

Space Impact

Personal Observations from Operations Iraqi Freedom



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By **BG Robert P. Lennox**

In June of this year I took up my post in Colorado Springs from a position at Fort Bliss. In my new position here at U.S. Army Space & Missile Defense Command (SMDC), I continue to be amazed at the Space-based capabilities that this command, the Space operations officers, and soldiers bring to warfighters. To support them during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), this command deployed all their existing Space Support Teams and constituted additional teams to meet the demand from the Army, the Marines, combined units, and the Coalition Provisional Authority rebuilding Iraq. One of the command's missile warning units, the Joint Tactical Ground Station, was deployed and put on "permanent TDY" in the area. SPEC-TR, the Spectral Exploitation Cell -Transportable, deployed to Qatar to support Special Operations Command, Central Command with commercial imagery products and spectral analysis. The Space-based Blue Force Tracking Mission Management Center continued playing its important role in tracking friendly forces and feeding that information into the supported command's common operating picture. The SMDC Battle Lab created and built a robust satellite communications package called the Space Support Element Toolset-Light (SSET-L) for all SMDC forces to use. I can say with pride that our capabilities were, and still are, playing a crucial and important role supporting Army, joint, and coalition operations.

I could continue to run down a list of units and capabilities that this command provided to OIF, but I'll leave that to the others who've written articles for this issue. COL Jim Pierson in his article lists some of the "firsts" the command scored. LTC Elizabeth Kuh outlines Space support to stability operations at the CPA. Other authors have gone into depth on the extent and nature of their support to their units.

Over the past several months we've been developing

and digesting our lessons learned from OIF and from Operation Enduring Freedom. Our goal as we work on these lessons is to continue to do those things that we do well and improve on those that we don't, to keep Space operations relevant, supportive, and complementary to military operations and the role other branches and functional areas play in those operations. One lesson came through loud and clear: military leaders don't know what they don't know and it's only through the actions of hard-charging Space professionals that the leaders discover Space-based capabilities and how to employ them in military operations. We Space professionals must continue "selling" our services, educating senior leaders, peers, and subordinates on how Space operations enables and enhances military operations, and integrating ourselves on the supported staffs. Only through those efforts will those Space-based assets and products make their impact on military operations. Only through those efforts will Space operations become a normal part of military operations.

I would like to switch for a moment from Space support during OIF to mention an important operation that I benefited from while I was the deputy commanding general at Fort Bliss. It's not a Space-centric mission, but a people-centric one. Foremost is the importance of a post-wide team that focuses not only getting the troops and equipment deployed, but also taking care of the families left behind. The Army does the first very well, but we often let the latter essential task slide. When the 507th Maintenance Company was attacked, I was in the middle of my own deployment to OIF. As you know, some of the unit's soldiers were killed, and some were taken prisoner. The importance of family readiness immediately became blindingly evident.

The family readiness groups for that company and battalion went into action providing support and liaison for the families. The post support staffs, led by the

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Below, members of Army Space Support Teams 13 and 14 prepare to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom last April.



Chief of Staff, dove in to interface with the families at Fort Bliss and with the bigger Army that was providing support to families not located on Fort Bliss. Because we all shared the tragedy and pain, it may have made it a little easier for the families. What might the results have been if the post and the unit hadn't had a good family support structure? It reinforced for me that not all of the heroes were deployed overseas. We were fortunate to have a selfless team of volunteers ready to respond when needed. This is one mission, one essential task that is important to every unit in the military.

In summary, all of us, at SMDC and in other Army units, should feel great pride in our collective contri-

butions to the success of Operation Iraqi Freedom, whether deployed to the "front lines of freedom" in Iraq and Afghanistan or at home. The contributions of Space operations to our successes in the Middle East can be attributed to the foundations laid over the years by Space professionals assigned to this command and throughout the Department of Defense. I encourage all of you to continue that work as we prepare our Army to meet the challenges of the next battle in the Global War on Terrorism.