

Responsible Iraq Drawdown— Rapid Afghanistan Buildup

Third Army: Directing Traffic At the Crossroads of Two Wars



Each morning, shortly after sunrise and following the last strains of “Reveille,” the theme song from the movie “Patton” echoes across Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, harkening back to Third Army’s iconic leader and World War II heritage. The camp is home to Third Army’s forward headquarters, and it is the sustainment nexus for America’s combat efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Third Army simultaneously is orchestrating the Iraq drawdown and reinforcement of the war in Afghanistan while supporting and supplying the

**Text and Photographs
By Dennis Steele**
Senior Staff Writer



First-generation mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles withdrawn from Iraq await shipment to Army training centers at a Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, holding yard.



Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) go through a final round of training at a Third Army facility in Kuwait before heading into Iraq.

day-to-day operations of both. The scale and complexity of Third Army's sustainment operation is astronomical. If U.S. military personnel deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom eat it, shoot it, drive it, sleep in it or draw electrical power from it, Third Army/U.S. Army Central had a role in getting it to them, along with thousands of other items and repair parts needed for combat. The pace is unrelenting—in Afghanistan, it is accelerating—and the stakes are always high.

To bolster U.S. operations in Afghanistan and help turn the tide against the Taliban, Third Army delivered some 10,000 vehicles to Afghanistan during fiscal year (FY) 2009. Since last July, it has transferred 1,770 tons of ammunition and more than a million individual items, valued at \$90 million, from Iraq to Afghanistan.

This year, it will coordinate movement of the additional 30,000 troops



A soldier washes a truck at Camp Arifjan to prepare it for shipment back to the United States.



Worn and damaged tire assemblies from Iraq will be refurbished in Kuwait and shipped to where they are most needed. Approximately 4,000 wheel assemblies are shipped to Kuwait each month for repair.



SFC Henry Scott, 1181st Deployment Distribution Support Battalion (DDSB), Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, checks progress as a ship at a Kuwaiti port is loaded with equipment from Iraq for shipment to the United States.



*SPC Jacob Gage,
1140th Transportation Company,
prepares a truck for
customs inspection
at a Camp Arifjan
wash rack.*





A medevac helicopter from Company C, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment (C/5-158 Aviation), kicks up a cloud of dust as it takes off during a training flight in Afghanistan. Third Army oversaw transportation of the company's personnel, helicopters and other equipment from Iraq to Afghanistan.

SSG Shelley Jo Broadhead, a flight medic assigned to C/5-158 Aviation, checks with her pilot as the aircraft is warmed up for takeoff from the NATO air base at Kandahar, Afghanistan.



ordered to Afghanistan by President Barack Obama along with the equipment they will need to fight and the increased amount of supplies needed to sustain them—likely a 30 percent overall sustainment spike.

Meanwhile, Third Army is continuing the job it started last May to retrograde what Third Army officials describe as a staggering amount of combat vehicles, equipment and supplies from Iraq, including:

- 60,000 shipping containers, which placed end to end would stretch from New York City to Richmond, Va.
- 41,232 pieces of rolling stock.
- 13,450 short tons of supplies.
- 135,500 U.S. military personnel, which is approxi-

mately the population of Savannah, Ga.

Some of the retrograde materiel will be sent to Afghanistan. The rest will return to the inventory. Retrograde equipment from Iraq—rebuilt and upgraded—is an essential part of plans to refit the Army.

Third Army is the operational orchestrator for the overall-theater U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) sustainment mission, and it has control of the theater checkbook that pays for it. Paymaster authority carries with it a responsibility to save money wherever possible—measures that are physically apparent in the Iraq equipment retrograde, which has resulted in savings calculated in the billions of dollars by repairing, upgrading and shipping critical items

A worker at the Defense Distribution Center Depot Kuwait, one of 25 Defense Logistics Agency distribution centers located worldwide, sorts items retrograded from Iraq to be returned to the supply inventory.

directly to Afghanistan and using much of the rest to fill equipment shortfalls in the Army's general inventory and theater prepositioned stocks.

BG (P) Phillip E. McGhee, director of resource management for Third Army, said the command achieved \$3.8 billion in "cost-avoidance savings" during FY 2009. According to BG McGhee, since the 2003 launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom FY 2009 was the first year in which costs decreased from the previous year. "The goal this year is to reduce costs by \$2.1 billion through efficiencies," he said.



An Air Force loadmaster at an airbase in Kuwait guides a pallet aboard his aircraft for transportation within Third Army's theater of operations.



Soldiers board an Air Force C-130 aircraft after passing through Third Army's reception, staging, onward movement and integration facilities in Kuwait.



Above, trailers and shipping containers are lined up at a Kuwaiti port for loading aboard a U.S.-bound ship as an Army unit is redeployed from Iraq. Right, MSG Duane Emerson, 1181st DDSB, checks items off the load plan as equipment is loaded for sea shipment back to the United States.



Above, workers upgrade equipment on a Husky metal detecting and marking vehicle at the 401st Army Field Support Brigade (AFSB), Army Materiel Command, maintenance facility at Kandahar. Below, one of the first MRAP all-terrain vehicles to arrive in Afghanistan awaits distribution at the 401st AFSB facility.

Individual items that could be transferred from Iraq to Afghanistan are put through cost-benefit modeling that determines whether it is cost-effective to move them to Afghanistan. For example, the cost of moving a concrete T-wall section would be 260 percent above the cost of paying for a new one to be cast in country.

Third Army operates as a split headquarters with a large forward element deployed to Kuwait and its U.S.-based headquarters at Fort McPherson, Ga. The Fort McPherson headquarters will move to a new command-and-control center being constructed at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., home of 9th Air Force, to better integrate planning and operations with its CENTCOM Air Force counterpart.

To accomplish its mission, Third Army partners with other commands and agencies such as the Defense Logistics Agency, U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC) and AMC's Army field support brigades that operate in theater. It coor-



A newly emplaced relocatable building (RLB) is ready for occupancy at NATO's Kandahar base. RLBs have the same proportions as a containerized housing unit (CHU) but are shipped flat with the walls folded inside. Several can be stacked and shipped in the same space required for a single CHU.



dinates strategic transportation with the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command and 9th Air Force/U.S. Air Force CENTCOM; the Army's 1st Sustainment Command provides the muscle to move and distribute materiel after it lands, and to fix it if it breaks.

Several joint task forces also support Third Army's mission, including the team that operates an expansive mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicle repair facility in Kuwait and is the forward-deployed element of the Joint Program Office-MRAP. The operation repairs or overhauls MRAPs retrograded from Iraq and feeds them into Afghanistan; about 800 MRAPs have been refurbished at the facility and shipped to Afghanistan since last June.

In addition, more than 750 first-generation MRAPs that have been replaced by more advanced models for frontline use will be transferred from Iraq to the Army's combat training centers. (Because of critical combat needs, no MRAPs were originally allotted to train Army brigades headed for Iraq and Afghanistan.)

Not just high-value combat vehicles are being returned to

Third Army's Missions: The Commander's Perspective

We cannot let any soldier go without ammunition, food or water for a single day. The number-one Third Army mission is to sustain the fight in two joint operating areas, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The number-two mission is to be prepared to go fight in any country other than Iraq and Afghanistan—no notice, be prepared to go do that tonight, and to command and control all the forces that GEN [David H.] Petraeus might give to us to conduct that operation.

The third mission is to help shape the future by working with all the countries in the region and trying to improve their capabilities—individually and as partners—throughout the region.

When you look at sustaining the current fights, the number-one priority is to ensure that we have sufficient infrastructure and equipment in Afghanistan for the soldiers who are fighting there, and the second is to draw down Iraq responsibly.

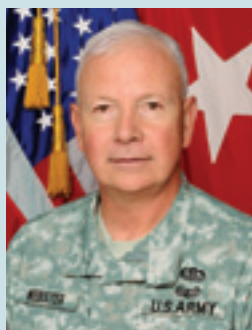
I think one thing we soldiers keep in mind the most is that whatever we do in terms of conducting operations around the world—even if it's pulling out of a country over time—we have to do that in a responsible fashion. We owe that to the American people and to the people

of Iraq. The Army chose the phrase "responsible redeployment" primarily to tell everybody that we are going to act responsibly in this; we're not just going to pick up and leave. *Drawdown* is a term that doesn't have doctrinal meaning, but it encompasses everything that we currently use in our doctrine: resetting the force—moving equipment to depots or here in theater, where we do much of the

rebuilding ourselves; retrograding equipment back to the continental United States so that it goes back to the training centers; and redeploying units back home. It encompasses all of that.

This is significantly different from the Gulf War. First of all, we only have about 15 to 20 percent of the equipment in Iraq that we had here when we were done with the fighting

in 1991. The quantity is much less. The second point is that we know where it all is. We have a handle on it. It's on our inventories. It's being counted. It's on hand receipts to people. So we have a plan over the time allotted by the security agreement with the Iraqis—that is, by the end of 2011—for drawing out that equipment so GEN [Raymond T.] Odierno and his troops get to keep the equipment that they will need to fight, if they should have to keep fighting. At the same time, we'll pull out what they don't need



LTG William G. Webster Jr., Third Army commander, was interviewed at Third Army's forward headquarters, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.



Soldiers move bunks into a recently constructed conventional barracks building at Kandahar.

the inventory, however. Third Army contractors examine every item retrograded from Iraq, down to the smallest and seemingly most insignificant piece, for serviceability, repairability and value, even if value is gauged by recouping money through surplus disposal sales.

The munitions stockpile in Iraq decreased 41 percent by the end of FY 2009. According to BG John R. O'Connor, Third

movements in and out of Iraq. Troops from both Iraq and Afghanistan also travel through Kuwait for their 15-day environmental morale leaves (formerly known as rest and recreation leaves) sometime during their deployment. Officials said that the annual personnel throughput of Kuwait's Theater Gateway life-support area is larger than the population of Baltimore, Md.

as quickly as we can, fix it, and send it over to Afghanistan or return it to the Army.

We try to keep cost in mind as we do everything. The last thing a trooper on the front line wants is to get something that is cheap, or not enough of something that is needed, and think it's just for economic reasons. We're not doing that; we're making sure the troopers get everything that they need. At the same time, if there's a less expensive way to accomplish the same thing, then we're looking for it. We do cost analysis, first, of virtually every decision that's made in theater.

For instance, we need generators, we need trucks, we need all kinds of equipment in Afghanistan, not only for the buildup, but right now. There are many who would say to just ship equipment from Iraq straight over to Afghanistan. Well, for example, some of these generators have been running for five or six years ... and we have to look at how much life expectancy they have. We then take a look at the costs—which vary—between buying a new one and having it shipped to Afghanistan, or bringing it out, rebuilding it here in Kuwait, and then putting it on a ship and taking it to Afghanistan. What is the most economical thing and what is the most beneficial to soldiers in terms of time—that's the choice that we make.

We saved the Army and the American taxpayers several billion dollars last year in cost avoidance. There's no way in the world we would let soldiers go wanting to save a few dollars; however, this cost savings is something that we're pretty proud of, and it's new in terms of thinking

about what something costs to decide how to provide a tool or how to conduct an operation.

In Third Army, we know the theater probably better than anybody else. We have been here, continuously deployed as Third Army headquarters, since 1990. We have a good working relationship with the Kuwaitis and other partners in the region, and we receive excellent support from the government of Kuwait. We know that we can stand in the middle of the bridge and direct traffic—that is, providing Iraq what the commanders need for the rest of their mission; removing those things that are no longer needed for the mission, either fixing them here or sending them someplace where they can be refurbished; and sending the absolutely best equipment in the most efficient fashion to Afghanistan. We're in the ideal position geographically as well as through experience to do that mission.

There are 20 countries in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. We have to be prepared for potential fights.

In the other countries of the region, we are sharing plans with them, sharing information, sharing equipment to the extent that we can so that we make them stronger and make them see a benefit in a partnership with the United States and a partnership with each other. By doing that, we strengthen our own alliance here against potential threats, whether they are from Iran, from ballistic missiles, from terrorists or from other organizations that want to bring harm to American interests.



To expand living space, a concrete channel diverts the natural flow of a wadi that runs through NATO's Kandahar base.



A soldier carries his gear up the stairs of a new double-stacked RLB living area at Kandahar.

Third Army moves most equipment and supplies for Operation Iraqi Freedom by road from Kuwaiti ports, reversing the route to get units out. Officials hope to use additional ports, notably in Turkey and Jordan, to avoid bottlenecks as the Iraq drawdown peaks.

(A northern supply route already reaches into Iraq from Turkey, primarily carrying rations and other expendable supplies for U.S. units in northern Iraq.)

The theater's primary RSOI site supporting Afghanistan is located in Kyrgyzstan, and it is a fairly straightforward operation.

Equipment and supply transportation to support Operation Enduring Freedom is geographically and politically much trickier than transporting supplies to Iraq.

The nearest available seaport is in Pakistan, and most equipment travels by two routes that, generally speaking, follow the same paths established by the British to support their 19th-century wars in Afghanistan—roads that would be treacherous because of the terrain alone, but which also traverse a swath of territory traditionally claimed by warlords/bandits who have plied their trade in the Hindu Kush for centuries, and who now may support the Taliban but are restrained by whatever compensation they may be deriving by allowing the convoys safe passage.

While supply routes into Iraq were extremely dangerous during the long height of the conflict there and Third Army convoys were assailed by improvised explosive devices, the route was relatively smooth, straight, flat and defensible—at least observable—to some degree.

The degree of difficulty is exponentially higher on the routes leading into Afghanistan. Nevertheless, convoy attacks are less frequent (but occasionally more spectacular) than during the dark days in Iraq, and convoy attacks in Pakistan's frontier region and Afghanistan seem bent toward shake-

A C/5-158 Aviation Black Hawk medevac helicopter takes off from a remote Afghanistan hilltop shortly after the company's transfer from Iraq.



PV2 Bryan Kelly, assigned to 569th Engineer Company, 4th Engineer Battalion (Task Force Thor), 555th Engineer Brigade, checks his Buffalo vehicle after a route-clearance mission in Afghanistan.





Left, SPC Darin Paine of the 569th Engineer Company checks his Husky vehicle. The company provides route-clearance support to forces based at Kandahar and to keep the base's main supply routes open. Below, a memorial at Task Force Thor's headquarters honors soldiers from the unit who have been killed in action since the 4th Engineer Battalion was transferred from Iraq to Afghanistan.



Left, MRAP vehicles line the enormous joint MRAP repair facility in Kuwait. The facility repairs and upgrades MRAPs retrograded from Iraq, most of which go to equip U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Above, a worker at the facility updates a status board.

A welder at the joint MRAP repair facility works on a vehicle.



A convoy arrives at Camp Arifjan, transporting Bradley fighting vehicles from Iraq.



A box of used fire extinguishers sits in the sorting yard at Camp Arifjan. Equipment items—often crammed into shipping containers in Iraq and shipped to Kuwait—are sorted and put into the repair and reissue pipeline, saving billions of dollars.



downs or outright robberies more than warfare, which has been the way since spice and silk caravans began plying the trails.

Another road-supply route, fed by rail and established through negotiations with Russia, meanders into Afghanistan from the northeast and carries some sustainment materiel for Afghanistan operations. Pakistan's ports, however, remain the primary strategic gateway.

According to Third Army officials, on a typical day more than 90 convoys are on the roads of Iraq and Afghanistan, delivering about 2.5 million gallons of fuel daily (which the officials described as enough to fill every car in Washington, D.C.) and enough food daily for 750,000 meals.

Third Army's area of responsibility (AOR) stretches from Egypt to Kazakhstan and from Yemen to Pakistan—real estate that encompasses allies and belligerents alike, where the economic value of the region is counted by the supertanker load. It's an important place to the United States and the West.

The AOR remains the battleground for the two ongoing major conventional U.S. military operations in the war on terrorism and for Coalition operations against terrorist cells in other nations of the region. Iran is in the geographical mix, along with Syria, which elevates the overall volatility in Third Army's AOR.

In addition to supporting the cur-



Left, contract workers at Camp Arifjan sort equipment coming from Iraq for reissue down to loose nuts and bolts. Below, workers sort unused medical supplies coming from Iraq. Loose medical gear will not be used by U.S. forces; Third Army donates it for use in training medical personnel in other countries.



Above, Robert Wayne, chief of ammunition surveillance at Third Army's theater ammunition-storage area and theater ammunition-reclamation facility in Kuwait, double-checks quality assurance. Ammunition—from 9 mm pistol rounds to Hellfire missiles—is being retrograded from Iraq and inspected and reclaimed in Kuwait. Much of it is shipped to troops in Afghanistan. Left, contract workers repackage mortar rounds to original specifications at the theater ammunition-reclamation facility.



rent fights, Third Army maintains a constant posture as the on-call command for any American land operation in the CENTCOM region that might be ordered other than in the command areas already established for Iraq and Afghanistan. It is prepared to meet that mission, but it pushes for peace through exercises and dialogues with the militaries of many countries in its AOR to promote goodwill and better relations with the United States.

Third Army has maintained a forward presence in Kuwait since the end of the Gulf War. Its continued buildup of regional institutional knowledge and long-term relations has paid off in war, and someday it also could pay off in peace. ★