



THE MULESKINNER

"No Task Too Large"



1 Oct 07
Issue 2

Muleskinners Benefit From Strong Leadership and Experience

- LTC David Lowe

Most people agree that strong leadership, experience, and competent personnel are keys to any successful organization. That formula has proven itself time and again in both civilian and military work environments. In the military, these qualities are essential for a unit to be both effective in accomplishing its mission and enjoyable to work in – especially in combat. Rest assured the 35th Engineer Brigade brings a wealth of experience, leadership, and top-notch personnel to the fight in Iraq.

The Muleskinners have two separate chains of command. The brigade is commanded by a team consisting of its Commander, Brigadier General (BG) Michael Pace; Command Sergeant Major (CSM), Ray Harding; Deputy Brigade Commander, Colonel (COL) Mitch Passini; and Executive Officer (XO), Lieutenant Colonel, John Akers. Headquarters Company is commanded by the team of First Lieutenant (1LT) Maureen Wells and First Sergeant (1SG) Patrick Stephens.

BG Michael Pace who is from West Plains began his military career 40 years ago as an enlisted engineer. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant, Military Policeman, in September 1974, by the Missouri National Guard Officer Candidate School. He has held multiple battalion, brigade, and state-level staff positions in the Missouri Army National Guard. He has held command leadership positions of increasing responsibility from squad leader through command of the 20th Aviation Brigade and the Joint Force Land Component Commander. BG Pace has been the Muleskinners' Commander

since February 2005.

When asked about the opportunity to lead the Muleskinners into combat and the challenges that lie ahead BG Pace stated, "The deployment process has been a long process with being at Fort McCoy most of the summer. Since coming into our area of operations in Baghdad, the mission has changed with many new challenges and our Soldiers have risen to the challenge and are performing magnificently. The greatest challenge in a combat zone is always the safety and security of our Soldiers. Our Soldiers have been properly trained - they know their mission and have come here ready to perform their mission... As far as the brigade and our subordinate battalions, everything is on track and going according to plan. I am very pleased thus far."

On the significance of our efforts in Iraq, BG Pace said, "Before we left Fort Leonard Wood, I talked to the Soldiers about being a part of history. I think many of them didn't understand what I said when we left the armory on the 10th day of June. I think many of them now understand what I said and I believe we truly are a part of history. We see good things happening in Iraq in just the short time we have been here. I don't advocate leaving right away because I don't believe the Iraqi Army is quite ready to fully assume authority. I would ask that people continue to support our Soldiers regardless of what you think of the war and do everything you can on the home front to encourage the Soldiers. Your Soldiers are doing a grand job!"

CSM Ray Harding who resides in St. Robert enlisted in the Missouri Army National Guard in 1972 and has served for the past 35 years in both the Missouri and Kansas Army National Guard. He has served in a variety of command and leadership positions during his career to include instructor for Primary Leadership Development Non-Commissioned Officer Course, Basic and Advanced Non-Commissioned Officer Courses, Commandant of the 140th Regional Training Institute, and 35th Engineer Brigade Command Sergeant Major since 2005.



“After arriving in Iraq, our Soldiers immediately began to settle in to their duties and responsibilities,” said CSM Harding. Soldier issues and basic Soldier care will not change or go away due to our deployment. My primary responsibility is to ensure the Soldier’s needs are addressed. Our scope of responsibility extends beyond the Muleskinners to our two subordinate battalions who have very difficult missions. For those battalions to accomplish their missions, we, as their higher command, must work closely with their command and Soldiers.”

COL Mitch Passini who resides in Rolla is the Mulekinners’ Deputy Brigade Commander. He recently returned from a deployment to Iraq where he served as the Commander of the 110th Engineer Battalion headquartered in Kansas City from April 2005 to November 2006. COL Passini has served almost 29 years in the U.S. Army -- 21 of which have been on active duty. He has served in a variety of command and staff positions to include Company Commander of an Infantry Company, Engineer Battalion Operations Officer, Executive Officer, and Battalion Commander. With the exception of his first deployment to Iraq, COL Passini has served as the full-time Administrative Officer for the 35th Engineer Brigade on Fort Leonard Wood since January 2003.

When asked his thoughts on this assignment and the Muleskinners’ ability to accomplish their mission, COL Passini replied, “I have the easiest job here. Our staff is so knowledgeable in their respective areas and all of them have a wealth of experience, to include most of them previously deploying to Iraq.

All I have to do is ensure the staff remains integrated and that the lines of communication remain open in all directions. I can see the improvements that have been made over here in Baghdad as well as throughout Iraq since we left last November. I think we are very close to going over the top and maintaining the momentum we now have.”

The Muleskinners’ Executive Officer, LTC John Akers, has served in the U.S. Army for the past 28 years. His experience includes both Command and Staff positions ranging from Company Commander, Battalion Operations Officer, Battalion Commander, and currently as the Brigade Executive Officer since August 2005. As the Commander of the 1140th Engineer Battalion headquartered in Cape Girardeau, he previously deployed from January 2004 to March 2005 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“There are many changes that have taken place since my last deployment in 2004,” said LTC Akers. Some things have improved such as working with the local populace, Iraqi Police, and Iraqi Army Forces. I just want our forces to finish our mission here as quickly as possible and the Iraqi people to have a secure environment in which a democracy can take hold. Let’s do it right this time so our children are not left with the task. I have a son and a daughter and I want them to live in a world without the constant threat of terrorism.”

The Muleskinners realize that strong leadership and experience makes a tremendous difference in the world we now live in. Each Soldier is doing their part by working hard to incorporate the training they have received before arriving in Iraq to ensure the Muleskinners’ success. It’s no coincidence that with these essential ingredients in place, the 35th Engineer Brigade is off to a great start in carrying out its mission. We all genuinely appreciate the continued prayers and support of our friends and family back home as we help the Iraqis rebuild a country where the people have freedoms and the ability to govern themselves.

“I think we are very close to going over the top and maintaining the momentum we now have.” – COL Passini

Headquarters Company: A Unique Leadership Challenge

- CPT Kelly Parker

Quite different than the normal Army Company, a Headquarters Company within a Brigade Headquarters presents leaders with some unusual and oftentimes awkward leadership challenges. That is what Commander, First Lieutenant (1LT) Maureen Wells, and First Sergeant (1SG) Patrick Stephens faced when they took charge of HHC, 35th Engineer Brigade.

1LT Wells, of St. Robert, took command of the HHC on August 1, 2007. She has eight years of military experience, has served one previous tour of duty in Iraq as a Platoon Leader for a Bridge Company, and when not deployed serves on a full-time basis as the Assistant S-3 for the 35th Engineer Brigade.

1SG Stephens, or Kyle as he is known in his home town of Bunker, has been the First Sergeant for the HHC since August of 2002. He has nearly twenty-six years of military experience and has served one previous tour of duty in Iraq as a construction representative for the Army Corps of Engineers. When not deployed, he works as a training analyst for a contractor out of Herndon, Virginia, specializing in weapons of mass destruction and homeland security.

Technically, these two leaders are in charge of the Headquarters Company of the 35th Engineer Brigade which is a part of the Brigade Headquarters. To make matters more confusing, the soldiers in the Brigade Headquarters are also members of the Headquarters Company.

As the Headquarters Company leadership, they are responsible for soldiers ranging in rank from Private First Class all the way up to Brigadier General. While technically the Commander and First Sergeant control the Headquarters Company, having one third of their Company that outranks them puts them in an unenviable and awkward position.

The mission of the Headquarters Company is “to support the Brigade Staff,” said 1LT Wells. “We are in the business of life sustainment which is lodging, food, all the beans and bullets type things...”

According to 1LT Wells, her role as the Commander is “to manage the Company.” She went on to add, “We are more like a support platoon in a regular line company.”

1SG Stephens says his role as the First Sergeant is “to take care of the highest ranking individual to the lowest ranking individual. In this case it’s from a Brigadier General to a Private First Class.”

Both leaders have encountered challenges as they have moved their Company forward to Iraq. “My biggest challenge has been to understand the dynamics of the Brigade makeup, and determining where mine and the 1SGs lanes of authority are” said 1LT Wells.

“I have to be very political on how I deal with one-third of the Company because they outrank me,” 1SG Stephens said. “I only have positive control over 11 people...and that includes me and 1LT Wells. I have to request through other people to get soldiers when I need to get something done. It’s very delicate.”

Because of their competence, professionalism, and leadership skills, these leaders are working through and overcoming these challenges and are bridging the gap between the Company and Brigade missions. They have gained the trust and respect of the Brigade Section Leaders as well as the Brigade Command Group.

As 1LT Wells said, “Everyone has a common goal. We all should have the team concept attitude. And that will be my banner throughout this tour here—to ensure we have continuity and mission accomplishment.”

Although the HHC, 35th Engineer Brigade is only about one-third of the way through its deployment, 1SG Stephens commented, “I believe this is the roughest, most demanding, the most frustrating, but best experience I have had in my whole military career.”

The Brigade Command Group and leadership within the Brigade understand the unique challenges of commanding a Brigade Headquarters Company and thank these fine leaders for stepping forward to assume these unique challenges. We are proud to be on the same team.



“My biggest challenge has been to understand the dynamics of the Brigade makeup, and determining where mine and the 1SGs lanes of authority are” – 1LT Wells



Chaplain's Corner

~ Chaplain Gary Gilmore

"How extensive is my support system, and in what specific ways do they offer their support?"

Let's talk about your support system for your LDR (that's Long Distance Relationship, remember?! You're in one right now!). When people heard your family would be touched by this deployment they might have said something like, "Now, if there's anything you ever need-- anytime-- just give me a call!" It's a polite thing to say, and I think people actually have good intentions when they say it... but do you think you (1) would ever call on them to help you and (2) they would "be there" for you in a meaningful way? Probably not.

Yes, I know... there ARE people we can turn to for support, whether we need a word of encouragement or help starting the car! And thank the Lord for them! But right now I want you to ask and answer the question, "Exactly who are those people I can rely upon in a pinch? How extensive is my support system, and in what specific ways do they offer their support?"

Research has shown that there are four different types of support that we need-- and that others offer. The first is Emotional Support-- people who respect you and send the message, "I care about you" and make you feel good as a person. Hopefully you are a bit lacking in this category now, because it is your partner who was primarily giving you this type of support. Often family members and close friends know your personality and needs and give you this needed support in appropriate ways. Next is "Informational Support" that comes in handy when you're trying to solve a problem. The more you know about the situation you're in, the better choice you will make. Just use some common-sense! Don't ask your doctor why your car is making a funny noise, or your mechanic why your nose is congested! Both you and your car may have a cough, but the information you need to solve the problem will come from the right consultant! (This is where Military OneSource is so helpful! Call them 24/7 with a problem and they will

assist you in finding the right person to talk about the issue!) called "Appraisal" support and refers to people who give you feedback. Honest opinions about "how you're doing" and "what could be done better" are very meaningful to most of us. And this type of feedback is best when it is asked for and encouraging. Nobody expects to be told they're "perfect," but someone in your life saying, "I'm so proud of the way you're carrying on!" is a real encouragement!

Finally, there is "Instrumental Support." No, I'm not talking about playing the saxophone-- not that kind of instrument-- but somebody who is instrumental in solving the practical problem! Who will come and baby-sit the kids while you go the library for an hour of peace and quiet? Who wouldn't mind picking up a few things for you at the grocery store to save you a trip? Who could give you a ride to the doctor or the airport if you needed it? THAT kind of support!

So here's your homework: Divide a piece of paper into four quadrants (fold it in half twice-- works for me!) and write one of the four types of support (emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental/practical) in each square. Then start filling in names and what that person would do for you if they knew you had a need. Don't overlook groups in your life, such as a Sunday School Class or PTA or other moms at the Library's Story Hour! (This is why we have a Family Readiness Group! Get involved!) If you come up with one square that is pretty blank, think of who MIGHT help and HOW... and then ask them! The effort you make to "balance out" your support system will make life easier should you ever need to "activate" these resources. Even more, you'll be encouraged to actually see the support you have-- and it makes us soldiers feel better knowing you've got that network in place!

And on the back of that same paper write out some ways that YOU can support OTHER soldiers and families, too! Remember, the Guard is family-- we take care of each other!

Chaplain Gary

Source: Long Distance Relationships, by Dr. Gregory T. Guldner, pp. 48-49.



Chaplain LTC Gilmore

Muleskinner Musings



It was reported to the Muleskinner by a reliable source that Brigadier General Pace and Command Sergeant Major Harding had to walk to the Task Force Iron Claw Academy after CSM Harding allowed their vehicle to run out of fuel. BG Pace said to make matters worse, he had to push the vehicle out of the road. CSM Harding later reported, contrary to initial reports, that the vehicle had not run out of fuel but rather the fuel pump had gone out. CSM Harding was reportedly heard to say, "That's my story and I'm sticking to it."

11 Muleskinners Attend Task Force Iron Claw Academy

On September 24 - 26, BG Pace, CSM Harding, LTC Akers, LTC Lowe, SGM Porter, MAJ Mickan, MAJ Holland, CPT Parker, 2LT Hardwick, LCDR Smith, and SSG Walters attended Task Force Iron Claw Academy. Task Force Iron Claw Academy prepares soldiers for performing route clearance missions.



2LT Bill "Nobody calls me Lawrence" Hardwick finds a way to be useful during training at the Task Force Iron Claw Academy.

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"THE MULESKINNER" is a publication focused on the Soldiers of the 35th Engineer Brigade (a.k.a. Muleskinners) and its engineer mission while deployed to Iraq in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The purpose of this publication is to keep our loved ones and friends at home informed about the Muleskinners in a combat environment. THE MULESKINNER will be produced exclusively by Muleskinner Soldiers to ensure accurate reporting and authentic information.

THE MULESKINNER is organized and edited by the Muleskinner's Command Judge Advocate, LTC David Lowe, and his cohort in crime, fellow Judge Advocate, CPT Kelly Parker. Paralegal SGT Jake Boswell will lend his technical assistance by overseeing the layout and design. It is our genuine desire to provide timely, insightful, and entertaining information to our readers.

Baghdad Weather for the Week of 01 Oct 07

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hi: 100 Low: 77 | Hi: 101 Low: 75 | Hi: 101 Low: 71 | Hi: 101 Low: 71 | Hi: 99 Low: 71 | Hi: 97 Low: 70 | Hi: 94 Low: 69 |

Deployment Countdown

There are several ways to look at the time we have left here in Iraq, these are just a few of them.

| Weeks | Days | Hours | Minutes | Seconds |
|-------|--------|----------|------------|---------------|
| 35.47 | 248.30 | 5,959.29 | 357,557.33 | 21,453,439.86 |

Arabic Customs

Ever wonder why so many Arabs have the first name of "Abu?" Abu means "father of." It is common for Arab men to refer to themselves as Abu and then the name of their oldest son. For example, LTC Anthony Adrian has a son named Lukas – so he would be called "Abu Lukas." Women also adopt the name of their oldest sons and are known as "Omm (Mother of)" and the oldest son's name.

Announcements



Lukas Anthony Adrian was born at 1:28pm EDT on 22 Sep 07, in Erie, PA. He was a whopping 9 lbs, 4 oz, and 21" long. The proud new father said, "Other than a broken collarbone sustained during delivery, he's very healthy, alert, and doing well. His collarbone will heal on its own without complications. He doesn't seem to be too fussy or bothered by it and is spontaneously moving his arm which is a good sign; it should never be an issue for him."

CONGRATULATIONS LTC TONY and LESLIE ADRIAN!

35th Assumes Command!!

The 35th Engineer Brigade assumed command on September 13, 2007. This transfer of authority was between the 1169th Engineer Group from Huntsville, Alabama and the 35th Engineer Brigade. During the ceremony, the 35th Engineer Brigade unfurled its flag to symbolize the transfer of authority. There was excitement throughout the crowd which included many distinguished guests. The 1169th was excited to return home to their loved ones and the 35th was excited to begin its mission in Iraq.



"FREEDOM ISN'T FREE"