



22 October 2008
Camp Al Asad, Iraq

Families and Friends of 1st Reconnaissance Battalion,

Greetings from Camp Al Asad, Iraq. This is the first of many updates I plan on sending to you during our deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 08.2. As you all know, the battalion departed Camp Pendleton around 12:30 PM on the 14th of October. It was truly great to see all the families come out to 33 Area to wish us good luck – especially in light of the huge wildfires still burning aboard the base! My thanks to all the members of our Battalion Family Readiness Team that provided refreshments and last minute information services for everyone.

We next proceeded to March Air Reserve Base where we were processed for deployment and loaded on to a United Airlines 747 for our flight to Kuwait. After ten hours in the air, we arrived at Frankfurt-Hahn, GE, for a quick 2.5 hour layover to refuel and stretch our legs in the military passenger terminal. After re-boarding, we were airborne for just five hours, finally landing in Kuwait City at 8:30 PM on the 15th of October – a total of 17.5 hours of travel, after which I can testify that we were all glad to finally be on solid ground. Our next stop was Camp Virginia, a U.S. Army transient base for all troops headed into the Iraqi Theater of Operations (ITO). Luckily, upon arrival, all of Charlie Company, and two platoons of Bravo Company, were manifested almost immediately for a follow-on flight into Iraq. All in all, they only were on the ground in Kuwait for about ten hours, departing for Al Asad at 6:30 AM. The remainder of Bravo Company and all of Headquarters & Service Company had a little more time on our hands in the massive tent city at Camp Virginia, but we too were able to escape, departing for Al Asad at 3:30 AM on the 17th. After about two hours in the air, we landed here at our home for the next seven months, Camp Al Asad.

Over the course of the next two weeks we will be conducting a relief in place (RIP) with our brother reconnaissance Marines and Sailors from 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, who have done a tremendous job during their tour here in Al Anbar Province. During the RIP we will become familiar with our area of operations, conduct live fire ranges, airborne training, and draw our vehicles and equipment; basically, prepare for combat operations. In fact, today we conducted our first airborne evolution, a familiarization jump for some of our jumpmasters. Once the RIP is complete, we will conduct a “Transfer of Authority” or “TOA”, which means that 1st Reconnaissance Battalion has completed all the assigned RIP tasks and is ready to conduct combat operations – and the men of 3d Recon can begin their long trip home to Okinawa.

Camp Al Asad is new to us all, after so many previous tours operating out of Camp Fallujah. It is a former Iraqi air base, and is massive. Everyone here has access to good food in the dining facilities (DFACs), a big exchange/PX, gym, and even an internet café and coffee shop. It is amazing to see the infrastructure in place to improve the quality of life for everyone here. Most importantly, as you all have seen reported in the media, the security situation in Iraq, especially Al Anbar Province, has changed dramatically for the better. Make no mistake, it is still dangerous, but compared with the past years, attacks have dropped significantly. We are in the last ten yards of this fight, and all the Marines and Sailors remain steadfast in our determination to do whatever it takes to ensure success here in Iraq and come home safely to our loved ones.

Although the facilities here at Al Asad are quite nice, nothing can live up to home. Your continued support in the form of e-mails and letters are critical to the morale of the battalion. At times, due to security reasons, the e-mail and international phones aboard base will be secured to all hands – please do not be discouraged if your loved one cannot contact you on a certain day or time. Also, being recon means being out in the field doing what we do best – find, fix, and finish the enemy – so again, do not be discouraged should time pass without contact.

Please know that the Marines and Sailors of 1st Reconnaissance Battalion are well prepared to face whatever challenges that may come our way, and I am honored to walk among them each and every day. Your pride in their accomplishments is justified. I have no doubt that the battalion will perform magnificently, and add greatly to the laurels won by the many warriors which have preceded us in this fight.

Semper Fidelis,

M.J. Mooney
LtCol USMC
Commanding Officer