35th Signal Brigade

"UTMOST OF OUR ABILITY"

by Capt. Randy Kennedy

In December 1979, the 35th Signal Group reorganized under the echelons above division (EAD) concept and was redesignated the 35th Signal Brigade. With a TO&E strength of over 3000 soldiers, the brigade is now one of the largest tactical Signal commands and has CENTCOM contingency missions.

The brigade, originally constituted on 11 January 1943 as the 931st Signal Battalion (Air Support Command), was activated on 15 January 1943 at Esler Field, Louisiana. The unit's first commander was Maj. Loren E. Gaither, who commanded a total force of 139 enlisted men and three officers.

The unit moved to Alachua Army Air Field, Florida, on 17 August 1943, with (by then) Lt.Col. Faither relinquishing command to Capt. Robert S. Drake. On April 1944, the battalion moved to Key Field Air Base, Mississippi. During its time at Key Field, the 931st received its nickname, "The Master Key." It was awarded this nickname by the 358th Service Group for "the work and hearty spirit of cooperation they (the 931st) have given at all times."

On 29 October 1944, the unit staged at Camp Anza, California, just prior to its departure aboard the *USS General John Pope* from Los Angeles on 15 November 1944 to India. The unit arrived in Bombay on 11 December 1944 and soon established its headquarters in Patia. The unit had men assigned to Calcutta, Comille, and Sylhet in India, and Payk, Myitcha, Ahyab, and Meungdon in Burma. During the war, the battalion's main mission was to provide communications for both the Fourth Combat Cargo Task Force and the British 14th Army in supporting the air-supply life line "over the hump" from India to Burma. The battalion also established and maintained a radio station on top of Mount Victoria in India. Soon after the Japanese surrendered, the battalion was inactivated on 29 December 1945 in India. The battalion received credit for participating in the India-Burma, Central Burma, and China Offensive campaigns. It also received a Meritorious Unit Citation for its service in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater.

The unit would remain inactive for over two decades until it was redesignated the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 35th Signal Group, and allotted to the Regular Army. It was again activated on 25 April 1967 as the 35th Signal Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina,

assigned to the Third Army, and attached to the XVIII Airborne Corps. At that time, the group consisted of one detachment and the 327th and 426th Signal Battalions. The mission of the 35th Signal Group was to direct and coordinate operations, training, administration, and logistical support of its subordinate units. It would also establish a corps area Signal system and additional communications facilities. The 25th Signal Battalion (Theater) and the 50th Signal Battalion (Command) (Airborne) were added to the group later. In December 1979, the 35th Signal Group reorganized under the echelons above division (EAD) concept and was redesignated the 35th Signal Brigade. With a TO&E strength of over 3000 soldiers, the brigade is now one of the largest tactical Signal commands and has CENTCOM contingency missions.

On the brigade's shoulder sleeve insignia is a blue lion—the lion symbolizing courage and fierceness and the color blue the unit's airborne mission. The lighting flashes symbolize the unit's communications mission.

The unit's distinctive insignia invokes the group's service in World War II. The two lions are from the coat of arms of Burma and recognize the unit's participation in both the India-Burma and Central Burma campaigns. (The lion is also one of India's state emblems.) The sun with the twelve rays is taken from the flag of China where the group saw service. Inside the sun is an ancient oriental bell, an instrument once used for signalling. The sun and the bell symbolize the unit's installation and operation of telephone communications during the China Offensive. The brigade's motto, "UTMOST OF OUR ABILITY," is depicted on the bottom of the insignia.

25th Signal Battalion "NEVER UNPREPARED"

The 25th Signal Battalion was originally constituted on 3 February 1944 as the 25th Signal Light Construction Battalion and activated on 14 April 1944 at Camp Forrest, Tennessee. From Camp Forrest, the battalion moved to Camp Pickett, Virginia, where it was reorganized and redesignated on 26 June 1944 as the 25th Signal Heavy Construction

Battalion. The battalion would stage at Fort Dix, New Jersey, prior to deploying overseas from New York aboard the *General William Gordon*. It arrived in France on 24 February 1945 and supported the 15th Army in both France and Germany. Soon after the war in Europe, on 18 July 1945, the battalion left France bound for the Philippines, where it became one of the few units to see service in both Europe and the Pacific during World War II. The battalion received credit for three campaigns during the war: the Rhineland, Central Europe, and Asiatic-Pacific Theater. The battalion was inactivated on 6 April 1946 in Yokohoma, Japan.

On 20 November 1951, the battalion was redesignated the 25th Signal Construction Battalion and reactivated on 1 December 1951 at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts. From Camp Edwards, the battalion moved to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, where it later was reorganized and redesignated the 25th Signal Battalion. It supported exercises at both Fort Drum, New York, and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and helped restore commercial lines in several New England states in the wake of Hurricane Carol.

The battalion moved to Germany on 29 March 1956 and remained there until its inactivation on 1 October 1968.

The battalion was activated again less than three years later at its present home at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on 18 January 1971. Its new mission was to install, operate, and maintain a portion of the integrated Signal Communications System within a theater Army communications zone (COMMZ). The battalion reorganized on 16 March 1984 as the 25th Signal Battalion (Corps Area) and is one of the subordinate battalions in the 35th Signal Brigade. Its mission today is to set up four corps area Signal centers and a battalion headquarters in support of the corps and its subordinate divisions.

The battalion's distinctive insignia depicts a weathercock on a field of white with purple roundels. The roundels symbolize grapes found in the Rhineland and central European areas where the battalion saw service in World War II. The weathercock, which is used to signal wind direction, is used with four lighting flashes, symbolizing the ability to communicate in any quarter of the world. The battalion's motto "NEVER UNPREPARED" is also depicted at the bottom of the crest.

50th Signal Battalion "KEY TO COMMAND"

Originally constituted on 16 December 1899 in the Regular Army as Company H, Signal Corps, and organized in the Philippine Islands, this unit received campaign credit for the Philippine Insurrection. Company H returned to Benicia Barracks, California, on 15 March 1905, where it remained for over ten years. During this time, the company provided communications to the frontier areas of California, Washington, Nebraska, Texas, and Arizona—primarily via telegraph.

The unit moved to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, on 25 May 1915,

where it was consolidated with the 1st Provisional Company, Signal Corps, as the 1st Telegraph Battalion. In October 1917, the battalion was again redesignated as the 51st Telegraph Battalion.

The battalion left New York bound for France aboard the *KAROA* on 15 August 1918 as a part of the American Expeditionary Forces. During World War I, the battalion participated in the Champagne, Oise-Aisne, and Meuse-Argonne Campaigns. After the war, the battalion was stationed at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, from 20 August 1919 until its inactivation on 24 September 1921.

The battalion was reactivated on 1 July 1940 at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. After several exercises at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, Camp Forrest, Tennessee, and Camp Robinson, Arkansas, the battalion left New York on 27 December 1941 for Iceland, where it provided allied military and air communications for nearly two years. From Iceland, the battalion moved to England, where it prepared for the Normandy invasion. The battalion supported the D-Day assault forces on the morning of 6 June 1944 by establishing communications from the VII Corps Headquarters to the 4th Infantry Division, the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, and the 9th Air Force. After the breakout, the battalion supported the 3rd Armored Division as it raced across France, Belgium, and into Germany. During the war, the battalion received credit for participating in the following campaigns: Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe. The battalion also received a Meritorious Unit Commendation for the European Theater.

The battalion was again reactivated in response to the Korean War on 24 October 1951 and designated the 50th Signal Battalion (Corps). Though it underwent a series of reorganizations during the fifties, its mission was still to support the XVIII Airborne Corps. Later the battalion became a part of the Inter-American Peace Force deployed to the Dominican Republic on 9 May 1965. There it received yet another Meritorious Unit Commendation.

In March 1970, the battalion became a part of the 35th Signal Group, which supported the XVIII Airborne Corps. The battalion was reorganized and redesignated on 16 June 1983 as the 50th Signal Battalion (Corps Command Operations) (Airborne). During Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, the battalion established the communications link between the 82nd Airborne Division and the commander of both the XVIII Airborne Corps and U.S. Forces Grenada. After the invasion, the battalion assisted in rebuilding the Grenadian telephone system as well as in maintaining communications for the commander of the military support element in Grenada.

The battalion's distinctive insignia depicts a key and design taken from the arms of Champagne, where the battalion saw service in World War I. The key, taken from the coat of arms of the Norman City of Lisieux, is also symbolic of Normandy—the key to the fortress of Europe—and of the unit's battle honors in World War II. The battalion's motto "KEY TO COMMAND" is also depicted on the insignia.

327th Signal Battalion

"SPEED AND ACCURACY"

The battalion was originally constituted on 26 May 1952 in the Organized Reserve Corps as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 327th Signal Support Battalion, and activated on 30 June 1952 at Tampa, Florida. The Reserve Corps title was redesignated on 9 July 1952 as the Army Reserve. From the time it was activated to its eventual inactivation on 7 July 1959, the battalion deployed to Fort Gordon, Georgia, during its annual two-week training period. The battalion remained inactive for a period of eight years, during which time the battalion was withdrawn from the Army Reserve and allotted to the Regular Army. The battalion was reactivated on 1 August 1967 as a Regular Army unit and stationed at its current home of Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The battalion was then reorganized and redesignated on 16 September 1980 as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 327th Signal Battalion. Concurrently, the 461st Signal Company was reorganized and redesignated as Company A, and the 221st Signal Company redesignated as Company B, 327th Signal Battalion.

The unit's distinctive insignia uses a background of crossed Signal flags to symbolize the mission of the battalion. The lightning flashing into a ring and disc pictorializes the communication unit's motto: "SPEED AND ACCURACY." The pine tree invokes North Carolina, where the battalion was activated into the Regular Army.

426th Signal Battalion

"THE COMMANDING VOICE"

The battalion was originally constituted on 28 June 1942 as the 426th Signal Battalion (Construction) (Aviation) and activated on 1 August 1942 at Fresno, California. Capt. Melvin W. Stehr was the first commanding officer of the battalion. The unit moved to Camp Pinedale, California, on 9 November 1942. In early 1943, Camp Pinedale became the site of the Western Signal Aviation Unit Training Center, and the unit received its first training at this location. During this time, Maj. Henry A. Ferguson assumed command of the battalion.

The battalion relocated to Langley Field, Virginia, on 27 March 1943 for additional unit-level training. Additionally, small teams were sent to specialist schools at Camp Crowder, Missouri, and Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. After a brief stay at Camp Cumberland, Virginia, for unit-level training in field conditions, the unit prepared for overseas movement. On 12 January 1944, the battalion left Hampton Roads, Virginia, aboard the *Andrew H. Moore*, a converted liberty ship.

After an uneventful crossing, the battalion entered the Port of Oran, Algeria, on 2 January 1944. The battalion remained near Fleurus, renamed Area 18 C.P. No. 2, where the battalion prepared for about two months prior to its deployment. The battalion arrived in Italy aboard the British troop transport *Winchester Castle* on 27 March 1944. Locating near Casavatore and the Capo Di Chino Airport, the battalion was assigned to the Army Air Force's Mediterranean Theater for Administration and Supply. For operations, the battalion was supervised by the chief Signal officer, Mediterranean Allied Air Forces.

In May 1944, the battalion was ordered to the vicinity of San Severo, Italy, for a Signal construction job. The movement over mountainous terrain was hampered by a lack of cargo trucks. Once at San Severo, B Company was tasked to assist the British 7th Air Formation Signals in the construction of a main (10-pin, open-wire) route from Foggia to Pescara, roughly a distance of 25 miles. The rest of the battalion remained near San Severo, with A Company assisting in the Signal construction of two nearby airfields and tails off of the main route. The battalion was reorganized and redesignated on 1 July 1944 as the 426th Signal Heavy Construction Battalion (Aviation).

The front along the Adriatic in July was just south of Ancona. Communications had to be extended to Ancona from Pescara in the expectation that Ancona would fall and the airfields would be pressed into use at Loreto and Falconara. During this time, the battalion, which was designed to operate as three separate units, operated out of 11 different places. Once the routes were completed, the battalion operated fault control stations at Ancona and Foggia, and test points at an additional five locations. Storms, particularly in January 1945, produced widespread outages. During a three-day period, 62 circuits were logged out of service.

Though the battalion received orders for deployment to the Pacific Theater on 2 July 1945, it did not depart the theater for two reasons: the war in Japan ended unexpectedly, and the battalion was needed to take over line maintenance and removal projects. The battalion was then inactivated on 8 November 1945. During the war, the battalion received credit for both the Rome-Arno and North Apennines campaigns.

On 2 March 1947, the battalion was redesignated as the 426th Signal Battalion and allocated to the Regular Army. The battalion was activated twenty years later on 25 April 1967, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and attached to the then 35th Signal Group as a corps area battalion. Since then, the unit has participated in numerous readiness and deployment exercises in support of the XVIII Airborne Corps.

The battalion's distinctive insignia depicts four roundels, which represent four area Signal centers that are installed, operated, and maintained by the battalion. The radiant edges indicate the emission of Signal information. The chevron represents the mountains of Italy and the two campaigns that the battalion participated in during World War II. The embattled division line reflects combat service and indicates that the unit was organized as a Signal combat battalion.

Capt. Kennedy, who recently completed an assignment as regimental operations officer at Office Chief of Signal at Fort Gordon, is now commander of the 258th Signal Company, 551st Signal Battalion, 29th Brigade, at Fort Gordon. He has had previous assignments as C&E staff officer, C&E systems officer, and Signal platoon leader. Capt. Kennedy has a B.A. from the University of Akron, Akron, Ohio.