

THE GALLIVANTER

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"Orion, the Hunter!"

July 28, 2010



Infantry practice movement to contact

Troops learn in 'theater immersive' environment

By SPC. IAN BOUDREAU
27th IBCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Weather Forecast

Thursday, July 29



High: 76°

Low: 57°

Chance of rain: 20%

Friday, July 30



High: 72°

Low: 54°

Chance of rain: 10%

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The road followed a more or less straight line through a sun-drenched field and into the village, still probably about 500 meters away from the nine Soldiers walking cautiously toward it. They were spread out, two teams of four men each, plus a squad leader, walking roughly in a crooked line abreast with their rifles held near the ready.

As they drew closer to a stand of trees between them and the village, two turbaned men armed with AK-47s rose from behind a small berm, about 200 meters away from the squad. They dropped, flat against the ground, returning fire.

At the sound of a whistle from the squad leader, Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Coon, the squad's second team took to their feet and began a flanking maneuver to the right, while Coon and team one continued providing suppressive fire. Team two made their way into the trees,



Photo by SpC. Ian Boudreau

Infantrymen from the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment use cover from a smoke grenade to assault a building on a Fort Drum range Monday.

well to the right of the attackers.

Coon directed team one to redirect their fire to the left of their targets, and sounded another whistle blast, letting the second team know to begin their assault from the right flank. As team two approached the enemy position, the two attackers fled, making their way back to the village another few hundred yards away. Team two brought one man down, and when Coon and the rest of team one met up with them in the woods, it was time to decide how to pursue their second attacker into the village.

They'd do it all again within an hour. Coon's squad had used blanks this time around, but the next time through, the rounds would be live. He and the rest of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment (headquartered in Utica) were practicing squad movement to contact drills on a Fort Drum range as part of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's annual training exercises.

"It's the most basic battle drill," said Capt. Shawn Tabankin, the battalion's assistant plans and operations officer, who was running the range. "A squad is on patrol, reacting to enemy contact."

Tabankin explained that the Soldiers were given a realistic training mission: enter the village and attempt to link up with local leaders in order to determine ways the new Afghan government could provide help. In the training scenario, the squads are attacked on their way into the village (by pop-up targets), and one of the attackers flees into a building. Soldiers must determine how to enter the building and either capture or kill him.



Photo by SpC. Ian Boudreau

Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Coon, a sniper section leader with the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, opens the door to a courtyard for his assault team Monday.

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Origins of the 27th Brigade's shoulder patch

From an unsigned article in the *National Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1933

Astronomy furnished the inspiration for the distinctive shoulder patch insignia of the Twenty-seventh Division, American Expeditionary Forces, writes Herbert E. Smith in the *Army Recruiting News*. The division of New York National Guard men adopted Orion, the Seven Sisters of the Pleiades—as a

part of its finished design for a shoulder patch. The design was approved in 1918.

On a circled background of jet black appeared these seven stars in red, with the monogram NYD (New York Divi-



sion) likewise in red. The colors, black and red, also have special significance. The black stands for iron and the red for the blood.

Another interesting coincidence lies in this design. The Orion corresponds with the name O'Ryan, the 27th Division Commander Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, the general who took the New Yorkers over to Europe during World War One and brought them back. •

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If that sounds incredibly specific for training, it's because exercises are increasingly being tailored to precisely mirror real-world missions.

"We're trying to provide theater-immersive training," Tabankin said.

And it's not just the squads and platoons that are testing their skills in these scenarios. Tabankin said exercise also was a chance for company leaders to coordinate their efforts with leaders at the platoon and squad levels, making the drill a "multi-echelon" training event.

Adding live rounds to the mix heightens the experience immeasurably.

"It's the difference between a pilot using a simulator and actually going out and getting some air under his butt," Tabankin said.

"It's nice to actually get out and do this stuff in the field," said Coon, a sniper section leader and scout squad leader from Lee Center, N.Y. "It's something [Soldiers] need to do to get ready to deploy, if and when the 27th Brigade does deploy."

The 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry arrived at Fort Drum July 24 and will conduct training with the rest of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team through Aug. 7. •

The 27th's century of history

The New York National Guard was organized into what would later become the 27th Infantry Division in 1912. In June 1916 the New York division was sent to the Mexican border until March 1917. It was recalled in preparation for service in Europe.

Designated as the 27th Division, it was mobilized in July 1917, and by late June of the following year was in France. It engaged in heavy fighting during the Great Somme Push. After heavy losses, the 27th was placed in reserve for six days. Once back in action, it closed on the heels of the retiring Germans. The 27th, in conjunction with British forces and the 30th Division cracked the Hindenburg Line.

The 27th was again federalized in October 1940. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, elements of the division boarded ships for Hawaii in late February 1942. On November 20, 1943, the 27th captured the coral atoll of Makin. Elements of the 27th also occupied Majuro atoll on February 1, 1944 and assaulted Eniwetok on February 19th. In June 1944, the division landed on Saipan, and in April 1945 landed on Okinawa. It returned home in December 1945 as the longest serving

National Guard unit in World War II.

In February 1955 the 27th became the 27th Armored Division. In 1967, the 27th Division was deactivated and reformed as a brigade of the 50th Armored Division.

It became a separate "round-out" brigade to the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the Guard nationwide was reorganized and the 27th became one of 15 separate "enhanced" brigades.

In the summer of 2001, the 27th Brigade conducted an intense training rotation at the U.S. Army's Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, LA. Nearly 4,000 Soldiers participated in the largest single exercise for the New York National Guard since World War II. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 struck within weeks of the unit's

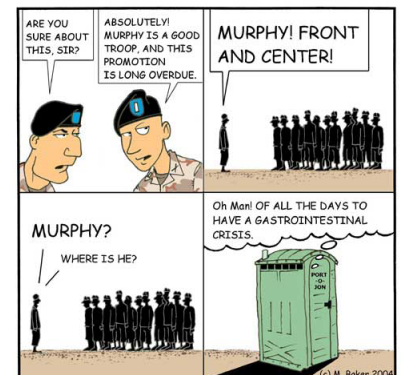
return home.

Following extensive state and federal active duty for homeland defense, subordinate units of the 27th deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003-2005. In 2006, following the return of most New York National Guard units from duty in Iraq, the New York Army National Guard was "re-set" and the 27th was reorganized as an Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

The 27th IBCT was mobilized in January 2008 for Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix VII, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The 27th IBCT transferred mission authority in December, 2008 and returned home to New York by early January, 2009.

The 27th IBCT continues to train and be ready for future missions both here at home and abroad. •

Private Murphy's Law



By Mark Baker

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