

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2008-04-25-03

April 25, 2008

SMOOTH MOVE EARNS 44TH EXPEDITIONARY SIGNAL BATTALION ARMY-LEVEL DEPLOYMENT AWARD

By **Spc. Evan D. Marcy**
5th Signal Command Public Affairs Office

MANNHEIM, Germany -- When 5th Signal Command's 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion deployed in September, its equipment went to more than 40 sites in Iraq, and Army officials are honoring the unit for its skill in completing that mission.

For its efforts the battalion was named a first-place winner in the large active Army unit category of the Army Deployment Excellence Award program. The announcement of the award was made earlier this month with other winners in the Fiscal Year 2008 Chief of Staff, Army Combined Logistics Excellence Awards competition, which also recognizes units for excellence in maintenance and supply programs.



SGT MICHAEL TAYLOR

Soldiers of 5th Signal Command's 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion and German workers load equipment onto barges in Mannheim, Germany Aug. 24 for their deployment to Iraq. The 44th's skill in moving its equipment recently earned the unit a 2008 Army Deployment Excellence Award.

The award recognizes the 44th's expertise in shipping, receiving and dispersing their equipment from Mannheim to Iraq.

"I've never been in an inspection at this level, and it was very thorough and professional. We did an extremely large amount of work on this project, and to be recognized for that

makes me extremely happy and proud for the battalion,” said Staff Sgt. Darius Cunningham of B Company, 44th ESB. “I think we did a really good job.”

“While loading and receiving more than 299 pieces of signal equipment during the transition, there was not one piece of frustrated cargo -- that is, we maintained 100 percent of our equipment,” said Maj. John Harris, the 44th’s executive officer.

Battalion officials say that feat was achieved by meticulous accountability at each point. Harris and a small team of Soldiers were on the ground at the port in Kuwait to watch the unloading process.

That watchfulness prevented the unit from losing at least one piece of equipment that Staff Sgt. Darius Cunningham said he saw rolling backwards because local workers weren’t familiar with it and didn’t set its brake properly.

Before deploying, the battalion -- whose motto is “Outstanding” -- transformed into an ESB by incorporating 105 new signal systems and getting rid of 152 older ones. The unit had to rotate personnel, conduct new equipment and warrior task training, validate its equipment in the field, clean and pack its gear, and then ship it all in two days.

“The battalion was able to do this because leadership pushed responsibilities down and the junior NCOs did an outstanding job of making sure it was done right. It went very smooth because the whole battalion was involved. You don’t usually see it that way, but the entire team was there helping,” said Maj. Benjamin Anderson, deputy director of plans, training, mobilization and security for U.S. Army Garrison Mannheim.

“The new unit movement handbooks that they created are going to be a great help to 72nd ESB down the line,” said the 72nd’s Sgt. 1st Class Bret Traweek. The 72nd is the 44th’s sister battalion in 5th Signal’s 2nd Signal Brigade.

The 44th deployed in support of OIF in 2003, for Operation Enduring Freedom in 2006 and then deployed to Pakistan from Afghanistan, and is currently deployed in Iraq.

Since this deployment is the first as an ESB, Harris said, the unit had to start from scratch sorting out how to maintain accountability and follow procedures for shipping their equipment, filing the right forms, and getting everyone properly trained.

“From busting their tail and unloading equipment during Ramadan -- which meant they could not drink water in public -- to learning and adapting on the spot, this team was professional the entire way,” he said.

