

Subject: Briefing by Lt. Col. George R. McCurdy III, 232nd Combat Communications Squadron (CCS) Commander on its Mobilization and Deployment during Operation Allied Force (OAF), 1999.

Presidential Selective Reserve Call-Up (PSRC) on 10 May 1999 for the unit. Lt. Col. McCurdy got notice Saturday night (9 May). Recall put into effect Monday P.M., (10 May). By Tuesday P.M., everybody had reported to the unit and was ready to go. Originally, the unit had been preparing, before the mobilization to go to Gulfport, Mississippi by truck and other motor vehicles for training. But, didn't know where they would be going when they were mobilized. Got their tasking on 18 May 1999. People in unit couldn't understand why they had been forced to sit at home station for several weeks before they finally got that tasking.

Their mission was to support Navy Seabees in Albania. 232nd didn't know where they were going in Albania at first. Terrible road. Seabees were preparing roads for a possible ground war at first then it became a humanitarian mission when the air war ended. Their was known as Camp Wedge. Had to fly their people and equipment into Camp Wedge by Navy helicopters.

Got no warning order that this unit was going to be mobilized. Initial configuration was for 100-man package – entire unit. Got the word from Air Combat Command (ACC) to tailor the package for 29 personnel plus equipment reconfigured several times. Lots of packing and repacking.

The unit arrived Triana, the Albanian capital. Initially, big base in Triana they stayed with 21 NATO countries represented. Unit had deployed overseas by C-17 on 6 June. Went from Charlestown AFB, South Carolina to Rota, Spain to Albania. The roads in Albania's mountains were impossible at that time. Their site was approximately 32 miles from Triana by road. Albania was run by Mafia. They could not go to Camp Wedge by road convoy. The Navy had a battle group in the Adriatic Sea. Had Sea Stallion Helicopters. Decided to airlift us with helicopters slinging heavy equipment underneath. The unit had to repack its equipment again. Our pellets too wide for the helicopters, Navy Ch-53s.

Our site on top of a mountain. It was about 10 miles from Kosovo border. This was well within Serb artillery range. Seabee's got a galley up there after 10 days of MREs. [i.e., meals ready to eat] Had hot meals at last.

Got our equipment up and running quickly. Used fiber-optic cable for the first time. We were a spoke extended off of a communications hub at Triana. Worked out some compatibility issues between our equipment and the hub's. Used the skills of our people had from the private sector to accomplish this. Provided all the Seabee communications requirements.

232nd CCS supported Operation Shinning Hope. This was the Kosovo refugee relief operation. Command and control dissolved away from the mountain when the war ended. There was no redeployment plan for the 232nd. No resources for the unit to get out. Triana airlift dried up. The only way to get out was to go through Kosovo to Macedonia with the Seabees. Needed humvees that were armed, flack vests etc.

Broke off from the Seabees road convoy to head down to Macedonia in Kosovo. Got Dutch helicopters to fly out some of the unit's equipment. Army helicopters were authorized to get us out but Army too busy to send them. There was no single POC to get things done. Finally got one Army helicopter to fly some of the unit's people out. The rest had to convoy through Kosho to Macedonia.

Had briefs by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Navy Intelligence, etc. about threats before we deployed from Camp Wedge. Artillery Fire, terrorism, land mines and sniper fire were big threats going across Kosho. It took us 4 or 5 hours to get to the Kosovo border. In Kosovo, land mines were the big threat. Wherever our convoy made pit stops, nobody left the road because of the threat of land mines. Going through cities, everybody there was armed and wearing civvies. Couldn't tell who was who. Kosovo was divided into NATO sectors. The local Serbs were very agitated. Kosovo roads were paved. Better roads in Kosovo than in Albania. But the Infrastructure in Kosovo was totally gone because of the bombing. . Some open air markets were operating. Most drinking water was bottled. Vast majority of houses were burned out.

Returned home to Montgomery, Alabama on 15 July 1999. Getting out of Macedonia was tricky. Had to wait at Ramstein Air Base, Germany for a flight back to the United States had flown from Macedonia to Ramstein.

TDC School – We sent our people on active duty through that school during the PSRC. Changing tasking after the PSRC. Initially we activated 100-man UTC. Most were still on active duty by 31 August 1999. Some people opted to get off active duty as early as mid July 1999.

MSgt Dubia: Seabees had requested communications support through EUCOM to USAFE. USAFE asked ACC. ACC then got them from us. We deployed under the Shinning Hope (Humanitarian Mission).

Dubia: There were no real communications before we arrived in Albania. Worked it out when we got there. Some of our equipment not compatible with hub's. We did work around with the communications at Triana, Albania.

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