



BRAVO COMPANY LEARNS NEW WAY TO “CONTROL THE HIGH GROUND”

By SGT Matt Davidson

FORT MEADE, Md. — Performing control operations on DSCS III satellites requires a highly technical skill set, willingness to retain new information, and expedient mastery of new techniques and procedures. Recently, several Soldiers from Bravo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion took a major leap forward in adding a critical area of satellite control operations to their repertoire: the Replacement Satellite Configuration Control Element (RSCCE).

During the months of April and May, Josh Bonesz of IIT Industries provided four weeks of in-depth instruction and hands-on practical exercises. The RSCCE is a subsystem vital to the 53rd Signal Battalion's mission. It enables operators to monitor and control the satellite's telemetry, command crucial satellite processing, and ultimately ensure the DSCS III payload is able to reach its users at all times. Everything that Bravo Company's Wideband Satellite Operations Center (WSOC) does ultimately, in one way or another, depends on some function provided by the RSCCE.

Bonesz's course was a gradual immersion into the progressively complex RSCCE curriculum. It walked an optimal middle course between informative lecture and learning by doing. Each successive lesson built upon the student-Soldiers' existing blocks of knowledge. The course focused on important characteristics of a DSCS III satellite, operational equipment paths, and extensive coverage of the RSCCE's hardware and software interfaces. The Black

Dragon warriors got hands-on training initializing the subsystem's equipment and even sent actual commands to a real-world communications vehicle. Later aspects of the curriculum entailed executing Command Pass Plans and resolving anomalies, to include anything from a hardware component failure to hostile Space weather conditions.

Pfc. Matthew Eckard of Bravo Company said, "I took a lot away from the RSCCE course. It's pretty overwhelming, actually. It's like learning a totally new job." Controlling and commanding the DSCS III satellite's payload and its many associated hardware systems, casually referred to as 'manning the pit', is essential to servicing any military communication network's end users: the Warfighter on the ground.

Be it a training exercise in Nevada or a real-world mission comprising part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, satellite controllers such as Bravo's Black Dragons make supporting the Warfighters of all branches of service possible. Although four weeks is not nearly enough time to grasp everything the Communications Payload Controller, it is the first and most important step towards doing so, and much more firsthand training lies ahead for the eight Black Dragons. The ability to learn and adapt to ever-expanding mission requirements and capabilities is but one more reason why Bravo Company continues to rise, in the parlance of the company's slogan, above the rest.