

# *34th Signal Battalion*



34TH FAREWELL  
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Editor	LT Jayna Legg
Cover and Illustrations	SGT Dave Hummel
Layout	SGT Mike Sampson
Photos	LT Julie Labib, SFC Rafael Palacio
	CPT Carol Mitchell, SPC Terry Minderman, CPT Mark Anderson, MAJ Sherrie Balko, LT Barry Hyde, CW4 Edwin Sugai, Heilbron TSC
Diagrams	CPT Brian Brown

# History

From Missouri to the beaches of Normandy, the Ardennes Forest, the Philippines, Japan and most recently the desert sands of Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, the 34th Signal Battalion boasts a long and colorful history. It all began in May of 1942 when the 34th was constituted in the Army of the United States and subsequently activated as the 34th Signal Construction Battalion March 18, 1943 at Camp Crowder, Missouri.

Soldiers joined the new battalion from other military units and branches of the Ohio Bell Telephone Company for training maneuvers in Tennessee and later Fort Ord, California. Then in February 1944, barely a year old, the 34th boarded the Duchess of Bedford bound for Cheshire, England to stage for World War II.

On July 12, 1944, 34th Signal Battalion landed on Utah Beach to support the Normandy Invasion of Europe. The young battalion had the crucial mission of providing wire signal communications between the rear and forward echelons of General George S. Patton's Third U.S. Army during the advance into Germany on March 16, 1945. The Meritorious Unit Citation was awarded to the 34th on Jun 22, 1945 for military service in the European Theater of Operations.



# History

Campaign participation credited to the 34th includes Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, Central Europe and the Asiatic-Pacific Theater after the Battalion landed in the Philippines on August 23, 1945. Before deactivating in early 1946, the unit also served in Wakayama Beach, Japan.

Ten years passed before General Order #232, Headquarters, USAREUR, activated the 34th Signal Battalion at Kelly Barracks Moerhringen Germany, to support VII Corps. The Battalion was then established at Krabbenloch Kaserne in Ludwigsburg. In 1961, the unit reorganized and Alpha and Bravo companies replaced the disbanded Delta and Echo companies. Charlie company was established in Crailsheim and became the most forward deployed company in the Battalion.

The 34th Signal Battalion unit crest was authorized on January 20, 1955 and the name "Communicating Devils" was adopted on May 1, 1979.



In 1980, reorganized from the 34th Signal Battalion, the 93d Signal Brigade was established as the VII Corps Signal Brigade. For over thirty years, VII U.S. Corps has served in the defense of western Europe and preserved the peace by maintaining a constant readiness for war.

## Battalion Crest

"Skill, Endurance, Spirit," the battalion's motto, is depicted on the crest. The six checkered, orange and white divisions along with the coconut palm tree and fleur-de-lis represent the six campaign honors the unit received in the European and Pacific theaters during World War II. The unit's meritorious commendation is represented by the second fleur-de-lis.



## Move to Heilbronn

In 1989, 93d Signal Brigade initiated plans to move to Heilbronn to field Mobile Subscriber Equipment. The 34th would consolidate at Badenerhof Kaserne. However, dramatic political changes in eastern Europe, including the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, led to a change of mission for the Corps, 93d Signal Brigade and the 34th. While the unit would deploy for its last REFORGER exercise in January and the move would continue as planned that summer, it was announced the unit would not receive MSE and would inactivate within three years as part of USAREUR force reductions.

After months of planning, Bravo Company was the first out the Krabbenloch gate on May 18, arriving in Heilbronn in time to operate a booth at the Wharton Barracks German-American fest. Alpha Company followed soon after on June 5 and Charlie Company moved from McKee Barracks in Crailsheim the 25th of June. HHC completed the Battalion move in July.

The battalion's historic construction mission is indicated by the white band across the shield representing the cleared right of way in pole line construction. The lightning flash represents the speed with which the battalion installs lines of communication.



Soldiers of the 34th were in the process of unpacking, organizing and getting used to their new surroundings in Heilbronn when Saddam Hussein ordered Iraqi troops into Kuwait August 2, 1990. The Battalion was still conducting Corps and Brigade field training exercises in Germany based on a NATO mission when U.S. troops began deploying to Saudi Arabia. With unit inactivation looming in the near future and a continued demanding VII Corps mission keeping the Battalion in the field, few people in August expected the 34th to deploy to Saudi Arabia.

The future of the 34th was drastically altered on November 8,

1990, when President Bush

### Deployment



made the announcement that he was sending European and Stateside troops to Saudi Arabia to join coalition forces. The mission - prepare to go on the offense. The Brigade was alerted for deployment the next day, exactly one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War.

The Battalion was then faced with the monumental task of deploying 620 personnel and 345 tactical vehicles and communication shelters to Saudi Arabia, as well as transitioning from a European setting to the desert and preparing troops for the possibility of combat.

Within 35 days of notification, the four companies in 34th deployed all the unit's vehicles and equipment by barge, rail and convoy to port and by air directly to Saudi Arabia.

First to deploy its vehicles on November 21st was Bravo Company by barge from Mannheim to the port in Antwerp, Belgium. Charlie Company celebrated Thanksgiving day at the railhead in Heilbronn and HHC began a two-day convoy to Belgium the same day. Alpha Company convoyed the bulk of its equipment to Belgium the 8th and 9th of December.



Alpha Company also air loaded 14 vehicles on C-5A's at Rhein Main the week of 10 December, a first in the battalion's history.

The days and weeks following the deployment of the battalion's equipment were spent training troops to live and fight in the desert. Leaders conducted NBC and weapons training and gave hundreds of classes on subjects including heat injuries, land navigation in the desert, Moslem customs and culture, combat stress, first aid, field sanitation and site defense.

Soldiers also prepared wills, received shots and medical examinations, made financial arrangements and prepared their families for a separation of unknown length and consequences.





The battalion advance party and all of Bravo Company deployed the first week in December from Stuttgart. Charlie Company followed soon after on December 9 and B2 Alpha Company soldiers flew to the Port of Dammam with their equipment the 9th through the 12th of December. HHC and the rest of Alpha Company flew into Saudi Arabia in time to spend Christmas in the infamous warehouse at the port.

The 34th joined thousands of VII Corps soldiers staying in tent cities and warehouses on the Persian Gulf waiting for their ships to come in. There wasn't much for the soldiers to do but write letters home and stand in line for meals, outdoor showers, the only phone and a mini post exchange. At tent city there was more room for volleyball and football games and walking along the Gulf coastline. Daily rituals in both places included standing in line to pick up bottled water, fruit and soda allotments provided by the Saudi government.

## *Desert Shield*

Equipment started to arrive in the port the third week of December and Bravo, Charlie and part of Alpha and HHC convoyed over 500 kilometers December 17 from the port of Dammam to Log Base Alpha in northern Saudi Arabia. By December 20th, 34th signal Battalion had installed three Corps Area Signal Centers - CASC 91, 92, and 93 in the barren desert. The battalion's three CASC's were committed continuously to support each phase of Desert Shield and Desert Storm to include trainup in the Training Assembly Area, movement to the Forward Assembly Area, G-Day (the beginning of the ground war, and redeployment to Germany.



On Christmas Day the majority of the battalion except for part of Alpha company and HHC was set up in their desert locations. Alpha and HHC soldiers were still living in the warehouse at the port and the festivities of the day consisted of a special dinner and cards and care packages addressed to "Any Servicemember". Ration points at the Log Bases provided special meals to soldiers already in place in the desert. It was a stressful time for soldiers of the 34th as they waited for the United Nations January 15 deadline to Saddam Hussein.



By the first of the year, all 34th troops were in the desert counting down the days to the UN deadline. As January 15 loomed closer, SCUD missile alerts were more frequent and soldiers learned to quickly don their NBC gear at literally a moment's notice. There wasn't any more time for NBC training - each time soldiers put their masks on in January the threat was real.

The second day after the UN deadline passed without a response from Iraq, a SCUD alert was called in the early morning hours on January 17. Then the news came from command channels and AFN radio in some battalion locations that the U.S. and its allies were bombing Baghdad. Operation Desert Shield became Operation Desert Storm.



### *Desert Storm*

Soon after the start of the air war, the battalion began moving into its ground war positions to support Corps movement into the forward assembly areas. The VII Corps battle plan was to envelop the more formidable Iraqi defenses in western Kuwait by crossing into southern Iraq far west of the Wadi Al Batin. Bravo company was the first company to deploy north of Tapline Road and west of the Wadi. This deployment played a significant role in the Corps battle plan leading into the ground war as the bulk of the Corps' subscribers were tied to each other through CASC 93.

At the end of January, Alpha Company briefly jumped part of CASC 92 to within 20 miles of the Saudi/Iraq border as part of the Corps plan to deceive the Iraqi forces into thinking the main attack would come through the Wadi.



February 6, CASC 92 re-located west of the Wadi. Two weeks later, Alpha and Bravo soldiers watched entire divisions of tanks and armor pass their sites, stretching as far as the eye could see. To ensure the deception worked, VII Corps waited until only days before the beginning of the ground offensive to begin rapidly shifting its divisions farther west from where the real attack would come.

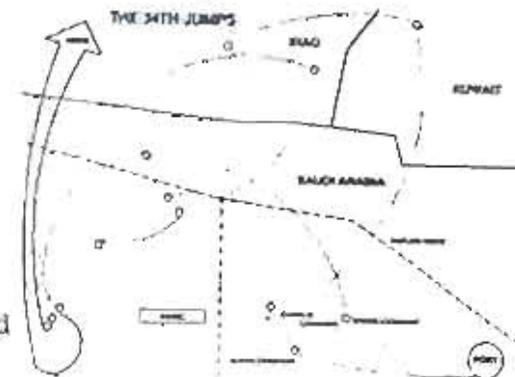


Alpha and Charlie Company broke systems February 22 to rendezvous with the 1st Armored Division, United Kingdom to move to Iraq the day after "G-Day". February 24 the ground war started and the 1st AD (UK) moved out in the afternoon - destination Iraq. Finally at 1600 hours on February 25, after the minefields had been cleared Alpha and Charlie Company started moving through the breach.



The sky was chalky blue. All soldiers had on chemical suits and body armor. British MP's notified convoy commanders that vehicles were hitting mines in the breach. The convoy took all night - slow, long line of small bobbing red lights in the pouring rain and blackness. Finally, on the morning of the 26th, both companies reached their sites in Iraq and set up CASC 91 and 92 in a driving wind and rain storm.

Battalion Forward Platoons were on the move with 2ACR, 1st CAV and 1st AD during the ground war. Charlie Company's 1st FWD jumped seven times in Iraq with 2ACR during combat, and was the most forward deployed platoon in the Brigade when the division halted on the Euphrates river. 2ACR was moving so fast the platoon designed a roof and trailer mounted antenna system to reduce installation time.



Bravo Company sent one radio team with 2ACR and another with 1st Cavalry Division Main. Site MA logged radio to radio times of 20 minutes during the Division Main's push deep into Iraq during the ground war. As 1st CAV moved to the Iraq-Kuwait border to pin four enemy divisions in place, Bravo soldiers provided crucial telephone service to the Division Commander and his staff.

Alpha Company's 1st Forward Platoon supported 1 AD in its drive north to destroy the Iraq Republican Guard. Alpha soldiers provided the Division Main and DISCOM with crucial intelligence circuits during the battle. 1AD pushed on to final positions in northern Kuwait after battling the Tawakalna Republican Guard Armored Division, the 52nd Mechanized ID, and the Medinah Division.



## Headquarters & Headquarters Company

Headquarters and Headquarters Company ate Thanksgiving dinner at a German Kaserne in Cologne, a stop on their two day convoy to Antwerp, Belgium to take their equipment to port.

HHC sent the battalion advance party to Saudi Arabia on December 2 and the rest of the company followed December 16.

Once they arrived in Saudi Arabia, the Hawks spent some time in the luxurious warehouse and the S4 section scrounged the port for much needed supplies.



HHC handled the first mail deliveries for the battalion while still in the port, and the maintenance section helped the companies ready their equipment for the long convoy north.

The Hawks headed north over 300 miles into the desert to their first location with Alpha Company December 19 and stayed there until the start of the air war. It was at CASC 92 the HHC Commander CPT Booker's PX, called "Booker's Bargain Basement" was born. HHC continued to run the PX throughout Desert Shield and Storm with customers including not only the battalion's own but many supporting units anywhere close to it's location. The PX also delivered to soldiers at other CASC's and warmly welcomed at some of the remote locations that it visited every couple of weeks.

On January 28, HHC broke down in a severe wind storm and moved a hundred miles north to its most forward deployed location at CASC 93. While at CASC 93, the S4 and maintenance sections coordinated CUCV turn-in and issuance of the Highly Mobile Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV) to the battalion. The HMMWV's greatly enhanced the battalion's ability to maneuver across the desert.

The day after the ground war started, elements of HHC crossed the breach into Iraq. The BATCON (Battalion Control) and the BMO (Battalion Maintenance Office) along with the Battalion Commander convoyed into Iraq with Charlie Company.

After the ground war, HHC relocated outside King Khalid Military City, where it remained until redeployment to Germany.

The many different sections of HHC accomplished varied and numerous missions during Desert Shield/Storm to aid the battalion. One of HHC's biggest contributions to the battalion was mail delivery. The HHC mail room delivered over 2 tons of mail and also sent out mail and packages for the battalion. The S1 section processed 546 Desert Shield/Storm awards. The S4 section issued 3,000 NBC suits, 3,000 MRE's and coordinated the battalion's equipment turn-in of over 4,000 items. The BMO maintained 316 items of equipment, and the Chaplain gave on memorial service and over 70 religious services in three countries.



## Alpha Company

Alpha Company was chosen in late November as one of two companies in the Brigade to deploy equipment and personnel to Saudi Arabia by air. The Corps G3 and Brigade S3 planned for the Gators to set up a "mini" CASC in Saudi Arabia early in December prior to the arrival of most of the subscribers.

The Gators prepared the switch section, two UHF communication vans, one SHF van, one multiplexer van, cable and dining facility trucks and three support vehicles for airlift on C-5A's, and the switchboard left on the first flight from Rhein Main December 9.



The rest of the company not air loading conveyed to Antwerp, Belgium to the ship the same weekend. After four more flights, Alpha's mini CASC was on the ground in Saudi Arabia waiting in Tent City to deploy to the desert on December 17. The Gators installed CASC 92 December 19, about the same time the rest of the Gators arrived in the port to wait on the arrival of their equipment.

By the beginning of the new year the company was consolidated at it's first site south of King Khalid Military City.

The Gators jumped CASC 92 a total of four times, the third time into Iraq with the British 1st AD the day after the ground war started. Alpha Company installed CASC 92 in Iraq in under 12 hours February 26 during a severe sand, wind and rain storm. The Gators stayed in Iraq throughout the ground war, cease fire, and peace talks.

After the ground war, Alpha Company installed sites simultaneously in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, covering approximately 11,700 square miles.

Gator forward platoons supported 11th Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, 341st Medical Group, and 159th Logistical Task Force as well as the 1st Armored Division Main and DISCOM. First Forward Platoon jumped over 25 times in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait with 1st AD. Second Forward Platoon supported 1st CAV in Saudi Arabia and jumped into Iraq with 11th Aviation Brigade at the start of the ground war.

CPT Matt Quinn took over Alpha Company from CPT Tim Brown in a Change of Command Ceremony in Iraq March 13, and the Gators also had a successful Organizational Day in Iraq in April. The Company was happy to say goodbye to Iraq April 8 and jump to KKMC to install CASC 92 for the last time and prepare for redeployment to Germany.



## Bravo Company

Bravo Company had several firsts during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The Bulldogs were the first in the battalion to deploy equipment to Saudi Arabia, convoying to Mannheim November 21 and 22 to put their equipment on a barge to Belgium. The Bulldogs were also the first 34th troops on the ground in Saudi Arabia December 7.

Bravo Company's CASC 93 was the first in the battalion and one of the first in the brigade to be installed in Saudi Arabia. The Bulldogs deployed from the port over 500 kilometers north to Log Base Alpha on December 17, and CASC 93 was fully integrated into the Corps network December 18.

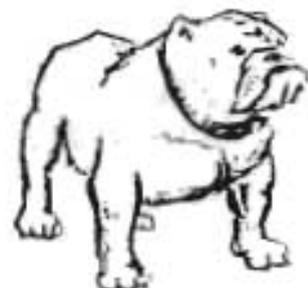
Soon after the air war started, the Bulldogs were the first in the battalion to deploy north of Tapline Road and west of Wadi Al Batin. The Corps was beginning to move into place in forward assembly areas for the ground attack, and Bravo's position near the border of Saudi Arabia and Iraq was a crucial link in the Corps network.



By the beginning of the ground war, seven different units with over 400 personnel were co-located at CASC 93, including the brigade headquarters and System Control, 26th Signal Battalion ALOC, 3rd AD Main, and 109th Engineers.

The Bulldogs installed twenty-two radio systems at CASC 93 in the two days before the ground war, supporting VII Corps Main and TAC, 1st AD, 7th Support FA, 210th FA, 1st Infantry Division and 2ACR. During the Corps push into Iraq, Charlie Company's 1st Forward Platoon installed a double radio relay covering over 102 miles through CASC 93 to support 2ACR. Bravo Forward platoons supported 8-43rd ADA task group, 75th FA, 7th Support Group, 317th Engineer Battalion, 1st Cav and 1st Cav's 13th Signal Battalion.

The Bulldogs provided the ADA Task Force phones and data lines including crucial Corps early Scud warning lines during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Bravo soldiers also jumped 19 times with 75th FA Brigade in Saudi Arabia.



## Charlie Company

The Charlie Cobras spent Thanksgiving loading their equipment on trains in Heilbronn to be transported to the port in Belgium. The Company flew out of Nurnberg and arrived on the ground in Saudi Arabia December 19 and moved directly to spacious accommodations among the sand fleas and canvas known as "Tent City." A week later, the Cobras off-loaded their equipment from the ship and made the long convoy north on Tapline Road to Log Base Alpha. Charlie Company installed CASC 91 December 20 and remained at that remote desert location near King Khalid Military City until February 21.

February 22, Charlie Company broke systems and convoyed north to link up with 1 AD United Kingdom on the Saudi Arabia and Iraq boarder. At 1800 hours on February 25, the Cobras entered Iraq, and after a long, slow convoy in blackness and pouring rain, at 0800 hours on the 26th they arrived on site and installed CASC 91 in enemy territory.

After the ground war, Charlie company became the only CASC in the battalion and one of two in the brigade to jump into Kuwait.



The night of March 1, the Charlie Company Operations section and the battalion S3 devised a plan to displace CASC 91 with all digital CASC (CASC 74) with minimal loss of service to the subscribers, something never tried before in the Corps network. The swap-over was successfully completed the next day due to excellent engineering by Company Ops and close coordination with CASC 74.

The Cobras then installed CASC 91 in Kuwait and some soldiers had the opportunity to travel in Kuwait and view the battlefield firsthand. The Cobra's jumped from Kuwait back to Saudi Arabia March 12.



Charlie Company forward platoons supported 2ACR and 210th Field Artillery Brigade. First Forward Platoon supported the 2ACR Tactical Operation Center and Tactical Command Post. Second Forward Platoon supported the 2ACR Support Squadron and 210th FA. During Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Charlie Forward Platoons accounted for the majority of site jumps in the brigade.

First Forward Platoon designed a new roof and trailer mounted antenna system that drastically reduced system installation time. Second Forward adopted the design, making it easier to install communications over 45 times in three countries with the 2ACR Support Squadron and 210th FA.

On April 20 in Saudi Arabia, CPT Mark Anderson took over command of Charlie from CPT Dave Nichting.

## Redeployment

After returning to Saudi Arabia from Kuwait and Iraq, CASC's 91 and 92 became the main nodes for the network supporting VII Corps' redeployment activities that were centered in the desert around KKMC. All three of the battalion's CASC's provided support to Corps units as they returned to Saudi Arabia and prepared their equipment for turn-in or for shipment back to Germany. In April, the battalion officially received word that it was to inactivate and that the majority of its equipment would remain in Saudi Arabia. The 34th had maintained three CASC's on the air for five consecutive months and had jumped CASC's a total of 12 times, more than any other corps signal unit in the theater. As systems were terminated and CASC's pulled out of the network, equipment was sent through wash racks and turned in to an equipment holding area in the desert near KKMC. Finally in early May, six months after being alerted in November for deployment, soldiers from the 34th began redeploying back to Germany. They were met with open arms and tears by the many family members who had remained in Germany waiting for their return.



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## Commander's Comments

It is sad to see the 34th Signal Battalion inactivate and yet, at the same time, it's great to see that the battalion is inactivating because we have accomplished our mission here in Europe. The Cold War has finally ended and all soldiers of the 34th, past and present, can be justifiably proud of their contribution and role in helping bring down the Iron Curtain. This past year has been a remarkable chapter in the battalion's history. The battalion's accomplishments during Desert Shield and Desert Storm were absolutely spectacular. What I will remember most about the war was the day to day tireless efforts of the battalion's many soldiers. Despite many unknowns and uncertainties and, at times, insurmountable obstacles, the soldiers always rose to the occasion and pursued their missions relentlessly. The 34th has been a great battalion throughout its' history and it's been the hard work of thousands of soldiers over the many years that have given the battalion its' legacy. Although the battalion is going away, the battalion's legacy will continue as long as one former 34th soldier remains on active duty.



Battalion Commander	- LTC William S. Rodakowski
Battalion XO	- MAJ Sherrie L. Balko
Battalion S-3	- MAJ Donald T. Howard
Battalion CSM	- CSM Larry F. Horton (not pictured)

