birthday of the Air Defense Artillery Branch with an event-filled day. Having just celebrated their 100 days in theater, the battalion's command team took the opportunity to express its commitment to their host nation partners. The "Lethal Strike" battalion's Soldiers hosted a US/UAE palm tree planting ceremony on June 20 at their headquarters to symbolize the allied partnership between the United States and the United Arab Emirates. Lt. Col. Pedro Camacho, the 3-2 ADA commander and Lt. Col. Hamad S. Al Yammah, the UAE 4th Battalion deputy commander, planted the palm tree, **See ADA, pg. 6**



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Sallena Samuel, 3-2 ADA
Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry Jacobitz and the newly inducted NCOs posed for a photo after the joint noncommissioned officer induction ceremony. A total of 15 U.S. and 11 U.A.E. NCOs were inducted into the NCO Corps.

demonstrating the mutual efforts between the nations.

“Our partnership tree planting event symbolizes the deep and strong-rooted partnership shared between our two countries. It commemorates the past years of U.S. and U.A.E relations which provides stability and prosperity to the region. I am humbled of the opportunity to honor our US and Emirati leaders of past who have planted the seed for us leaders of today to continue to grow and strengthen with intent to deter future aggression from our adversaries,” says Camacho. “We will continue to work together as partners to promote regional stability, enhance our combat readiness and development our leaders while maintaining a ‘Ready Now’ in defense of our assigned Patriot defended assets.”

The day of celebration ended with a traditional cake cutting ceremony, provided by the Army Windy’s Dining Facility. Camacho and Al Yammah cut the Air Defense Artillery birthday cake together, further symbolizing the units’ cohesion. After the completion of events, the battalion began planning for the Noncommissioned Officer Induction Ceremony.

A few months later, to further enhance partnership between 3-2 ADA and the U.A.E 4th Patriot Battalion, 3-2 ADA conducted a partnership combined noncommissioned officer (NCO) induction ceremony on Aug. 29. The NCO induction ceremony is a tradition in which NCOs are formally recognized as members of the corps. This year’s ceremony included the “Lethal Strike” Battalion’s Emirati Armed Forces counterparts. The induction of the Emirati NCOs alongside American NCOs is the first of its kind, demonstrating the on-going partnership between the armed forces and the commitment of the battalion to enhance and build partnerships. A total of 26 NCOs from both nations were formally inducted into the Corps of the Noncommissioned Officer.

“The NCO Induction ceremony is a time-honored tradition where we recognize the achievements of the newly inducted Soldiers and welcome them to the corps. During the ceremony, the Soldier crosses the line of authority, symbolizing the transition from a junior enlisted to a noncommissioned officer leader with inherent authorities to lead, train, and care for their assigned Soldiers, families, and equipment,” said 3-2 ADA Battalion Operations Sgt. Maj. Quinnus Caldwell.

“As a noncommissioned officer, we are charged with ensuring such traditions are maintained and passed on to the next generation of Soldiers. It is always a great day when you can bring the unit together and highlight the achievements of a great group of professionals. The day was extra special because we were able to share this time-honored event with our host nation partners to further strengthen our bond and partner capacity,” Caldwell explained.

Through their deployment to Al Dhafra Air Base, UAE, 3-2 ADA continues to build trust and communication with their host nation partners. From a palm tree planting ceremony to the NCO Induction Ceremony, the “Lethal Strike” Battalion is committed to strengthening partnership. The coordination through the ACSA program shows the direction of the continued partnership of the two nations as they seek greater fidelity within their missions.

CHAPLAIN’S CORNER:

The season for an attitude of gratitude

Lt. Col. (Ch) Buddy Winn
34th Inf. Div. Chaplain
Task Force Spartan

The American Thanksgiving observance traces its roots back to the 1621, as the Pilgrims celebrated survival! It has been observed regularly by Presidential Proclamation beginning with George Washington in 1789. It was established as a regular national holiday in November by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. And is now the unofficial starting point in America for holiday shopping.

Consider this approach by two-time Academy Award-winning actor Denzel Washington, best known for his roles in Glory, The Preacher’s Wife, & Remember the Titans. He had this to say back in 2015 as he spoke of the need to live in a constant attitude of gratitude for God’s goodness:

“Give thanks for blessings every day. Every day. Embrace gratitude. Encourage others. It is impossible to be grateful and hateful at the same time. I pray that you put your slippers way under your bed at night, so that when you wake in the morning you have to start on your knees to find them. And while you’re down there, say ‘thank you.’ An attitude of thanks can move mountains. A bad attitude is like a flat tire. Until you change it, you’re not going anywhere.”

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ENCOURAGEMENT FOR INFLUENCERS

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER:

Moving on from the past and building our future

Lt. Col. (Ch) Peter Lawson
28th Inf. Div. Chaplain
Task Force Spartan

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping.

– Ezra 3:12-13

When the people of Israel returned to their homeland the experience was decidedly mixed. After 40 years of being held in captivity in the land of Babylon, the enemy who had plundered their city, they were excited to rebuild their city and their lives and they expressed their joy because of it.

Yet they also expressed their grief. The Bible says that many of the priests and the Levites, and the older generation who had remembered the first Temple, which sat on that same location, were moved to tears when they saw the foundation of the new Temple being laid. “They wept with a loud voice,” the Bible says. Perhaps they were thinking about all those years they had missed as they were forced to live in the Babylonian captivity. A whole generation had missed out on this critical aspect of the Hebrew people’s life: the religious festivals, the rituals of sacrifice on the holy altars, and the overall awe inspiring ambiance which made the Temple the sacred place that it was. These

were years they would never get back.

This mix of grief and joy will no doubt describe the scene for the Soldiers of the 28ID when we return home from this deployment. We who haven’t seen our families these many months will no doubt know the joy of reunion. Like the people of Israel, we have the chance to rebuild!

However, there will be sadness because we cannot simply resume our lives where we left off. When the Hebrew exiles returned to their homeland after being in exile for a full generation, they were excited to rebuild their city and the Temple which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. They began digging the foundation of the Temple and they wanted it to look as much like the original as possible. I can envision those elders and the priests who had seen it in all of its glory many years before were saying, “Let’s set every new stone right where each original one was. Let’s cut every line of timber the same way it was cut before from the cedars of Lebanon, and replace every gold fixture, every holy relic, which the enemy

had plundered and snatched away.” And as they were making these plans and began to dig the foundations perhaps it was then they realized they could never duplicate the past. Even if they could create a perfect replica of the Temple so that it appeared nothing had changed, they had changed as a people.

This is to say there is no such thing as turning the clock back. During this deployment we have experienced changes as have the people in our lives back home, which means we must move forward acknowledging how these experiences will shape our actions and motives – as they will for our families.

And this creates a new opportunity. The God of the Bible is about possibilities not the past. He holds before us a vision of what we might become rather than a picture of what has been. And this means another chance to see what direction God would have us go, a chance to carve out a new beginning and a new vision of what God would have us and the people in our lives be.



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