



News Release

U.S. ARMY SUSTAINMENT COMMAND

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Ammo ship upload raises readiness

By Charles Fick (HQ ASC)

ROCK ISLAND, Ill. – Longer than three football fields, the M.V. Staff Sgt. Edward A. Carter Jr., is a seagoing insurance policy.

Loaded aboard the massive vessel are more than 2,000 containers of munitions, part of the Army Prepositioned Stocks -- afloat mission to sustain expeditionary Army forces, wherever and whenever they may engage.

“Ammunition is what makes our Army a fighting force,” said Rick Hale, Ammunition Team lead in Army Sustainment Command’s Army Prepositioned Stocks Directorate at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.

The Carter is due in to port at Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, N.C., this month to download, refit, then upload more than 20,000 tons of munitions ranging from rifle bullets to air defense missiles.

“When we send the Carter back out to its maritime station, it will be carrying an even more lethal load than before,” Hale said.

Efforts to maximize the ship’s load have been ongoing and successful.

“Prepositioned munitions stocks come from a variety of sources and commands, all facing pressure to keep up the flow to combat forces,” Hale said.

Putting some away for a rainy day is a challenge, he noted, but essential to preserve the Army’s ability to meet contingencies.

“We’ve worked with the Army G-4, U.S. Army Materiel Command, Joint Munitions Command, Aviation and Missile Life Cycle Management

Command and a host of supporting organizations and agencies to substantially increase our fill rate aboard the Carter,” Hale said.

Maj. Gen. Robert M. Radin, commanding general of ASC, called the improved fill rate a major improvement in readiness. The Carter’s increased effectiveness ripples beyond the obvious support to Soldiers on the ground.

“Keeping munitions aboard ship, ready to sail to trouble spots, is by far the cheapest, most effective way to sustain expeditionary forces,” Hale noted. “Improvements to the Carter’s load reduce airlift requirements by up to 35 C-17 aircraft, saving millions of dollars -- not to mention easing the strain on air assets.”

The Carter’s turnaround will take about three months, during which time a complex, coordinated effort will move mountains of high-explosive cargo.

“Safety is always uppermost in our planning and operations,” Hale said. “From the stevedores laboring on the docks to the port operations managers and ammunition quality assurance and surveillance specialists, we’re all alert to the dangers of handling munitions.”

Once the entire ship is downloaded, the cargo will undergo serviceability inspections, containers will be inspected and recertified, inventories will be made and a new load plan configured.

“It’s like a puzzle coming together,” Hale said. “Months, even years, of planning all take form as the operation unfolds.”

When the download is complete, the workforce changes gears to carry out the massive, but delicate task of putting aboard thousands of containers filled with live rounds. Army Reserve Soldiers play a major role in operations, providing specialized manpower, while certifying their training requirements. It’s a win-win situation.

Spring will be in the air when the Carter sets sail, carrying its lethal cargo.

“Even knowing it’s out there may deter an enemy,” Hale said. “And if the day comes we have to download the cargo into combat, our Soldiers can count on us when they pull the trigger, yank the lanyard or push the launch button.”

SIDEBAR ARTICLE

Medal of Honor: African-American hero recognized decades after brave act

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 Ernest McPherson

When the Civil War ended, 21 African- American Soldiers wore the Medal of Honor. Blacks have earned our nation's highest honor in every war since then, except, strangely, during World War II. More than a million blacks served in that conflict and many bravely died in it, yet not one received any of its 433 Medals of Honor.

Finally, on Jan. 13, 1997, a wrong was addressed as seven black heroes joined those ranks. Our state proudly associates with one of them, a California native, the late Army Staff Sgt. Edward Allen Carter Jr. His is a story of a true military man with more than his share of tribulations. Today, the California State Military Museum celebrates his victory over all challenges except that of being physically here to receive our thanks.

A career Army noncommissioned officer, Carter was born May 26, 1916 in Los Angeles, Calif. He was the son of missionary parents who went to the Far East and finally settled in Shanghai, China. Edward ran away from this home when he was a young teen to begin a military odyssey. However, it was not to be an ordinary journey as his material and spiritual paths intertwined.

His first tour was short-lived, yet not too short to prevent the 15-year-old Carter from rising to the rank of lieutenant in the Chinese Army. When he was discovered to still be a child, he was promptly discharged and returned to his parents. It was also long enough for Carter to believe he was visited by a spirit in the Chinese Army, which informed him would be a great warrior, but would not die in war. Now having a spiritual military destiny, as soon as he was old enough, Carter enrolled in a Shanghai military school. There he received extensive combat training and learned at least four languages, including Mandarin Chinese, Hindi and German.

Next he fought in the Spanish Civil War as a corporal in the socialist Abraham Lincoln Brigade. It was an American volunteer unit opposing Gen. Franco's fascist troops. In 1938, they were forced to flee into France. This led to his return to the United States.

Here he met and married his wife Mildred in Los Angeles in 1940. It wasn't long, though, before destiny called again. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Sept. 6, 1941, shortly before World War II, and quickly rose to staff sergeant. In 1942, just months after he enlisted, the Army opened a counterintelligence file with his name on it.

On May 18, 1943, an unidentified intelligence officer at Fort Benning, Ga. "deemed it advisable" to put Sergeant Carter under surveillance and start an investigation. The officer did so because Carter had been a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Allegedly, "while not necessarily communist," he had been "exposed to communism."

The report further alleged "Subject... capable of having connections with subversive activities due to... early years [until 1938] in the Orient" and had a speaking knowledge of Chinese. Every commander Carter had thereafter secretly reported what he read, where he went and what clubs he joined.

In 1944 he was shipped to Europe and ended up assigned to supply duties. When Gen. Dwight Eisenhower ran short of combat-arms replacements in December 1944, he instituted the volunteer Ground Force Replacement Command for rear-echelon Soldiers of all races. By February 1945, a total of 4,562 black Soldiers were serving in units up to company size attached to previously all-white infantry and armored divisions.

At the height of his career he was even close to Gen. George S. Patton, serving as one of the general's guards. Patton had no room for prejudice in the ranks. They had a strong bond with the fact they both believed they had been visited by a spirit who foretold accomplishments on the battlefield.

After months of volunteering, Carter's platoon made it into combat, yet he had to accept demotion to private. This was because his superiors would not allow a black to command white troops. He eventually served in the "Mystery Division" of blacks in Patton's Third Army. (The Mystery Division performed missions requiring uniforms without identifying unit insignia.)

On March 23, 1945, Private Carter earned his Medal of Honor, was recommended, but received the nation's second highest award, the Distinguished Service Cross because of his race.

After recovering from his wounds in less than a month, he was restored to his staff sergeant rank and finished the war training troops.

At this point in his career, he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, American Defense Service Medal, Combat Infantry Badge and numerous other citations and honors.

(In 1946, Secretary of War Robert Patterson noted an irregularity in the lack of black recognition and promised to investigate.)

The war over, Carter found himself stationed at Fort Lewis, Wash., and politely known as a Negro or colored. A lot of the battlefield camaraderie had faded, however, as black soldiers were becoming increasingly common and were blending into the ranks.

When Carter attempted to re-enlist, his “suspect” background apparently became an issue and the Army barred his enlistment and discharged him without explanation on Sept. 30, 1949. He received an honorable discharge dated October 1949, probably the darkest “honor” of his life.

He moved into a life as a family man and steadily worked in the vehicle tire business the rest of his life. In 1962, although he smoked, he and his doctors attributed the discovery of lung cancer to shrapnel still in his neck. He died peacefully of lung cancer in the UCLA Medical Center, a Los Angeles hospital, on Jan. 30, 1963, at 47 years of age.

Carter was laid to rest in the National Cemetery on the grounds of the Veterans Hospital in West Los Angeles near where he died. His remains have since been moved to Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1992, Secretary of the Army John Shannon commissioned an independent study to identify unrecognized African-American heroes from World War II. In May 1996, the study was completed under the title, The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II. Staff Sergeant Edward Allen Carter Jr. of Los Angeles, Calif., was identified and recommended for honors. On Jan. 10, 1997, Carter was exhumed and honored the next day in Los Angeles. On Jan. 13, President Clinton presented Carter’s posthumous Medal of Honor to his son, Edward Allen Carter III, in Washington, D.C.

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