

This month in Military History

Army Materiel Command Logistics Support Element – Southwest Asia (LSE-SWA) and the Opening Stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom



1621– Massachusetts Colony signs defensive alliance with Chief Massasoit of the Wampanoag tribe.

1865 – Confederate General Robert E. Lee's supply line into Petersburg, Virginia, is closed when Union forces under General Ulysses S. Grant collapse the end of Lee's lines around Petersburg.

1866 – G.A.R. was formed (Grand Army of the Republic) as a Union Army veterans association.

1877 – The 1st Easter egg roll was held on White House lawn.

1893– US Navy rank of Chief Petty Officer is created.

1966 – The United States recovered a hydrogen bomb that had been lost off the coast of Spain.

1969 – Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announces that the United States is moving to "Vietnamization" of the war as rapidly as possible to allow US withdrawal.

On 20 March 2003 Operation Iraqi Freedom kicked off with troops moving through the sand berms that denoted the boundary between Kuwait and Iraq. That afternoon the AMC Logistics Support Element-SWA was ordered to be prepared to join a larger convoy into Iraq in the early morning of 21 March as part of the support structure behind the attacking units. On 22 March the AMC LSE-SWA element crossed into Iraq as part of the move towards Baghdad. Due to the friction and fog of war they soon found themselves going through 3rd ID units while artillery and mortar fire was evident off to the East. On 23 March the LSE-SWA group reached Tallil Airbase and set up operations as a reachback link between the forward units and the rear base in Kuwait.

From the forward base at Tallil, Camp Adder, the LSE-SWA began to execute some of the missions envisioned in the concepts that had led to the creation of Operations Support Command, although further forward than had been expected. The LSE-SWA began to use its advanced communications equipment to facilitate the flow of logistics information from the forward units to the base in Kuwait. AMC had purchased a commercial Multi-Media Communications

System (MMCS) in 2001 and had begun deploying the system OSC units prior to the war. The MMCS was in many ways superior to the communications suites of the divisional and corps logistics units. (In an interesting vignette, one contractor MMCS operator reported being helicopter-deployed into Iraq and set down alone, apparently in advance of the unit he supported. He was there for 18-24 hours before other American units arrived.) LSE-SWA became a reliable logistics conduit. At the same time the LSE-SWA commander, COL Carl Cartwright, began to call forward LARS and other AMC elements into Iraq in order to assist the forward units with readiness and technical issues. In a role probably not anticipated by the strategic planners, COL Cartwright also offered his logistics experience to assist the 377th TSC SPO to manage their support missions.

What was anticipated was the flow of division LSEs into Iraq. LSE-SWA assumed responsibility for the divisional LSEs. The LSEs were the first line of logistics information and readiness gathering as well as the first line of LAP support to the troops. However, in mid-2003 many LSEs, because of gaps between the doctrine and TDAs, arrived without required

equipment, especially vehicles and power generation. LSE-SWA equipped what they could, but materiel was short. The APS units in Kuwait had continued to issue equipment to follow on units in late March and April to include 1st AD, 101st AB, 4th ID and many more. By the time LSEs arrived in May and June the cupboard was bare. Those late arriving LSEs had to depend on their supported unit until more equipment arrived in SWA. However, the LSE's had MMCS. In 1st AD the DISCOM commander relied heavily on MMCS to run the logistics support of the division and delayed movement of the LSE to a more efficient location until divisional communications were improved.

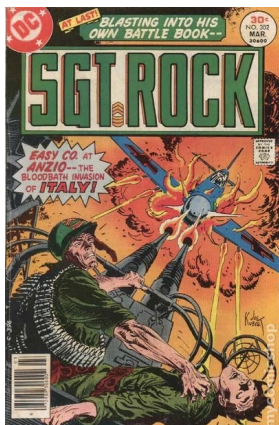
By late May there were 6-8 LSEs in Iraq just as it was clear OIF was going to last much longer than first anticipated. Continued high tempo in Kuwait, growth in aviation and other specialty missions, as well as sustainment of operations in Afghanistan, Qatar, and Djibouti all pressed upon the LSE-SWA headquartered at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. From May to August 2003 the missions of the OSC further developed and new structure was created to meet demand. Next month more on the evolution of missions in SWA.

SGT Rock

(In response to the demand for more comic book heroes after last month's Captain America article)

Looking for an audience of WWII and Korean veterans, DC Comics released a war hero of their own, perhaps in response to Marvel Comic's Captain America. First appearing in 1959, the tough and cunning SGT Rock debuted as a leader and hero who had grown up through one tragedy and/or battle after another.

Early history for this hero detailed the death of three fathers: his biological and step-father, and then a father-figure in his place of employment. The grief and despair was further antagonized through the difficult-to-believe histories of his siblings. Of his six siblings, a sister was committed to a mental institute; a brother died in a motorcycle accident; another brother died in a paratrooper accident jumping from a bridge; a third brother was in a vegetative state after being wounded in war; and his



final brother was a Marine in the Pacific theater, whose his survival is never known.

SGT Rock's military career started as a private serving in the African theatre. As WWII continued he reached the rank of Master Sergeant after the rest of the unit was killed while defending a hill against a German onslaught. From that point on SGT Rock was in charge of Easy Company. He had a cast of several permanent soldiers and a stream of replacements – known together as the "Combat Happy Joes of Easy". The most frequently mentioned "Happy Joes of Easy" were Bulldozer, Wildman, Jackie Johnson, and Little Sure Shot. Aid came from other countries as well, such as the French resistance fighter Made-moiselle Marie. Rumor has it she also had a son, who looked strikingly similar to the heroic SGT Rock.

Just like any good hero sto-

ry, there was also an arch nemesis, The Iron Major, to keep SGT Rock and his band of Happy Joes in business. As the timeline in the comic reached the end of WWII, one issue depicted the death of Sgt. Rock, which was of course just as heroic as any other part of his life. It is said that SGT Rock bravely entered the battlefield to save a little girl from German fire. He was badly wounded and died in front of Easy Company, still holding the small girl he had just saved. Whether or not this death is accurate is heavily debated, as SGT Rock makes appearances in post-war stories—perhaps it was just a comic hero flesh wound.

One of the things SGT Rock was famous for was his fashion choices: he was always shown to be wearing M1 Garand cartridge belt and two belts

1986 - U.S conducts airstrikes in the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi in retaliation for the bombing of La Belle Disco in West Berlin, where U.S. soldiers were killed.

1991 – US military planes began airdropping supplies to Kurdish refugees who were facing starvation and exposure in the snow-covered mountains of northern Iraq

2003- Coalition Forces led by the 3rd Infantry Division of the U.S. Army completed the invasion of Baghdad Iraq .

of .50 ammo even though he never carried the corresponding weapon. Soldiers seem to be a little more utility conscious today. Thank you SGT Rock for defending us so long!