



Photo by Sara Goodeyon

Capt. Jason and Emilee Elbert remember their first impressions of each other when they met in college.

Lawyers play vital role in Iraq

1st AD couple serves together, tackles cutting edge issues

By Sara Goodeyon
U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden Public Affairs Office

Cutting edge technology, state of the art weaponry and highly trained Soldiers are among the necessities the Army requires to wage a successful military campaign.

And don't forget the attorneys. These professionals deploy right along with other Soldiers and, in their own way, are on the cutting edge of their profession.

During the 1st Armored Division's recent 15-month stint in Iraq there were several Soldiers from the legal office who also deployed. Their legal expertise was required for a number of different areas of law practiced in a deployed environment. They include operational law which involves rules of engagement and law of armed conflict issues. There is administrative law which is Army regulations and investigations and there is military justice for clerical services, claims and legal assistance for military personnel.

Among the legal staff that deployed with 1st AD were Jason and Emilee Elbert, both Army captains, both lawyers and both deployed to Tikrit, Iraq. The couple, who actually sought to deploy together, said that they found the experience rewarding personally and professionally.

"I got to meet a lot of Iraqis," said Emilee. "I worked with a lot of Department of State attorneys who go over there and work."

Emilee, who is from Long Lake, Minn., also found herself handling operational law and rule of law issues specific to a war zone. One cutting edge issue that Emilee said is receiving a big push is the new Status of Forces Agreement in Iraq that went into effect Jan. 1. The SOFA means that Iraqi law might apply in some instances to U.S. forces.

"It also affects commanders because they can't detain Iraqis anymore without evidence," said Emilee. "So that will impact how they operate."

Jason Elbert also handled detainee issues at Camp Speicher. "There were a lot of situations with the detainees and how we treat the detainees," said Jason. "We were

concerned with how Soldiers treated detainees and the Uniform Code of Military Justice."

Jason, who is from Grand Forks, N.D., said many of the issues were situational to Iraq, including some that involved what troops were doing to each other with weapons. "I don't want to make it sound worse than it is," said Jason, "but people are carrying weapons all the time and the assaults would now have a weapon involved with it."

The Elberts, who haven't started a family yet, said even though it was a long, tough deployment that involved 13-hour work days, it was positive too.

"I loved my job. I think it was rewarding," said Emilee. "I got to experience a lot of things that I never would have otherwise."

Jason said he learned a lot from the different kinds of cases he worked on in Iraq. He also liked the way they deployed. "We deployed with sort of the new modular brigade set-up so we were working with people from all different units," he said. "I would never have gotten a chance to meet and work with those people had it not been for the deployment."

Both said they also grew personally during the time in Iraq. "I think I could handle anything now," said Emilee. "I can't imagine a situation that it would be too much."

Marriage grew stronger

Jason said their marriage is now stronger too. "When I was stressed out at times, having her there to lean on and trusting her was a super benefit," he said. "It helped me feel closer to her."

Now that they are back the Elberts are "adjusting to a civilian world" again and plan to do some traveling with their families. After that they will move on to the 7th Army in June with Emilee taking on administrative law in Heidelberg and Jason going to the Patton Legal Center to be officer in charge and handle client services.

So, two attorneys who are paid to argue, living under one roof in a stressful environment for 15 months — did they argue at all?

"No. Never," said the Elberts. "It was wonderful."

Uncasing the colors

Ceremony marks return of 1st AD, remembers fallen

By Dave Melancon
U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

The uncasing of the "Old Ironsides" colors at Wiesbaden Army Airfield Dec. 18 officially marked 1st Armored Division's return home from deployment in Iraq.

A formation of about 1,100 Soldiers of the division's Special Troops Battalion was welcomed by family members, friends and colleagues from the Wiesbaden military and civilian communities during an afternoon ceremony on the airfield's Minue Parade Field.

The ceremony marked the official conclusion of "Task Force Iron's" 15-month mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

After replacing the Iraqi flag with the flag of the Republic of Germany in the color guard formation and uncasing the division standard, Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, 1st Armored Division and Task Force Iron commander, said he was happy to be home and praised the 22,000 service members and civilians who made up the task force in Iraq for their dedication, service and sacrifice.

Using the division band as an example, Hertling described task force members' ability to adapt to changing and sometimes dangerous situations, and their willingness help the Iraqi people.

"They are diplomats in ACUs (Army combat uniforms)," he said. "They played for the first lady of Iraq," he said, adding, "They were attacked on their way to a concert and shot at during a concert in Tikrit."

The band members' missions, which included serving as scouts as well as musicians, are examples of the broad range of the task force's responsibilities, Hertling said.

"What the band did in those concerts is just a small example of the thousands of bizarre types of missions all of the Soldiers (standing) before you performed while they were in Iraq," he said.

The Soldiers of the division headquarters and the 17 brigade combat teams assigned to the task force and their achievements in Iraq "were truly miraculous and historic," he said.

"But no matter their accomplishments — and there were many, all of which will be linked with superlatives as the history of the conflict is recorded — pale in significance to what their families did," the general added.

"You have fought against rebellion, terror and violence far away from home and family," Karlheinz Weimar, Hessen finance minister, told the assembled troops. "You have taken risks for life, liberty and law in the past 15 months."

While the division headquarters suffered no casualties during its combat tour, 104 service members serving in units attached to Task Force Iron died in Iraq and must be remembered, he said.

The citizens of Germany will always be grateful and indebted to U.S. service members for their sacrifices for freedom and peace during World Wars I and II, the Cold War and the Berlin Airlift, and the same spirit that fueled those sacrifices makes Germany and the United States



Photo by Karl Weisel

Members of the 1st Armored Division salute as smoke fills the Minue Parade Field during a cannon welcome home tribute.



Photo by Karl Weisel

Soldier musicians of the 1st AD Band join the welcome home celebration.



Photos by Karl Weisel



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Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling and Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Blackwood uncasing the division colors. Photo above left: Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Douglas leads the official party and color guard to the 1st AD memorial site. Photo left: Guests pay their respects at the 1st AD memorial.



partners in today's war on terror, Weimar said.

"You can be justly proud of what you have done in the service of your country and the people of Iraq," he said. "You can be proud of your contributions to peace."

"I am very glad that you completed your mission just in time for the Christmas holiday," said Dr. Helmut Müller, Wiesbaden's lord mayor. "Welcome back to your home station."

Müller said the task force helped bring peace, security and prosperity to the people of Iraq just as American forces did during the Berlin Airlift 60 years ago.

"The United States changed not only the minds of the people, but most of all, the hearts of the German people," he said. "I believe through your mission in Iraq you performed in ways to win the hearts of the people of Iraq — especially the children."

Müller's city honored the division once more in a gathering later that evening, presenting the unit with a large cake bearing the Old Ironsides and city crests and 1,200 vouchers for the town's famed thermal baths.

"It is great to see Task Force Iron back in Wiesbaden where you belong," said Gen. Carter Ham, U.S. Army Europe commander.

"Task Force Iron's 15 months was nothing short of

historic, heroic and monumental, and I think those three words best characterize what these Soldiers before you have accomplished," Ham said, quoting a speech given by Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, during the Dec. 9 ceremony in which Hertling passed the task force's mission on to the Army's 25th Infantry Division.

"It is a battle-hardened outfit that has done all that

our nation and all that the nation of Iraq have asked of them," he continued. "They are all back home and that is a good thing."

Following the ceremony, Hertling, Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Blackwood and members of the audience stood in silence as a lone bagpiper played "Amazing Grace" in remembrance of the task force members killed in Iraq.