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21st Theater Support Command moves record number of Soldiers through Deployment Processing Center

By Angelika Lantz

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KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany -- About 4,000 Soldiers from units deploying with the 172nd Infantry Brigade passed through the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's Deployment Processing Center on Rhine Ordnance Barracks here between Thanksgiving and Dec. 5.



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1st Sgt. John Gutierrez of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 9th Engineer Battalion (left), and Odis Atkinson, a team leader and equipment specialist at the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's Deployment Processing Center, review paperwork after Soldiers of the 9th were manifested at the DPC, Dec. 2. The battalion is part of a contingent of 4,000 Soldiers from the 172nd Infantry Brigade who deployed through the DPC at Rhine Ordnance Barracks in Kaiserslautern, Germany during a 10-day period.

Even for the experienced team at the DPC, which is part of the 21st TSC's 39th Transportation Battalion, those are record numbers.

"This is probably the greatest influx of Soldiers we have ever experienced. We usually see about 200 to 300 Soldiers every three weeks or so. Now we are looking at 4,000 in a 10-day time frame," said Odis Atkinson, a DPC team leader and equipment specialist.

Atkinson and his co-workers at the DPC said intensive planning and excellent teamwork made the mission a success.

“We sat down with the staff and did a lot of planning. We analyzed the mission and crunched the numbers. For example, we usually stock 2,000 bottles of water and 3,000 meals; for this mission we upped the meals to 10,000 and the water to 6,000 bottles,” Atkinson said.

“Once we broke out all the mission requirements, we set up teams to manage and take care of them.

We were working three flex shifts to be covered 24/7, and we always overlapped teams to be prepared for potential changes and challenges.”

“We have a great team that pulls together to get things done. We back each other up. And being the Air Force guy here means I know what they want at Ramstein Air Base. I can help the Army side of the house by being familiar with how to best prepare to get their equipment on the planes,” said team leader and processing specialist Wayne Rondeau.

“The idea behind everything we do is to make it as easy on the Soldiers as possible,” Rondeau added.

“We want to minimize all that ‘hurry up and wait’ stuff to get them processed as quickly as possible, so they can enjoy a little more comfort before they go ‘downrange,’” Atkinson said.

“Our team leaders are retired senior noncommissioned officers. We speak the same language, and we speak the language of the Soldiers coming through here as well. We know how to relate to them and how to get them to do things because that’s what we did during our military careers,” he said.

Soldiers from the brigade’s 9th Engineer Battalion who were bused to the DPC from Schweinfurt, Germany, Dec. 2 testified that their processing was better than ever.

“I came through here on a deployment in 2003. There is a world of difference between then and now. Things run a lot smoother and much more efficiently. It took about 30 minutes to manifest more than 200 Soldiers, which used to take three or four hours back then, said Capt. Jerrid Allen, commander of the 9th’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

“There seem to be improvements everywhere. The whole system – the reception process, manifesting, the services provided to the Soldiers -- everything seems to have improved a lot,” said Lt. Col. Ben Bigelow, commander of the 9th.

