

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

The 528th Support Battalion in Operations
DESERT SHIELD & DESERT STORM

by Christopher E. Howard

Abstract: *Temporarily spared inactivation following Operation JUST CAUSE, the 528th Special Operations Support Battalion's fate remained undecided when Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990. Consequently, its involvement in U.S. military operations to defend Saudi Arabia (DESERT SHIELD) and liberate Kuwait (DESERT STORM) was not a foregone conclusion. But, when U.S. Special Operations Command, Central (SOCCENT) needed an immediate logistics solution for Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) deploying to Saudi Arabia, it requested the 528th. This proved to be a fortuitous decision for both the 528th and the myriad ARSOF units they supported.*

Operation DESERT STORM concluded on 28 February 1991, after six weeks of intense aerial bombardment and a 100-hour ground campaign that ejected Iraqi forces from occupied Kuwait. Commenting on the rapid and overwhelming success of that operation, General (GEN) H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., Commander-in-Chief (CINC), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), singled out U.S. Special

Operations Forces (SOF) for praise, referring to them as the glue that held the diverse U.S.-led coalition together.¹ Schwarzkopf did not specifically mention the 528th Special Operations Support Battalion (SOSB), but his senior SOF commander in theater, U.S. Army Special Forces Colonel (COL) Jesse L. Johnson, described the 528th as his “saving grace.”² Johnson’s deputy, U.S. Air Force (USAF) Colonel Douglas Brazil, echoed that sen-



General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr. commanded USCENTCOM during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM.

timent: “we’d have died without them.”³ Viewed in this light, the 528th SOSB was a critical, but largely overlooked, ingredient in Schwarzkopf’s “glue.”

Few published histories of the Persian Gulf War, as Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM are commonly known, address the 528th SOSB’s role.⁴ However, several unpublished histories, including those produced by the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) History Office, devote a few paragraphs to ARSOF combat service support (CSS) in this conflict.⁵ These accounts typically describe 528th SOSB contributions in terms of quantities: number of miles travelled, requisitions filled, maintenance jobs completed, and meals distributed. They do not provide context for understanding these numbers, nor do they put faces on the ARSOF Support soldiers respon-

sible for sustaining ARSOF.⁶ In contrast, this article fills that gap by relating how this small, one-of-a-kind support battalion, with limited operational experience and no role in existing USCENTCOM plans, deployed to Saudi Arabia and helped sustain ARSOF during the U.S. military’s largest ground campaign since the Vietnam War.

Background

In 1986, the U.S. Army activated the 13th Support Battalion (Special Operations) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to provide dedicated logistical support to ARSOF units assigned to 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM). Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Louis G. Mason, its 163 soldiers were organized into a headquarters company (HHC) and three functional detachments (Supply, Maintenance, and Transportation). In May 1987, the Army reflagged the 13th as the 528th Support Battalion, better known as the 528th SOSB. Soon thereafter, it began deploying small contingents to Bahrain to support ARSOF in Operations EARNEST WILL and PRIME CHANCE – the so-called “Tanker War” with Iran that lasted from 1987 to 1989.⁷ That mission was ongoing in May 1989 when the Army ordered the 528th’s inactivation, effective September 1990.⁸

Rather than passively wait for inactivation, 528th leaders successfully inserted it into U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) contingency plans for Panama. In December 1989, two task-organized elements from the 528th, totaling thirty-seven soldiers, deployed in support of Operation JUST CAUSE.⁹ The 528th’s performance there convinced the CINC, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), GEN James J. Lindsay, to ask the Army to reconsider its inactivation decision. At a March 1990 meeting with Lindsay, GEN Robert W. Riscassi, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, agreed to postpone the inactivation, pending a comprehensive study of ARSOF CSS.¹⁰ This study was underway when Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s tanks overran neighboring Kuwait that August.

The 528th SOSB gained valuable experience in Pan-



U.S. Central Command
Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI)



U.S. Central Command
Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI)



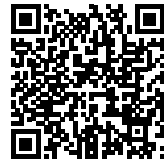
528th DUI



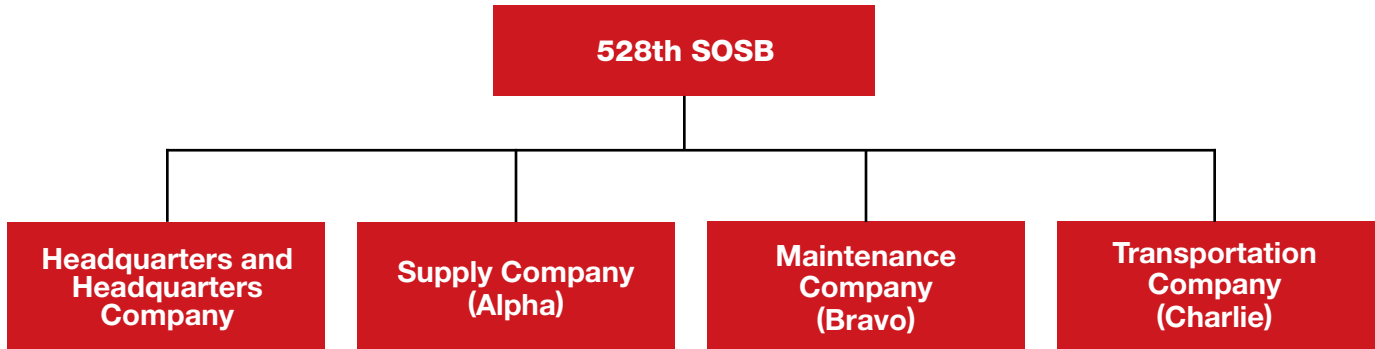
528th SOSB beret flash



1st SOCOM SSI



528th Special Operations Support Battalion 1990



ama but, like many USASOC units, had not yet been tested by an extended, large-scale deployment. It would now get that opportunity, due in part to deficiencies in the USCENTCOM plan for supporting ARSOF during contingency operations. Between August 1990 and March 1991, 155 soldiers – 96 percent of the 528th’s total strength – deployed to the USCENTCOM area of operational responsibility (AOR). Their actions there ensured the battalion’s survival.

Planning and Deployment

Inclusion in USSOUTHCOM plans, prior to JUST CAUSE, allowed the 528th SOSB to stage equipment

and rehearse with supported ARSOF elements.¹¹ Nothing of this nature existed for USCENTCOM.¹² As a result, the 528th’s role in DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM was largely an exercise in improvisation.

Existing plans and doctrine gave SOCCENT, the theater special operations command for USCENTCOM, operational control (OPCON) of all ARSOF in theater. However, it was not responsible for their logistical support. That responsibility fell to U.S. Army Central Command (ARCENT), the Army Service Component Command (ASCC) for USCENTCOM.¹³ ARCENT’s plans called for a mobilized U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) Army Support Group (ASG) to support ARSOF during

During Operation JUST CAUSE, a team of eleven 528th soldiers ran a Forward Arming and Refueling Point (FARP) from Howard Air Force Base, near Panama City, Panama. Here, a UH-60 Black Hawk is seen departing the FARP.

(Image credit: David Stewart)



“Proving the Concept”:
The 528th Support Battalion in Panama



President George H.W. Bush spoke out forcefully against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, declaring that the aggression “will not stand.”

contingency operations.¹⁴ However, the planned ASG could not arrive in theater for at least seven weeks after the SOF units it was to support, a problem identified by SOCCENT at a March 1990 planning conference.¹⁵ Finally, the SOF element intended to coordinate ARSOF logistics in the USCENTOM AOR, 5th Special Operations Support Command (SOSC), would not activate until October 1990, which was too late to have any impact on DESERT SHIELD.¹⁶

On 7 August 1990, U.S. President George H.W. Bush ordered the deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia to deter further Iraqi aggression. COL Jesse Johnson and his staff immediately began making preparations for a SOCCENT-Forward headquarters (HQ) on the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁷ Knowing the weaknesses in the ARCENT support plan, he asked Lieutenant General (LTG) Michael F. Spigelmire, Commanding General, USASOC, for the 528th SOSB, being familiar with its recent contributions during JUST CAUSE.¹⁸ 1st SOCOM, the 528th’s higher headquarters, recommended deployment two days later.¹⁹

LTC Norman A. Gebhard, 528th SOSB Command-



Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

er, alerted his battalion, which immediately began preparing to deploy to Saudi Arabia. One junior officer recalled the soldiers being too consumed by the task at hand to worry about what lay ahead. Instead, the prevailing sentiment among the troops was that Iraq, which fielded the fourth largest army in the world at the time, “didn’t know what it was getting into.”²⁰

When LTC Gebhard assumed command of the 528th in July 1990, it was his second consecutive SOF assignment on Fort Bragg. However, he had spent the first fifteen years of his career in the conventional Army, experience that would serve him well during the upcoming deployment. He was aided by battalion Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Otis W. Norfleet, a JUST CAUSE veteran who had been the battalion CSM since mid-1988. Joining him were fellow Panama veterans Major (MAJ) Randy R. Heyward (Executive Officer), Captain (CPT) Robert T. Davis (S-3, Operations Officer), CPT Mark A. Olinger (Support Operations Officer), CPT John M. Gargaro (Commander, HHC), and Sergeant First Class (SFC) James E. Boone (S-4, Non-commissioned Officer-in-Charge [NCOIC]).²¹ Their combined experience made it possible to deploy the entire battalion into a largely unknown environment in less than a month and then hit the ground running.



U.S. Army, Central (ARCENT) SSI



5th Special Operations Support Command (SOSC) beret flash

528th MISSION ESSENTIAL TASK LIST

Echelon: Battalion

PRIORITY	TASK
1	Provide dedicated logistical direct support.
2	Provide unit level logistics support.
3	Provide command and control for assigned/attached units (Engineer, Security, Graves Registration, Decontamination).
4	Deploy by air, land, sea, and rail.
5	Provide for internal defense.
6	Operate in a Nuclear, Biological, or Chemical (NBC) environment.

Echelon: Headquarters Company

1	Provide unit-level medical support.
2	Provide food service support.
3	Provide interim staff coordination for graves registration.
4	Provide classes of supply I, II, IV, VII, and VIII.
5	Provide classes of supply I, II, IV, VII, VIII transfer and transship operations.
6	Coordinate with Civil Affairs for services (laundry, bath, potable water, etc.) which are not provided by augmentation.
7	Provide Headquarters Commandant services.

Echelon: Supply Detachment

1	Provide combat/demand supported Authorized Stockage Lists (ASL) for SOF-peculiar equipment and limited conventional support systems.
2	Operate forward-based refuel/rearm supply points for deployed ARSOF aviation and ground elements.
3	Operate forward-based ammunition supply points, including special ammunition (for 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment).
4	Provide unit level Class III support.

Echelon: Maintenance Detachment

1	Provide intermediate direct support maintenance (Weapons, Automotive, Engineer).
2	Provide unit level maintenance support.
3	Provide Class VII Operational Readiness Float (ORF) for selected special and conventional equipment (Ranger).

Echelon: Transportation Detachment

1	Provide movement control for sea, land, rail, and air (Airfield Departure/Arrival Control Group) movements.
2	Provide short-haul transportation support.

(Image credit: NARA)



The C-5 Galaxy, seen here offloading troops in Saudi Arabia, was the largest cargo aircraft in the USAF inventory.



(Image credit: NARA)

Some 528th SOSB personnel and equipment deployed to Saudi Arabia aboard a USAF C-5, like the one pictured here.

(Image credit: NARA)



Most 528th soldiers deployed out of Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, on one of several USAF C-141 Starlifter cargo aircraft, like those seen here. The C-141 has since been replaced by the C-17 Globemaster.

Still, a battalion-sized deployment was a new experience for all involved and was not without difficulty. To accomplish the task, the 528th embedded Staff Sergeant (SSG) Ronald Jackson, its Air Movement Officer, at Pope Air Force Base (AFB), North Carolina, to coordinate air load planning.²² It also received invaluable assistance from the USAF as it jockeyed with XVIII Airborne Corps units for limited space on outbound aircraft heading for Saudi Arabia.²³

The battalion began deploying from Pope AFB on 29 August, on a combination of C-5 Galaxy and C-141 Starlifter aircraft. Most arrived at King Fahd International Airport (KFIA), located on the Persian Gulf coast near the city of Dammam, within a few days, although the C-5 lagged behind the C-141s, due to maintenance issues.²⁴ On 8 September, the 528th SOSB became the first ARSOF unit to complete its deployment (“close theater”), despite not having been previously force-listed on USCENTCOM contingency plans.²⁵ It left behind a small rear detachment of eight personnel at Fort Bragg, led by First Lieutenant (1LT) Janette L. Skowron.²⁶

DESERT SHIELD

The earliest days of Operation DESERT SHIELD were chaotic and tense. Though growing daily, the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia was miniscule, compared to the massive concentration of Iraqi troops in Kuwait.²⁷ The XVIII Airborne Corps and SOF elements that arrived first were sent to deter further Iraqi aggression, but were not equipped to stop a potential Iraqi armored thrust into Saudi Arabia. The resulting “window of vulnerability” necessitated the development of what CPT Davis termed a “run-away plan.”²⁸ The much-anticipated arrival of U.S. Army armored units in October, with their state-of-the-art M1A1 Abrams tanks and M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, eliminated the need for a quick evacuation plan.²⁹

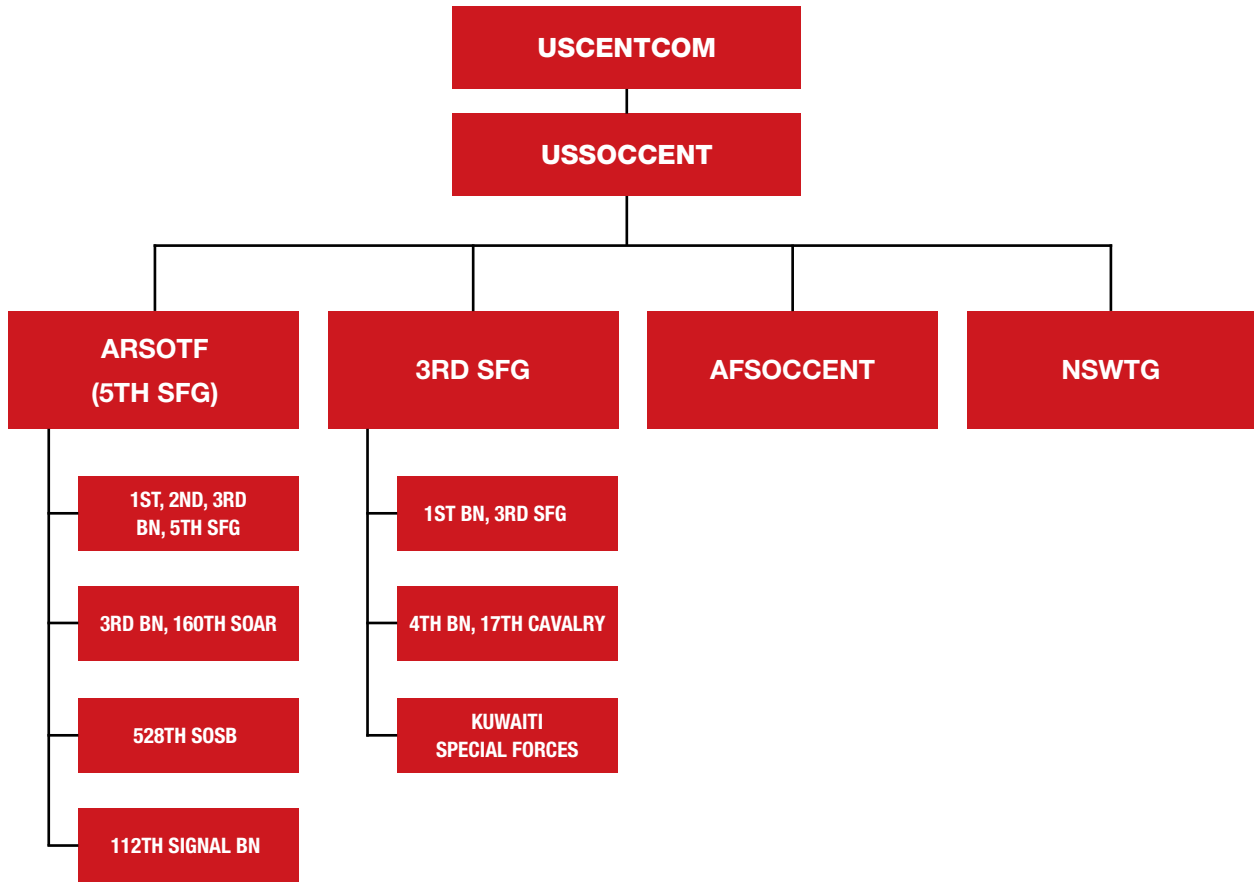
At KFIA, the 528th linked up with lead elements from 5th Special Forces Group (SFG), and bedded down in the unfinished airport’s extensive underground facilities.³⁰ The 5th Special Forces Operational Base (SFOB), as 5th SFG headquarters was known, formed the core of an Army Special Operations Task Force (ARSOTF), commanded by COL James W. Kraus (Commander, 5th SFG). The ARSOTF in turn fell under SOCCENT and was collocated at KFIA.³¹

SOCCENT assigned the 528th SOSB responsibility for providing direct support to ARSOF units at both KFIA and the other main ARSOF staging base, King Khalid Military City (KKMC), approximately 350 miles to the northwest.³² Soldiers from the 528th supported the HQ, ARSOTF (5th SFOB); 1st



Special Forces SSI

Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) during DESERT SHIELD/STORM



MILITARY CLASSES OF SUPPLY	
Class I	Subsistence
Class II	Clothing, Individual Equipment, Tools, Administrative Supplies
Class III	Petroleum, Oils, and Lubricants
Class IV	Construction Materials
Class V	Ammunition
Class VI	Personal Demand Items
Class VII	Major End Items: Vehicles, Weapons, Electronics
Class VIII	Medical Materials
Class IX	Repair Parts
Class X	Material for Non-military Programs

528TH SOSB EQUIPMENT LIST FOR DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM	
NOMENCLATURE	QUANTITY
5-ton Tractor Truck	1
5-ton Cargo Truck	23
2½-ton Cargo Truck	5
5/4-ton Utility Truck	11
3/4-ton Utility Truck	1
5-ton Wrecker	1
10,000-pound Forklift	3
4,000-pound Forklift	2
Forward Area Refuel Equipment	3
Fuel System Supply Point	1.5
Water Trailer	8
Mobile Kitchen Trailer	4
NBC Shelter	4
Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU)	5

Battalion, 5th SFG (Forward Operational Base [FOB] 51); SOCCENT–Forward; Naval Special Warfare Task Group (NSWTG) 1, consisting of two SEAL teams and a special boat unit; and elements from two Psychological Operations (PSYOP) battalions.³³ The 528th supplied Class I (meals-ready-to-eat [MREs], meals operationally ready-to-eat [MOREs], T-rations, supplements, and bottled water), and Class VI (male and female sundry packs).³⁴ It utilized the Standard Army Retail Supply System (SARSS) to requisition Classes II, III, V, VII, and IX for supported units.³⁵ It drew and issued ammunition, replenishing the 5th SFG basic load several times, and obtained approximately 50,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition for coalition partners.³⁶ Lastly, it maintained an air line of communication (ALOC) with ARSOF at KKMC.³⁷

Heavy equipment was initially scarce at KFIA. Fortunately, the 528th brought “everything but the kitchen sink” with them, according to CPT Olinger.³⁸ Most mission essential equipment had accompanied the troops by air, while less essential or oversized equipment travelled by sea.³⁹ This allowed the battalion to make an immediate impact, and CPT Davis recalled their M816 5-ton wrecker and 10,000-pound capacity (10k) forklift being especially valuable.⁴⁰ “They [the 528th] came in ready to go,” said Col. Brazil, the SOCCENT Deputy.⁴¹

Just five days after it closed theater, a SOCCENT Logistics Assessment, dated 13 September 1990, noted, “the 528th Support Battalion continues to provide outstanding support to ARSOF units,” mentioning that it had just received its first pallet of supplies, via air, from the continental U.S. (CONUS).⁴² A week later, the 528th received and signed for fifty-four Global Positioning System (GPS) units, which it transported to



(Image credit: NARA)

528th SOSB soldiers arrived at King Fahd International Airport in early September 1990 with much needed heavy equipment, including a 10,000 pound-capacity (10k) forklift. A smaller, 4,000-pound capacity forklift is seen here, unloading supplies in Saudi Arabia.

forward-located SF units.⁴³ However, when it came to supplies, the first few weeks of DESERT SHIELD consisted of a lot of scavenging. CPT Davis recalled SSG Jackson spending considerable time in the lost pallet yard, searching for anything useful. Meanwhile, the 528th’s cooks went directly to the docks to retrieve Class I (food and water), lest it not find its way to KFIA, through normal supply channels.⁴⁴

These supplies were ferried between the King Abdul Aziz Seaport, near Dammam, and ARSOF bas-

Transportation Company soldiers perch on the hood of a M923 5-ton truck during a rare moment of downtime. The 528th’s truck drivers logged over a quarter million miles in support of ARSOF missions during DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM.



(Image credit: Jeremy Sellers)

The M923 5-ton cargo truck, seen here in garrison, was the workhorse of the 528th SOSB Transportation Company during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, and performed superbly in the harsh desert conditions.



(Image credit: Louis G. Mason)



528th SOSB truck drivers ferried supplies to remote border outposts, manned by U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers.

es at KFIA and KKMC by the 528th's Transportation Company, which deployed with twenty-three M923A2 5-ton cargo trucks and five M35A2C 2½-ton trucks.⁴⁵ These seldom sat idle, due to limited organic transportation assets in the supported ARSOF units, including 5th SFG, which was responsible for manning dozens of border outposts. Delivering food, water, and ammunition to these remote outposts required the company's truck drivers to traverse hundreds of miles of desert each trip.⁴⁶ The company deployed with roughly thirty truck drivers (military occupational specialty 88M), but the high operational tempo led the 528th to request augmentation from non-deploying units on Fort Bragg, resulting in the addition of approximately forty personnel.⁴⁷

All of those miles, combined with the intense heat and desert sand, kept the 528th's Maintenance Company busy. Tire blowouts and overheating engines were constant threats, sometimes necessitating recovery using the lone 5-ton wrecker.⁴⁸ As if performing unit-level maintenance for the 528th, and direct support maintenance to the ARSOTE, were not enough, SOCCENT also tasked it to support NSWTG 1, which lacked an organic maintenance capability.⁴⁹ The maintenance section had to overcome several obstacles, in order to complete these missions, including a shortage of repair parts, grueling temperatures that forced it to shut down operations for several hours in the afternoon, and frequent "Scud alerts," that brought work to a grinding halt.⁵⁰

The 528th brought a M816 5-ton wrecker, pictured here at Fort Bragg, NC. Over the course of the deployment, it ran dozens of recovery missions for ARSOF vehicles, often resulting from the harsh desert conditions.



“Scud Alert!”

The 528th SOSB did not take any casualties during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, but it had its share of run-ins with Iraq’s most infamous weapon of the war: the Scud missile. Though not effective as a military weapon due to its inaccuracy, Scuds allowed Iraq to project force, and inspire terror.¹ Major U.S. bases and staging areas in Saudi Arabia were well within the Scud’s reach. For 528th soldiers at King Khalid Military City (KKMC) and King Fahd International Airport (KFIA), “Scud alerts” became a part of life.

Iraq had made extensive use of the basic Soviet-made Scud surface-to-surface missile during its eight-year war with neighboring Iran (1980-88). By 1990, the Iraqis had developed two enhanced variants of the 1950s-era weapon. The Al-Husayn had a range of 373 miles, and the Al-Hijarah could reach targets 466 miles away. Both Scud variants could carry high explosive, chemical, or nerve agent warheads.²

During Operation DESERT STORM, a total of 88 Scuds were fired from fixed site or mobile launchers in western Iraq: 42 towards Israel and 46 at Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states.³ Most Scuds aimed at U.S. troops missed their targets, or were intercepted by the U.S. Army Patriot Defender missile defense system. However, on 25 February 1991, a Scud struck a barracks housing the Army’s 475th Quartermaster Group (Provisional), in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 28 US soldiers and wounding almost 100 more. It was the single deadliest Iraqi attack of the entire war.

The 528th was more fortunate, although Scud alerts frequently sent soldiers scurrying for cover and grasping for their protective gear. One such incident occurred in early February 1991, when four separate Iraqi Scud missile attacks – nine missiles, in all – targeted KKMC. All 528th soldiers, including those outside the wire running transportation missions at the time of the attack, escaped unharmed. Still, Captain Mark Olinger remembers it being “too close for comfort.”⁴

Endnotes

- 1 Iraq targeted Israeli civilians with dozens of Scuds, in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to provoke an Israeli response that, in turn, would cause Arab members of the U.S.-led coalition to withdraw their support.
- 2 U.S. Department of Defense, “Final Report to Congress: Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” April 1992, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL, 53-54.
- 3 “Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” 219.
- 4 COL (Ret.) Mark A. Olinger, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 17 June 2020, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.

(image credit: MARPA)



(image credit: Louis G. Mason)



(image credit: MARPA)



Top: Military personnel work at the site where an Iraqi Scud missile attack on 25 February 1991, killed 28 Army Reserve personnel and wounded in 100 others. The building housed the 475th Quartermaster Group (Provisional). **Middle:** Training in Mission-Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear while in garrison helped prepare 528th soldiers to react to the threat of chemically-armed Scud missiles, during Operation DESERT STORM. **Bottom:** Military personnel examine a Scud missile shot down in the desert by an MIM-104 Patriot tactical air defense missile during Operation DESERT STORM.



The steady influx of ARSOF units into Saudi Arabia led LTC Gebhard to send a task-organized Forward Area Support Team (FAST), consisting of 35-40 soldiers, to the sprawling KKMC complex in mid-September. This new Saudi military facility housed 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 5th SFG (FOB 52 and FOB 53, respectively), and 3rd Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (3/160th SOAR), among others.⁵¹ It offered outstanding facilities: dormitory-style living quarters, an excellent dining facility, showers, maintenance shops, and a well-lit, paved motor pool.⁵² However, these luxuries came at the price of more oversight from the Saudi Ministry of Defense.⁵³

Commanded by CPT Rodney O. Griffin, the Supply Company Commander, the FAST provided ARSOF units at KKMC with food, water, ammunition, and fuel. The Supply Company set up and operated a fuel point from a Saudi motor pool, and a fuel system supply point for both SOF (3/160th) and conventional aviation assets. The 528th drew and issued the ammunition, and the receiving units had responsibility for storing it. It also requisitioned supplies, provided direct support transportation and maintenance, maintained ALOC between KKMC and KFIA, and established an Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (A/DACG) for SOF.⁵⁴ Twelve 528th fuelers participated in a Forward



(Image credit: Louis G. Mason)

Fuel System Supply Point (FSSP) equipment, seen here on display at Fort Bragg, NC, had a considerably larger capacity than the more compact and transportable Forward Area Refueling Equipment (FARE). Both systems were used in Saudi Arabia.



(Image credit: NARA)

The UH-60 Black Hawk, seen here, and the SOF variant, the MH-60, saw extensive action in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM.

(Image credit: Stephan R. Anderson)



A small team from the 528th was assigned a water purification mission, using four 600 gallon-per-hour Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units (ROWPUs). They set up their ROWPUs at an oasis in the vicinity of Dammam, Saudi Arabia.



(Image credit: Stephan R. Anderson)

SGT Stephen R. Anderson, pictured here at the ROWPU site, was the Headquarters Company Supply Sergeant. Early in DESERT SHIELD, he was tabbed to be the NCOIC for the water purification mission.

(Image credit: Stephan R. Anderson)



Purified water produced by the 528th ROWPU team was transported to remote SOF locations via 500-gallon blivets, slung under CH-47 helicopters.

Arming and Refueling Point (FARP) training exercise with 3/160th SOAR, from 31 October to 7 November 1990.⁵⁵ This training would pay off later, during DESERT STORM, when the refuel capacity of the 528th was stretched to the limit.

Despite being overextended in its core mission areas of supply, maintenance, and transportation, the 528th was assigned other missions, for which it was less prepared. For example, USASOC tasked the battalion with performing a water purification mission, and issued it four 600 gallon-per-hour Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units (ROWPUs) shortly before deployment.⁵⁶ Once in theater, LTC Gebhard entrusted this mission to 1LT John M. Sheckler, who assembled an ad hoc team of Headquarters and Supply Company soldiers.⁵⁷ Ser-

geant Stephen R. Anderson, normally the HHC supply sergeant, served as his NCOIC.⁵⁸ After setting up their ROWPUs at a desert oasis between KFIA and Dammam, they produced an estimated 3,000 gallons of potable water per day, before shutting down operations in December 1990.⁵⁹ This water was then transported to remote ARSOF elements in 500-gallon blivets, sling-loaded under CH-47 Chinook helicopters. Despite the improvised nature of the mission, the 528th demonstrated an ability, as CPT Olinger saw it, “to fill a capability gap, without burdening the rest of ARSOF.”⁶⁰

Transition to DESERT STORM

On 29 November 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 678, giving Saddam Hussein until 15 January 1991 to withdraw his forces from Kuwait, and authorizing the use of force if he did not comply.⁶¹ Within a month, the 528th SOSB relocated its main body of about 150 soldiers forward to KKMC, to better support offensive operations to liberate Kuwait. In turn, the FAST, which had been at KKMC since late September, replaced the main body at KFIA.⁶²

From KKMC, the 528th supported the same units the FAST had supported, plus the 112th Signal Battalion, and VII and XVIII Corps aviation units.⁶³ It provided food, water, fuel, and ammunition, and requisitioned Classes II, III, IV, VII, and IX. It also provided ALOC from KFIA, direct support maintenance and transportation, and water production and distribution.⁶⁴

The 528th’s fuelers went from relative novices to experts within a few days in mid-January 1991, when they set up and operated a FARP to support aviation units from both XVIII Airborne Corps and VII Corps, which

were repositioning to support the DESERT STORM ground offensive.⁶⁵ Over four hundred AH-64 Apaches, AH-1 Cobras, UH-60 Black Hawks, CH-47 Chinooks, and OH-58 Kiwas transitioned through KKMC. For several days, the fuel section pumped as much as forty thousand gallons of aviation fuel.⁶⁶

CPT Griffin's FAST, now at KFIA, picked up the mission of supporting 5th SFOB (HQ, ARSOTF), FOB 51, and HQ, SOCCENT, along with providing limited support to 3rd SFG and attached units.⁶⁷ It supplied food, water, and ammunition, and requisitioned Classes II, III, IV, VII, and IX. It provided ALOC to KKMC, along with direct support maintenance and transportation.⁶⁸ This arrangement, with the main body at KKMC and the FAST at KFIA, continued after Operation DESERT STORM commenced on 16 January 1991.⁶⁹

When the U.S.-led coalition advanced into Kuwait and Iraq, starting on 24 February, the 528th sent a second FAST, under the command of MAJ Harold 'Hal' Walker, to Kuwait City International Airport (KCIA).⁷⁰ From there, it supported ARSOF elements that had advanced with the ground offensive.⁷¹ It established a FARP, using a combination of East German and HEMTT tankers. It also provided food, water, ammunition, limited direct support transportation support, and ALOC from KMMC to KCIA.⁷²

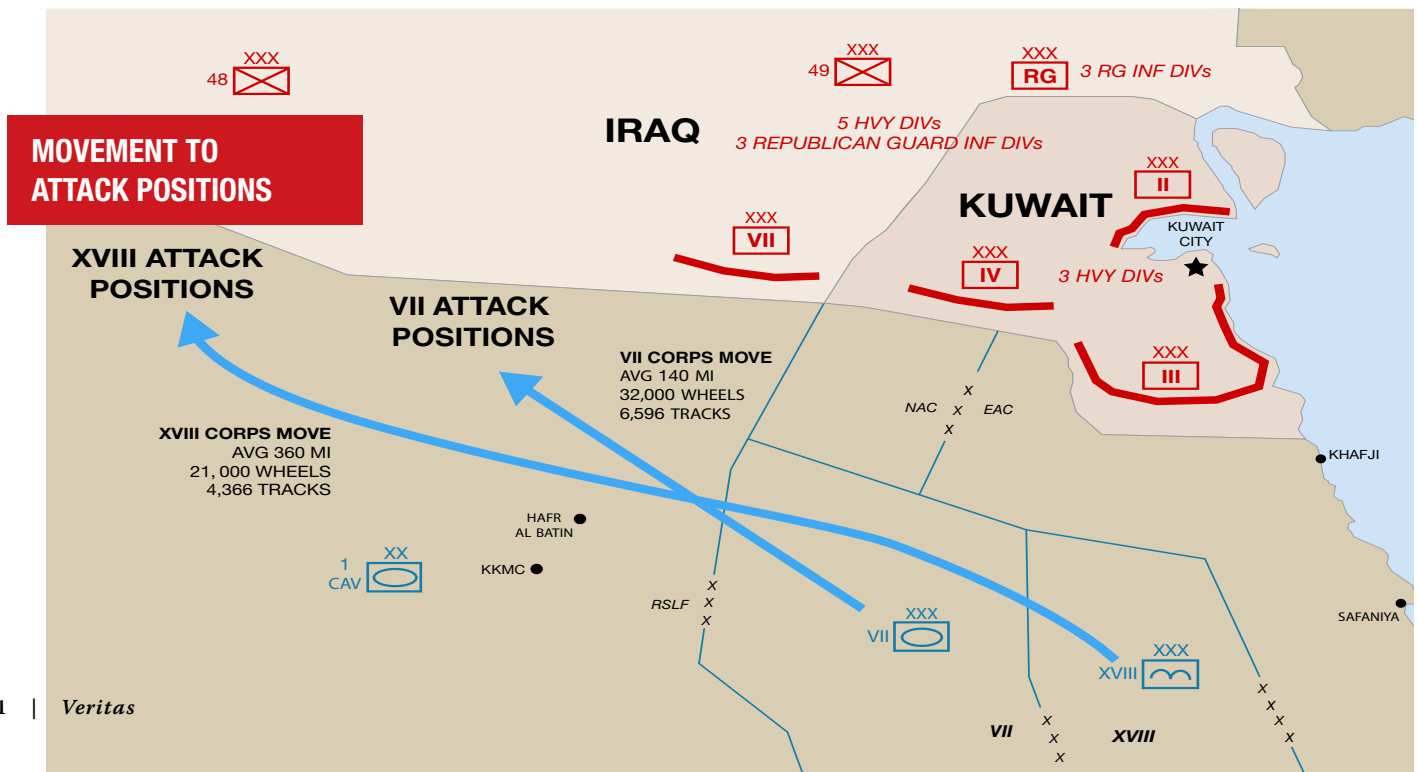
With no prospect of holding onto occupied Kuwait, Iraq agreed to a ceasefire on 28 February 1991. The 528th SOSB began redeploying to Fort Bragg the next month. In the six months since it arrived in Saudi Arabia, the 528th provided 500,000 MREs, 175,000 T-Rations, and 600,000 gallons of bottled water. It dispensed

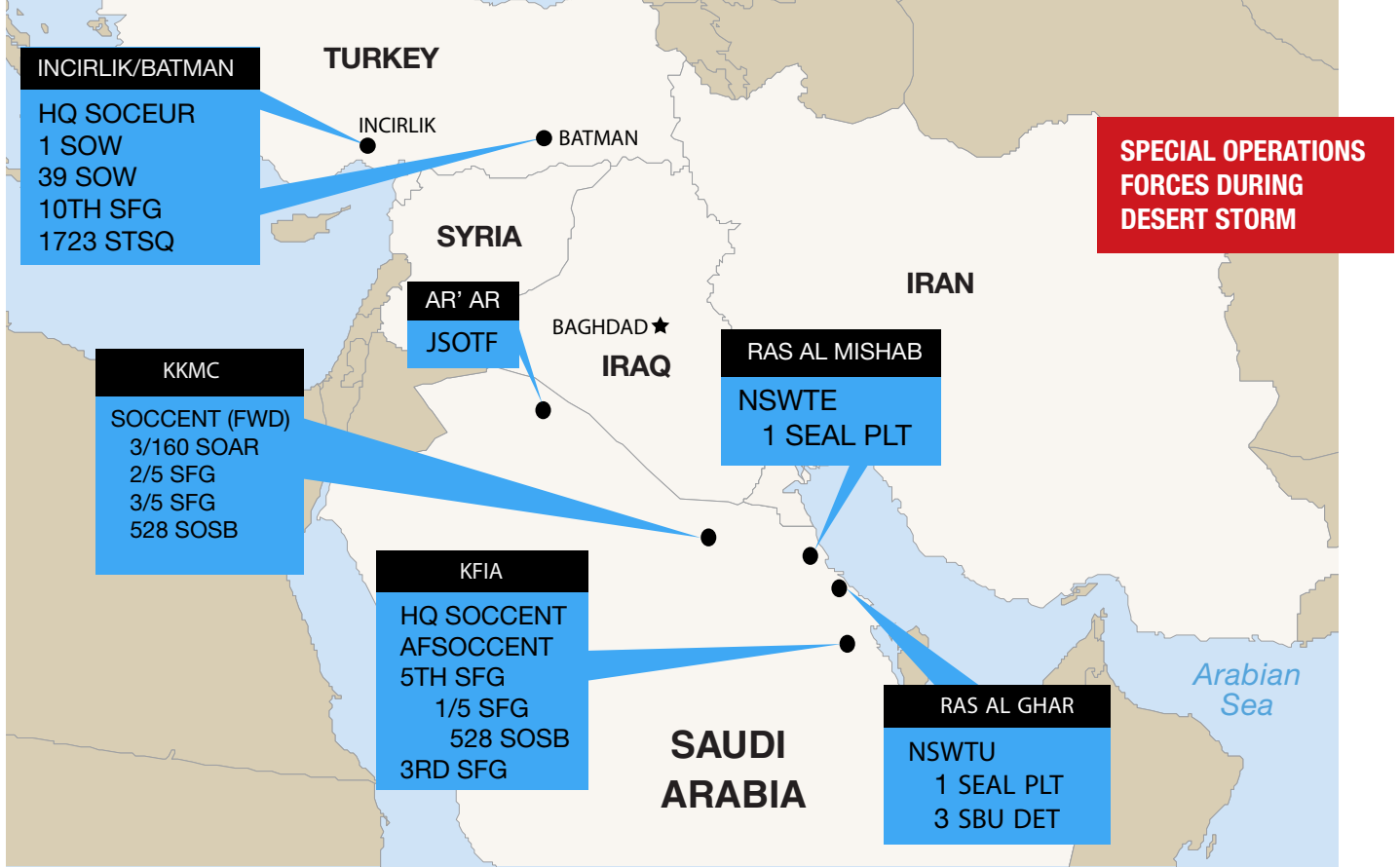


(Images credit: NARA)

589,000 gallons of Jet A-1 fuel, 57,997 gallons of diesel, and 125,551 gallons of MOGAS. It drew and issued 303.39 short tons of ammunition. It filled 20,601 of the 23,765 requisitions it received (86.69 percent). It transhipped 7,584 short tons via ground, and 2,070 short tons via air. Its drivers transported 14,416 personnel,

In January 1991, coalition forces began repositioning westward, in preparation for the ground offensive against Iraq. GEN Schwarzkopf's strategy called for a "left hook" that would catch the Iraqis off guard, allowing for a swifter victory.





(Image credit: NARA)



Retreating Iraqi troops set fire to Kuwaiti oil wells, severely limiting visibility and causing it to literally rain oil.

(Image credit: Jeremy Sellers)



A 528th SOSB soldier snapped this photo on his way to Kuwait City.

driving a total of 275,340 miles. At KKMC, its Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group directed 198 total cargo aircraft, most of which were C-130s (145) travelling intra-theater.⁷³ Its mechanics received 272 jobs, completing 263 (97 percent).⁷⁴

Conclusion

The numbers were certainly impressive, but the impact the 528th SOSB went beyond the numbers. It was in the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment, skill sets, and adaptability to fill the CSS gap for ARSOF. COL Donald W. Betts, Chief of Logistics (J-4), SOCCENT, during the war, wrote in a U.S. Army War College paper, “Without [the 528th’s] expertise and responsive support, ARSOF would not have been able to accomplish their missions.”⁷⁵ COL Jesse Johnson was even more succinct: “We would have been in dire straits without them.”⁷⁶

This sentiment was shared by members of the 528th. CPT Mark Olinger, Support Operations Officer, referred to Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM as a “high-water mark for the battalion,” adding, “had we not been there, it would have been an entirely different picture for the ARSOTF and other SOF we supported.”⁷⁷ SGT Stephen Anderson, who served as NCOIC for ROWPU operations before advancing into Kuwait City with MAJ Walker’s FAST, expressed great pride in the unit’s accomplishments. “[We] did a fantastic job.”⁷⁸

Following the war, the Army awarded the 528th SOSB




His ROWPU mission complete, SGT Anderson joined MAJ Hal Walker's FAST for the push into Kuwait. He is seen here near the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City.

the Valorous Unit Award, with streamer embroidered IRAQ-KUWAIT 1991. The 528th also earned campaign credit for both the Defense of Saudi Arabia and Liberation and Defense of Kuwait.⁷⁹ More importantly, its contributions to Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM reinforced the value of a dedicated, rapidly deployable ARSOF CSS unit, settling the inactivation question.⁸⁰

While 528th was deployed to Saudi Arabia, USASOC completed the review of ARSOF CSS review, commissioned by GEN Lindsay in March 1990. Four months into DESERT SHIELD, it was clear that the 528th SOSB support was invaluable to ARSOF, but the battalion was stretched beyond its capacity.⁸¹ USASOC proposed quadrupling the battalion's size to 724 soldiers, judged sufficient to support major contingencies in two different theaters.⁸² Although later pared back to 400, it still represented 150 percent growth.⁸³

In the years immediately following DESERT STORM, the expanded 528th SOSB reorganized into a headquarters company and two robust multifunctional forward support companies (FSCs). It supported ARSOF "to the utmost" in the Balkans, Haiti, Africa, and elsewhere. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the

528th deployed in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. It was inactivated in 2005, as part of broad realignment of ARSOF CSS capabilities. Since 2008, its lineage lives on in the 528th Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations). 

Takeaways:

- 1** Though unplanned, 528th SOSB support to the ARSOTF and SOCCENT was critical to mission success during DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM.
- 2** The 528th was stretched extremely thin for the duration of the conflict, operating out of multiple locations, and supporting a wide array of SOF and conventional forces.
- 3** 528th SOSB contributions to Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama led the Army to postpone its activation, but its excellent performance in Operation DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM secured its existence for another fifteen years.

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Defense of Saudi Arabia Streamer

Endnotes

- Facsimile sent to John Partin, 13 May 1998, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) History and Research Office, MacDill Air Force Base (AFB), FL.
- Colonel (COL) Jesse L. Johnson, interview with John W. Partin, 30 April 1991, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL.
- Col. Douglas Brazil (USAF) interview with John W. Partin, 7 March 1991, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL, hereafter Brazil interview, 7 March 1991.
- Works consulted for this article include** Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993); Kevin M. Woods, *The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein's Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008); H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Linda Grey Bantam Books, 1992); U.S. Army Center of Military History, *War in the Persian Gulf: Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, August 1990 – March 1991* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army, 2010); Robert H. Scales, Jr., et al., *Certain Victory* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1993); Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus, eds., *The Whirlwind War: The United States Army in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1995).
- Unpublished histories consulted include** USASOC History Office, "Army Special Operations in Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM (DRAFT)," undated, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, 104-105; USASOC Directorate of History and Museums, "A Short History of Special Operations Support," undated, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL, 46-50; Richard W. Stewart, "Appendix J: Special Operations Forces," in U.S. Department of Defense, "Final Report to Congress: Conduct of the Persian Gulf War," April 1992, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL, J-18 – J-19; Richard W. Stewart, Stanley L. Sandler, and Joseph R. Fischer, *Command History of the United States Army Special Operations Command: 1987-1992: Standing Up the MACOM* (Fort Bragg, NC: USASOC Directorate of History and Museums, 1996), 77-83.
- The notable exception is the account provided in Chapter Three of an undated and uncredited manuscript entitled "SOSCOM History Book," dating to 2003-2004. It provides a brief, but descriptive, narrative account of the 528th in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, incorporating interviews with junior officers, non-commissioned officers, and other enlisted soldiers. It is quoted herein, but only after the excerpts cited were independently verified.**
- John W. Partin, "Special Operations Forces in Operations EARNEST WILL and PRIME CHANCE," April 1988, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL; COL (Ret.) Mark A. Olinger, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 13 May 2020, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Department of the Army, U.S. Army Forces Command, "Permanent Orders 79-6," 11 May 1989, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. **The reasons for the inactivation decision are not clear, but competing proposals for how to best sustain ARSOF, under consideration at the time, depended on harvesting the 528th's 163 billets.**
- For more on the 528th SOSB in Operation JUST CAUSE, see** Christopher E. Howard, "Proving the Concept: the 528th Support Battalion in Panama," *Veritas: Journal of U.S. Army Special Operations History* 15:1 (2019): 52-58.
- General Robert W. Riscassi, Memorandum for Commander-in-Chief, Special Operations Command, "SUBJECT: Recent Decisions Concerning Special Operations Force Structure," 12 March 1990, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Howard, "Proving the Concept," 53-54. **This role was expanded after JUST CAUSE started, due to identified shortfall in ARSOF CSS.**
- USCENTCOM was in the process of revising its primary contingency plan in the summer of 1990.**
- COL Donald W. Betts, "U.S. Army War College Paper: Logistical Support of Special Operations Forces During Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM," Carlisle Barracks, PA (1992), 3, on internet at https://archive.org/details/DTIC_ADA251754, hereafter Betts, page number.
- Betts, 8. **This was consistent with FM 31-20, Doctrine for Special Operations, 20 April 1990. ARSOF was considered an Echelon Above Corps force, for sustainment purposes.**
- Betts, 8. **Compounding the problem was that USSOCCENT headquarters relied on U.S. Air Force Central Command (USCENTAF) to meet its logistical requirements, but that organization's logistics capacity was stretched thin by the rapid USAF build-up in Saudi Arabia, during the initial stage of DESERT SHIELD.**
- COL Jesse L. Johnson, interview with John W. Partin, 3 May 1991, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL, hereafter Johnson interview, 3 May 1991.
- Brazil interview, 7 March 1991. **SOCCENT-Forward initially went to Riyadh, the Saudi capital, but relocated to King Fahd International Airport (KFIA) a few days later, due to overcrowding.**
- Betts, 28-29; Johnson interview, 3 May 1991.
- "528th SOSB, 1991 Annual History Report," copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter 528th SOSB AHR, 1991. **1st SOCOM was then in the process of standing down, as the U.S. Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) prepared for a November 1990 activation.**
- LTC (Ret.) Robert T. Davis, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 3 March 2021, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Davis interview, 3 March 2021.
- COL (Ret.) Mark A. Olinger email to Christopher E. Howard, "SUBJECT: Re: 528th in DS/DS," 20 October 2020, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. **Other key leaders were Company A (Supply) Commander: CPT Rodney O. Griffin; Company B (Maintenance) Commander: CPT Desmond Keyes; Company C (Transportation) Commander: 1LT Kyle Fugate.**
- COL (Ret.) Mark A. Olinger, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 17 June 2020, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Olinger interview, 17 June 2020.
- Davis interview, 3 March 2021.
- Davis interview, 3 March 2021; Mark A. Olinger email to Christopher E. Howard, "SUBJECT: Re: 528th in DS/DS Draft," 15 April 2021, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. **According to Olinger, "Although under construction, KFIA offered many advantages over an undeveloped desert location. Water, although non potable; was available, as was access to international telephone lines for C2 and SARSS use; runways could be used by both military and commercial aircraft; and the terminal uncompleted infrastructure could be used for C2, supply points, and billeting."**
- "528th Support Battalion Lessons Learned – OPERATION DESERT SHIELD," undated, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter 528th SOSB Lessons Learned, DESERT SHIELD.
- Olinger interview, 17 June 2020.
- Davis interview, 3 March 2021. **Davis recalls a massive explosion at KFIA that sent everyone scrambling for cover. At first, it was assumed to be an enemy missile attack, but was later determined to be the result of an accident.**
- "Conduct of the Persian Gulf War," 81-82; Davis interview, 3 March 2021.
- Davis interview, 3 March 2021. **LTC Gebhard had Davis, his S-3, track the arrival of conventional forces in theater.**
- 528th SOSB Lessons Learned, DESERT SHIELD. **The lack of a Pre-deployment Site Survey (PDSS), noted in a post-war lesson learned, was a minor inconvenience, given that the 528th arrived in theater ahead of many of the ARSOF units it was to support, which continued to arrive throughout September.**
- Olinger email, 15 April 2021. **LTC Gebhard held battalion formations each Friday morning to update the soldiers on the status of the deployment, recognize soldier accomplishments, and share significant events.**
- COMSOCCENT Message 160910ZSEP90, "SUBJECT: SOCCENT Logistics Architecture," copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 528th SOSB AHR, 1991; Mark A. Olinger email to Christopher E. Howard, "SUBJECT: Strength of elements," 9 February 2021, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. **528th SOSB troop strength at various locations broken down, by phase of operation: Phase I (SEP to late DEC 90): 128-138 soldiers at KFIA (main body); 25-40 at KKMC (FAST)
Phase II: (Late DEC 90 to late FEB 91): 50-60 at KFIA (FAST); 140 to 150 at KKMC (main body)
Phase III (Late FEB to MAR 91): 50-60 at KFIA (FAST); 100 to 120 at KKMC (main body); 30-40 at KCIA (FAST)**
- 528th SOSB AHR, 1991; Olinger interview, 17 June 2020. **Sundry packs**

- consisted of personal items, such as toiletries, tobacco, and chewing gum.
- 35 528th SOSB AHR, 1991; Olinger interview, 17 June 2020. The 101st Airborne Division had already established a fuel point at KFIA, meaning that the 528th was not asked to provide Class III support.
 - 36 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020.
 - 37 528th SOSB AHR, 1991.
 - 38 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020.
 - 39 Davis interview, 3 March 2021.
 - 40 Davis interview, 3 March 2021.
 - 41 Brazil interview, 7 March 1991. Brazil added that the 528th enabled them to get needed supplies through Army channels (ARCENT), which could then be billed to the Air Force, which bore ultimate responsibility for sustaining HQ, USSOCENT.
 - 42 "SOCCENT Commander's Logistics Assessment," 13 September 1990, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
 - 43 LTC (P) Jimmie F. Holt, USASOC Summary Sheet, "SUBJECT: Operation DESERT SHIELD," 21 September 1990, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
 - 44 Davis interview, 3 March 2021; Olinger email, 15 April 2021. The food initially arrived via prepositioned shipborne stocks, and the water came from a potable water fill point. 1st COSCOM ran the supply points until Theater Army assets were in place (circa November 1990).
 - 45 SOSB Lessons Learned, DESERT SHIELD. The battalion also took five 2 ½-ton M35A2C cargo trucks, but judged the 5-ton M923A2 superior, in most respects. Members of the 528th's Transportation Company agreed with this assessment.
 - 46 SSG Keller, interview with CPT Robert T. Young, 25 June 1991, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Keller interview, 25 June 1991. Drivers (MOS 88M) were escorted at first, until they knew the routes, after which they were on their own.
 - 47 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020. This augmentation pushed the peak deployed strength of the 528th SOSB to 214.
 - 48 1SG Rene Kelly, interview with CPT Robert T. Young, 25 June 1991, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Kelly interview, 25 June 1991. The combination of weather and sand broke down lubricants, increased tire wear, and led to frequent blowouts.
 - 49 Davis interview, 3 March 2021. Davis, who had commanded the Maintenance Company prior to becoming S-3, remembers the Naval Special Warfare element being particularly hard on vehicles.
 - 50 Keller interview, 25 June 1991; Stewart, "Appendix J: Special Operations Forces," J-18. The shortage of repair parts during the first two months of DESERT SHIELD, was partially due to the resulting from the lack of Authorized Stockage Lists (ASLs) for supported units. Fortunately, the 1st Corps Support Command (COSCOM) and the 101st Airborne Division Support Command (DISCOM) were able to provide assistance.
 - 51 3/160th SOAR, commanded by LTC Dell L. Dailey, formed the core of Task Force (TF) 3/160. Elements of 2/160th SOAR rounded out the TF.
 - 52 Kelly interview, 25 June 1991. Other 528th soldiers agreed that the facilities at KKMC were superb, and considerably better than those at KFIA.
 - 53 Mark A. Olinger email to Christopher E. Howard, "SUBJECT: RE: Need Input," 7 April 2021, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Olinger email, 7 April 2021; "SOSCOM History Book," undated, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, 33, hereafter "SOSCOM History Book," page number. "When it was necessary to push up a berm around an aviation refueling location, the construction had to be requested on a work order and the work had to be done by Saudi workers. It took at least three weeks to get the berms constructed."
 - 54 528th SOSB AHR, 1991.
 - 55 "After Action Report: Unilateral FARP Training," undated, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
 - 56 528th SOSB Lessons Learned, DESERT SHIELD. The 528th SOSB Table of Organization & Equipment did not include water purification specialists (MOS 77W), and those assigned the mission received only minimal on-the-job training from 77Ws, prior to deployment.
 - 57 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020. 1LT Sheffler was the Executive Officer, Headquarters Company.
 - 58 Stephen R. Anderson, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 14 January 2020, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
 - 59 Stephen R. Anderson, interview with Christopher E. Howard, 5 May 2020, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Anderson interview 5 May 2020.
 - 60 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020.
 - 61 United Nations Security Council Resolution 678, 29 November 1990, on internet at <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/678>.
 - 62 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020; 528th SOSB AHR, 1991.
 - 63 528th SOSB AHR, 1991. The 112th Signal Battalion arrived in early February 1991. Additionally, the 528th supported USSOCOM Deployment Cell, ARCENT Jump TOC, 5th SFOB Jump TOC from KKMC.
 - 64 528th SOSB AHR, 1991.
 - 65 "SOSCOM History Book," 34. XVIII Airborne Corps was positioning itself for the planned left hook around the Iraqi defenses, which required relocating from Dhahran, on the Persian Gulf, to Rahfa, in western Saudi Arabia.
 - 66 "SOSCOM History Book," 34; Olinger email, 7 April 2021. According to Olinger, "We sustained this for about 3 to 4 days...until the late afternoon of 16 January, when the FARP was essentially down to a few thousand gallons [with] no resupply from theater army. LTC Gebhard and I talked with LTC [Dell] Daily [Commander, 3rd BN, 160th SOAR] and his S-3 Andrew Milani, about the potential impact [and] set an immediate safety level."
 - 67 528th SOSB AHR, 1991. This included 4th Battalion, 17th Cavalry Squadron, 1st Battalion, 3rd SFG, and 3rd SFOB.
 - 68 528th SOSB AHR, 1991.
 - 69 528th SOSB AHR, 1991; Olinger interview, 17 June 2020. 528th operations were not significantly impacted by the initiation of the air war phase of Operation DESERT STORM, which lasted from 16 January through 23 February 1991.
 - 70 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020. MAJ Walker, an Army Aviator with a logistics background, had replaced MAJ Heyward as battalion XO in November.
 - 71 528th SOSB AHR, 1991. These units included: 5th SFOB, 1-5th SFG (FOB 51), 2-5th SFG (FOB 52), 3-5th SFG (FOB 53), 3rd SFOB, and 1-3rd SFG (FOB 31). The FAST also supported 4/17th Cavalry Squadron, U.S. Embassy, SOCCENT Jump Tactical Operations Center (TOC), and Marine Corps Forces Central Command (MARCENT).
 - 72 528th SOSB AHR, 1991; Olinger interview, 17 June 2020. The ammunition, which included over 100,000 rounds of 5.56mm ball, link, and tracer ammo, came from a prepositioned stock of 70 short tons, located in a MARCENT service support area.
 - 73 "SOSCOM History Book," 34; Olinger email, 7 April 2021. The 528th transferred A/DCG mission to a theater army unit in late November/early December, as the theater expanded to receive the VII Corps and supporting elements.
 - 74 528th SOSB AHR, 1991.
 - 75 Betts, 30-31. Betts noted elsewhere, "Army problems were minimized due to the presence and outstanding support provided by the 528th Support Battalion." (JULLS Number 51536-21957, submitted by SOCJ4, LTC Betts, Title: "SOF Logistics Training," 5 June 1991.)
 - 76 COL Jesse L. Johnson, interview with John W. Partin, 29 April 1991, USSOCOM History and Research Office, MacDill AFB, FL, hereafter Johnson interview, 29 April 1991. In a subsequent interview, dated 3 May 1991 (cited above), Johnson explained, "There was no Army element to support [the ARSOTF]...[the 5th SOS] did not come into existence until October, and then it was very small. The Navy had no such element. What saved me, obviously, was the 528th Special Operations Support Battalion."
 - 77 Olinger interview, 17 June 2020.
 - 78 Anderson interview, 14 January 2020.
 - 79 Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), General Order 7, 2 April 1993, on internet at https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/go9307.pdf; HQDA, General Order 14, 25 June 1993, on internet at https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/go9314.pdf.
 - 80 "Army Special Operations Forces Combat Service Support Review," 17 December 1990, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter ARSOF CSS Review. The study validated the need for larger SOSB, based in part on the 528th's contributions to Operation JUST CAUSE and DESERT

SHIELD, which was still underway when the study concluded.

- 81 Betts, 30; 528th Lessons Learned, DESERT SHIELD; "5th Special Operations Support Command (SOSC) After Action Report," 23 May 1991, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter 5th SOSC AAR. The 528th had required individual augmentation to perform its transportation mission, and was only able to support 3rd SFG, which was not part of the ARSOTF, to a limited degree.
- 82 ARSOF CSS Review; Johnson interview, 29 April 1991; Johnson interview, 3 May 1991. COL Johnson proposed expanding the 528th to brigade size, with a battalion supporting each theater.
- 83 Additional lessons learned noted other deficiencies across the doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) spectrum. Support doctrine for ARSOF was not clearly defined or understood. Battalion S-4s and support company commanders

throughout USASOC lacked sufficient logistics training. The 528th did not have the qualified personnel and resources for some of the missions assigned to it (water purification and graves registration, in particular). State-of-the-art refueling equipment was needed, in order to better support Special Operations Aviation. The lack of an ARSOF-specific Materiel Management Center was also noted, as was the lack of demand history for USASOC units not stationed at Fort Bragg. There was clearly room for improvement, and these hard-learned lessons were not neglected. See: 528th SOSB Lessons Learned, DESERT SHIELD; 5th SOSC AAR; LTC Dell L. Dailey, Memorandum For Commander, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, "SUBJECT: After Action Report, Operation Desert Storm," 8 May 1991, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.

(Image credit: Stephan R. Anderson)





THE 75TH RANGER REGIMENT DISTINCTIVE UNIT INSIGNIA

by Troy J. Sacquety

Sergeant First Class Christopher A. Celiz was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for actions while serving with 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment in Afghanistan. He wears the 75th Ranger Regiment DUI on his beret.

Military insignia serve as both unit identifiers and sources of inspiration for those who wear them. They also connect present-day units to their historical predecessors. While insignia may be instantly recognizable, the symbols they contain often require explanation. The description that follows provides historical context for the current U.S. Army 75th Ranger Regiment Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI). The Ranger Regiment has roots to multiple World War II units, but the story of the DUI itself starts in the Burma campaign.

A British colony, Burma was invaded by the Japanese in early 1942. In order to take back its former territory and to secure India from threat of invasion, the British attempted a number of military operations. The most daring of these was infiltrating a long-range penetration group, known as the Chindits, into Japanese-controlled Burma. Led by Brigadier General Orde Wingate, in February 1943, 3,000 Chindits entered north Burma and succeeded in causing limited damage to the Jap-

anese, but at great cost in personnel casualties.¹ The Chindits, however, secured a propaganda victory by showing that allied units could operate successfully behind enemy lines. This led the U.S. Army to create its own long range penetration group, the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), otherwise known as Merrill's Marauders.

In February 1944, the Marauders began their own campaign in Burma. They were pivotal in seizing the airfield at Myitkyina, in north Burma, and after three months of siege, the city itself. However, that campaign rendered the unit combat ineffective. Because the 5307th was no longer capable of operations, on 10 August 1944, remaining Marauders—along with their unit lineage—were consolidated into the 475th Infantry Regiment (Long Range Penetration, Special), part of the 5332nd Brigade (Provisional), better known as the MARS Task Force. The MARS Task Force was the second U.S. Army long range penetration unit formed for service in Burma in WWII. It was instrumental in seizing the remainder of the Burma Road from Japanese control, opening up a land route to China, and securing north Burma. The 475th, as well as the other component units in the MARS Task Force, were disbanded in China on 1 July 1945.² For nearly a decade, the two U.S. Army long range penetration groups seemingly were just a memory.

That changed on 20 November 1954, with the activation of the 75th Infantry Regiment on Okinawa. The 75th Infantry Regiment in the mid-1950s was not considered a 'Ranger' unit and at the time had no formal ties to the six WWII Ranger Battalions. However, the 75th drew its lineage directly from Merrill's Marauders and the 475th Infantry Regiment. This heritage was reflected on the 75th's DUI, the description of which reads:

DUI for the 75th Infantry Regiment.



“Blue is the color for Infantry. The two elephant tusks are used to represent Burma, and in forming and arch supporting the Indian Star allude to Burma being the eastern ‘Gateway to India.’ The red stripe leading through the gateway signifies the defense of India and central Burma, the areas in which the regiment was engaged. The two crossed kukris (Gurkha knives) barring the gateway are used to represent the regiment’s two battle honors for service during World War II, and also symbolized the nature of jungle combat. The tusks and kukris taken together simulate the letter ‘M’ and refer to ‘Merrill’s Marauders,’ its famed World War II designation.”³

The 75th had only a short existence before being inactivated on 21 March 1956.⁴ The lineage to the Marauders and the 475th again went dormant.

On 1 January 1969, the 75th Infantry Regiment was reorganized to become the “parent organization” for all Department of the Army-authorized long range patrol units, under the Combat Arms Regimental System.⁵ The 75th retained its lineage to the Marauders and the 475th, but the unit was also granted an exception to policy that allowed it to adopt another DUI. For its DUI, the 75th chose to adapt the shoulder patch of the Marauders, which had also been worn by the 475th and the rest of the MARS Task Force. While never officially authorized, this patch was widely worn in Burma during WWII and symbolized those units. The DUI description reads:

“The colors blue, white, red and green represent four of the original six combat teams of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), commonly referred to as Merrill’s Marauders, which were identified by color. To avoid confusion, the other two colors, khaki and orange, were not represented in the design; however, khaki was represented by the color of the uniform worn by US forces in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II. The unit’s close cooperation with the Chinese forces in the China-Burma-India Theater is represented by the sun symbol from the Chinese flag. The white star represents the Star of Burma, the country in which the Marauders campaigned during World War II. The lightning bolt is symbolic of the strike characteristics of the Marauders’ behind-the-line activities.”⁶



MARS Task Force patch



Merrill's Marauders patch

On 3 February 1986, the 75th Infantry Regiment was redesignated as the 75th Ranger Regiment. The redesignation led to the Rangers, after a long struggle, claiming official lineage to the WWII Ranger Battalions, which had previously been assigned to U.S. Army Special Forces.⁷ The Rangers were later able to show this additional World War II heritage in the form of their Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI), the adoption of which is another story. However, the 75th Ranger Regiment retained the same DUI that had been approved for wear on 18 March 1969, thereby honoring the contributions of the Marauders, the 475th Infantry, and the MARS Task Force to Ranger history and legacy. 🔥

Endnotes

- 1 This first Chindit expedition was Operation LONGCLOTH. A second Chindit expedition, Operation THURSDAY, entered Burma in early 1944.
- 2 For more on the MARS Task Force, see Troy J. Sacquety, “Over the Hills and Far Away: The MARS Task Force, the Ultimate Model for Long Range Penetration Warfare,” on internet at https://arsoc-history.org/articles/v5n4_over_the_hills_page_1.html.
- 3 Arthur E. Dubois, Chief Heraldic Branch Research and Development Division, to Commanding Officer, 75th Infantry Regiment, “Coat of Arms and Distinctive Insignia for the 75th Infantry Regiment,” 27 July 1954, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. The unit motto was “Attack, Destroy, Defend.”
- 4 Department of the Army Lineage and Honors, 75th Ranger Regiment, on internet at <https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/lineages/branches/inf/0075ra.htm>.
- 5 John H. Maddox to Commanding Officer, The Institute of Heraldry, “Parent Organization for all DA Authorized Long Range Patrol (LRP) Units,” 10 January 1969, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 G.W. Dundas, “Distinctive Insignia for the 75th Infantry,” 18 March 1969, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC; Maddox to Commanding Officer, The Institute of Heraldry, “Parent Organization for all DA Authorized Long Range Patrol (LRP) Units,” 11 March 1969, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. Company sized LRP units were serving at the divisional and brigade level. Concurrently with the adoption of the DUI, the 75th changed its motto to *Sua Sponte* (Of their own accord) because the old motto of “Attack, Destroy, Defend” reflected a traditional infantry mission, not the current LRP role.
- 7 Gerald T. Luchino, TIOH, to Commander, 75th Ranger Regiment, “SUBJECT: Distinctive Unit Insignia for the 75th Ranger Regiment,” 10 October 1990, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC; John A. Wickham, Jr., Headquarters, Department of the Army, General Orders No. 7, “75th Ranger Regiment,” 14 February 1986, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.