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Soldier on fourth deployment- all in same unit

By Pfc. Michael Schuch, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAMMER, Iraq (Oct. 2, 2008) – There are a handful of Soldiers who can say they have served three tours or more in Iraq. Fewer can say they served those tours in the same unit.

Sgt. 1st Class Cameron Richardson, of Palm Springs, Fla., has the unique distinction of deploying to Iraq with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division four times: three deployments to Iraq and one to Kosovo in 1999 as part of Task Force Falcon.



Pfc. Michael Schuch

Sgt. 1st Class Cameron Richardson patrols through the Four Corners market in Baghdad during a recent foot patrol.

Following his seven-month long peacekeeping tour in Kosovo, Richardson returned to the brigade's home in Baumholder, Germany. For the next several years, Richardson trained with the Iron Brigade, preparing for their next assignment.

In March 2003, that assignment came. The brigade was called upon to deploy to Iraq.

Richardson, then a staff sergeant, led of a section of Bradley Fighting Vehicles in Company C, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment. His unit was tasked to serve as the V Corps headquarters security force. It was the first 1st AD to deploy in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“Our mission was to keep a 360-degree perimeter for the V Corps Tactical Army Command,” he said.

During the invasion of Iraq, V Corps headquarters followed the advancing 3rd Infantry Division as it fought its way to Baghdad International Airport.

After defeating the Iraqi army, V Corps’ mission shifted from war fighting to stability operations and securing the country for the Iraqi population. Richardson’s company moved into Camp Muleskinner in Rustimayah.

Their security and stability operations missions complete, Richardson and his unit began redeploying to Germany in March 2004.

But in April 2004, the Mahdi Army began its uprising, and the 1st AD tour of duty was extended for an additional 120 days in country.

“We had already redeployed to Baumholder and gone on our 30-day leave. I was back in the states when I got a phone call to return to Baumholder in order to deploy back to Iraq,” Richardson said.

Richardson, now the brigade’s master gunner, returned to Baumholder that July. He turned down a stateside assignment, preferring to stay with the brigade as one of its senior trainers and leaders.

In November 2005, Richardson and the Iron Brigade were called upon to return to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07.

“When they say to go, you have to go. I was thinking, ‘OK this is the last time,’” Richardson said.

The Iron Brigade, recently modularized, deployed as a separate unit. Assigned as U. S. Central Command’s theater reserve force, they remained in Kuwait for several months before “crossing the berm” into Iraq.

Upon finishing his second tour in Iraq, Richardson returned to his family and considered his career options, deciding to work toward becoming a platoon sergeant. He was selected to lead the 2nd BCT’s command security detail.

In April, Richardson and the brigade returned to Iraq in support of OIF 07-09, their third tour of duty there.

His daily duties include route planning, caring for his Soldiers’ physical and mental health, performing pre-combat checks and inspections and, once out on a patrol, ensuring the security of the brigade’s senior noncommissioned leader, Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Eyer.

“This deployment is unique in the fact that I was in the forefront in the first deployment as a Bradley section leader,” he said. “The second deployment I was the master gunner, a part of the theater reserve for six months and then moved up to Baghdad to finish the deployment. Now, I have a challenge in ensuring that the command sergeant major gets where he needs to go.”

As a Soldier who has seen the war in Iraq from its very beginning, Richardson said that he has seen tremendous progress in the last five years.

“It has progressively gotten better each time. The Iraqi Army seems to have gotten the grasp of what to do and is getting more professional,” Richardson said.

Richardson will remain in Iraq for the duration of this deployment with the Iron Brigade. Upon his return to Baumholder, he plans to request a continuing position with the 2nd BCT.

“I would love to stay if they’d have me,” said Richardson. “My wife is German, and she would love to stay in Germany.”

Until then, Richardson said he is taking it one day at a time, as he has done on his two previous OIF tours.

“I want to get myself and my guys all back home safely,” said Richardson. “I hope I don’t have to come back, but if ordered, I will and complete the mission.”

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