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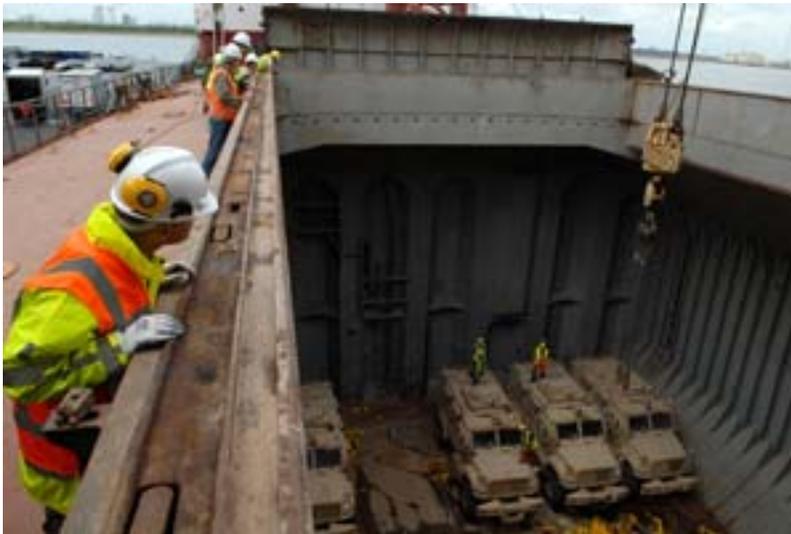
2009: THE YEAR OF THE NCO

July 13, 2009

First large load of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles arrives in Europe

By Erica Donohue and Capt. Anderson Raub
598th Transportation Group

ANTWERP, Belgium -- Saturday July 11, 2009 has come and gone, but it will not be forgotten. It was a historic day for U.S. Army Europe, the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command's 838th Transportation Battalion and the 21st Theater Support Command's 39th Transportation Battalion. It was the day the 838th off-loaded the first large batch of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to arrive in Europe.



PIERRE-ETIENNE COURTEJOIE

Lt. Col. Riley Cheramie, commander of the 838th Transportation Battalion (Surface Deployment and Distribution Command), monitors a harbor crane off-loading Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles from the hull of the MV Marilyn Vessel in the port of Antwerp, Belgium, July 11. This is the first major shipment of 40 MRAPs from Kuwait that will be used for training exercises at the Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels (Germany) Training Areas.

The vehicles arrived through the Port of Antwerp on board the ship MV Marilyn, and the team that off-loaded them was well aware of that this was special cargo.

“Even though from a technical standpoint this is a standard off-load operation for us, it is very special and significant to be off-loading the first large number of MRAP vehicles here in the port of Antwerp,” said Mario Smits, lead marine cargo specialist for the operation.

“Although this is not the first time an MRAP vehicle was offloaded in Europe, we are honored to be part of the team that made it possible for Soldiers to have MRAPs in Europe to train on and better prepare them for combat,” added Michel van Marle, marine cargo specialist for the 838th.

The operation didn’t present any significant problems, although the infrastructure of the vessel presented some small challenges to the team. A bulk vessel engineered to transport grain, the Marilyn is not specifically designed for the transportation of vehicles and equipment.

“Fortunately, due to expertise of the 838th workforce, what may have been an insurmountable task for the port operators was just another day at the port for the 838th,” said Cor Schaatsbergen, the unit’s supervisor, cargo control.

A crane lifted the vehicles from the Marilyn and positioned them on the pier, where a container carrier configured to lift the MRAPs by cable carefully placed them in the staging area. The MRAPs were then hauled to the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, where they will be used to train Soldiers headed for deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan.



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