

SATCON Volunteers give Boost to Sister Battalion

By Sharon L. Hartman

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — “Hooah” is written all over the faces of PFC Corey Wilson, SPC Chad Duncan, and SPC Daniel Alvarez, soldiers from the 1st Satellite Control Battalion. These fine soldiers didn’t wait for the call or the “hey-you roster,” instead, they volunteered to deploy in support of their sister battalion, the 1st Space Battalion.

Alvarez, from SATCON Battalion’s Delta Company, left in March to join the Test and Evaluation Unit deployed to Oman. A co-worker, SPC Jarrod Mantz, said about him, “He is dedicated to what he does and always tries to better himself at everything, and this deployment is just another example of that can-do attitude.”

Wilson, Alpha Company, and Duncan, Bravo Company, trained with Army Space Support Team (ARSST) 14 for several weeks before leaving. Duncan deployed with Team 14, and Wilson went to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan to plus up Team 3 already on the ground. The three young soldiers heard of the need for volunteers through their respective chains of command and jumped at the opportunity.

“It really came down to whoever was working that day,” said Duncan who is a native of Colorado. “They asked ‘who wants to leave on Monday?’ That was on Thursday afternoon.

“We were told, ‘You won’t know where you’re going. You won’t know what you’re doing. You won’t know whom you’re going to be with. You won’t know how long you will be gone.’”

Such uncertainties might leave others less eager to volunteer, but not Duncan and Wilson.

“It excited me. To switch battalions, get assigned

to 1st Space, learn a completely different job, that’s really a once in a lifetime thing. I’ve never heard of anyone ever doing it,” said Duncan.

“Getting to go do something like this — getting a combat patch when he’s an E3 and I’m an E4 — that just doesn’t happen. It doesn’t ever happen and being on a team with three officers right now is not something many guys in our shoes get to do.”



Above, PFC Corey Wilson and SPC Chad Duncan of 1st Satellite Control Battalion train-up for their volunteer deployments with their sister battalion, the 1st Space Battalion. Photo by Sharon L. Hartman

Opposite page, top, although he deployed with the 1st Space Battalion, SPC Daniel Alvarez holds up a 1st Satellite Control Battalion banner showing his allegiance to his unit. Photo by SFC Robert Kelley.

Opposite page, bottom, SPC Chad Duncan, far left, one of three volunteer soldiers from the 1st Satellite Control Battalion poses with members of his temporary Army Space Support Team. Photos, U.S. Army Space & Missile Defense Command

Wilson — originally from Arizona — had just arrived at the Operations Center at Fort Meade, Md. when the need for volunteers arose.

“My first sergeant and company commander brought it up to me and asked me if I wanted to go. I came into the Army with pretty much the same intentions and goals as SPC Duncan. Ready to learn, ready to go and do Army things. To do things soldiers do,” said Wilson.

“I’ve been in the Army for three years, straight out of high school. I did my basic training at Fort

Knox, Ky., Advanced Individual Training at Fort Gordon, Ga., went to Korea for one year, and came back to do the Satellite Network 1 Charlie course. Like I said, I’m new to the Operation Center and jumped at the chance to go.”

Army Space Support Company 1SG Scott Ballard remarked on the challenges Wilson and Duncan endured in preparation for their deployment.

“They arrived March 3 for a six-and-a-half week training process which includes two situational training exercises. Then, in addition to all the certification training for team support, they have had to step up to the plate and be prepared with weapons qualifications

and NBC training.

“They’ve been really training to work the imagery aspect of being team members. They are learning hardware and software maintenance as well as actually utilizing the different image products and getting them ready to provide to the support units.”

“Duncan was also a combat lifesaver but his certification had lapsed so we had to send him to a re-certification course. He has already put together his combat lifesaver bag, and all the other stuff he needs for that,” said Ballard.

“I’m glad to have them. They are taking on the responsibilities of an NCOIC for the team as an E3 and E4. They have proven to be a great asset to our effort.”

Although they are leaving the 1st SATCON Battalion, their move is not permanent.

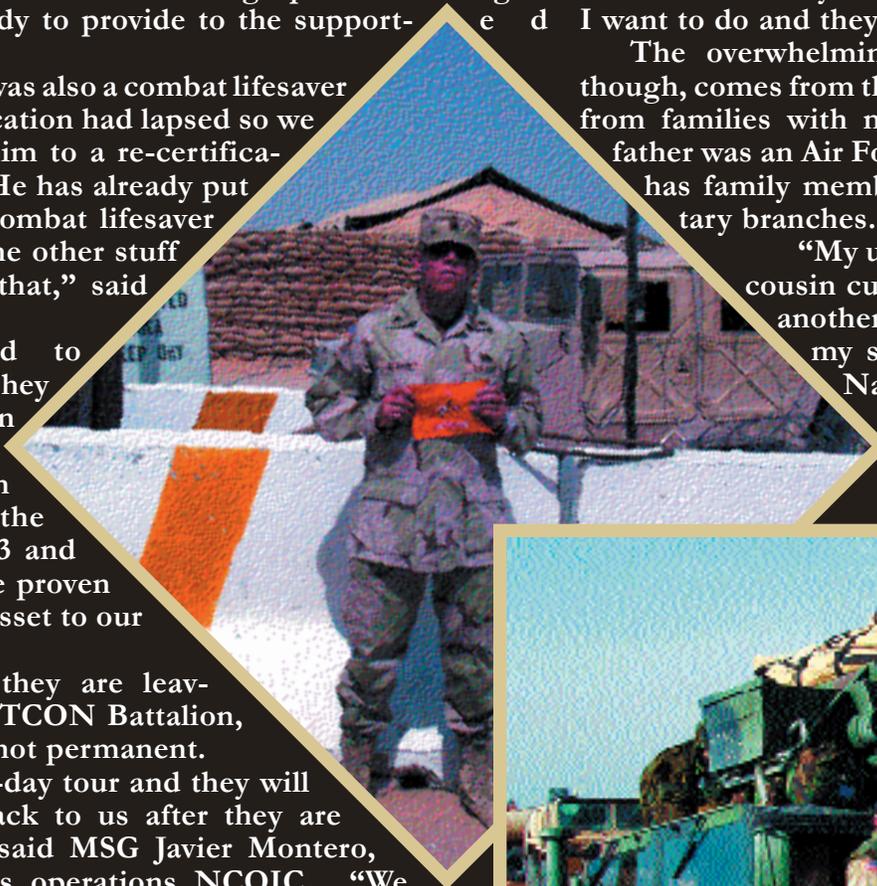
“It’s a 179-day tour and they will be coming back to us after they are done there,” said MSG Javier Montero, 1st SATCON’s operations NCOIC. “We pulled them out of the Operation Centers so they could supplement the ARSST teams the command were putting together to support Central Command.”

“As far as our mission is concerned, the Satellite Control companies will miss them, but we’ll carry on. We have enough folks to cover the workload.”

But, for these young men, this truly unique opportunity puts them closer to the line of fire than soldiers in their military occupation specialty have ever been in. When asked if there was any anxiety about going into the field, both replied with an immediate “no.”

“There’s the inherent amount of fear that always comes with getting ready to go someplace you’ve never been before,” said Duncan.

“I’ve never left the country before. Wilson has been to Korea, so he’s been abroad, he’s been a for-
eigner, so he knows a little about that, but I think we are probably the most anxious people in the state right now. We’re ready to rock and roll and we have a lot of support from our families.



“I called my mom one week from Maryland, and told her everything was fine, then two days later, I tell her I’m coming home for a few weeks to do some training and then I’m deploying to who knows where. It was kind of a system shock, but they know it’s what I want to do and they fully support me.”

The overwhelming understanding and support though, comes from the fact that both men were reared from families with military backgrounds. Duncan’s father was an Air Force Vietnam veteran and Wilson has family members who span the various military branches.

“My uncle is retired Air Force, I have a cousin currently serving in the Air Force, another cousin in the Marine Corps and my sister is planning to go into the Navy following after me in service to our nation,” said Wilson.

Everyone serving in today’s military all-volunteer



force is, by definition, serving of their own free will, and thus a volunteer. The three soldiers now deployed to dangerous areas of the world have taken that one step further, to the benefit of their unit and their country.

Sharon L. Hartman, is a DoD contractor with COLSA Corporation, and has served in the Army Space & Missile Defense Command Colorado Springs Public Affairs Office for three and a half years. She is a computer graphics designer, journalist, and photographer, and is the graphics editor for the Army Space Journal.