



**3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command
16th Sustainment Brigade
Public Affairs Office**

Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq
DSN (NIPR) 318-827-6101
DSN (SIPR) 302-243-5104
keith.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil

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Mosul redeployment center exceeds expectations

By Capt. Matthew Joy
18th CSSB

MOSUL AIRFIELD, Iraq — Since Soldiers set up a redeployment center here in August 2008, they have pushed over 500 pieces of equipment, 200 containers and more than 1,000 personnel for redeployment.

The Mosul Redeployment Center has exceeded expectations, said Lt. Col. Christopher Roscoe, commander, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion.

“When we assumed the mission from our predecessor, redeployment support was not a part of our mission,” said Roscoe. “But our transportation team recognized a need, and realizing we had the capability to engage a target of opportunity, they immediately executed, and it’s proven for the benefit of all units in Multi-National Division - North.”

Before the 18th CSSB transportation section stood up the center, Mosul had never had a military-operated redeployment capability, and the contractor facility that used to be there had shut down in 2005. Since that time, unit movement officers from units below the brigade level, who frequently lack internal deployment and redeployment expertise and

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the necessary computer systems, have had to travel back and forth between Mosul and the closest redeployment center, several hundred kilometers away at Joint Base Balad.

“Everything administratively regarding UMO operations had to be completed in Balad.” said Sgt. 1st Class Patrice Elmes, movement control specialist, and Lacey, Wash., native. “If data-loads and what-not went without issue that would still normally require at least two separate trips for the UMOs. But even units who execute thorough deployment and redeployment preparation encounter problems, so inevitably it wasn’t uncommon for UMO’s to make three or more trips.”

Elmes compared the center to a “one-stop shop.”

“Now they can do everything here,” Elmes said. “We even provide Haz-Mat (hazardous materials) certification and blocking and bracing classes, if the units need it.”

Elmes and Sgt. Guillermo Martinez, cargo specialist, and Mayaguez, P.R. native, established the fully-functional redeployment center, complete with programs like Transportation Coordinators' Automated Information for Movements System II (TC-AIMS II) and radio frequency identification tag burning capability, for the support of all units in MND-N.

“By setting up the redeployment center, we’re not only alleviating the headaches that naturally go along with the duty, but we’re also mitigating risk and freeing up air and ground transportation assets, by reducing unnecessary travel across the battlefield,” said Martinez.

The shipping equipment, containers and personnel is challenging, but rewarding, said Elmes.

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“In the end, it’s all about helping the units,” said Elmes. “I’ve been on the other end, struggling with the load plans, the railhead, port or airfield operations, all of it, and I know how stressful it can be. Like we say in transportation, nothing gets done until something moves.”

The redeployment center will be part of his unit’s history, said Roscoe.

“Not all CSSBs have the capability to stand up such an operation,” Roscoe said. “Indeed, we were fortunate to even have the foresight to deploy with our TC-AIMS system, which, as I pointed out, wasn’t necessary for the mission we took over. However, now that the redeployment center is operational, it is difficult to imagine not having it. It is an important part of the 18th CSSB legacy, and we will work hard to ensure that it is able to endure beyond our time in Mosul.”