

2nd ARMORED CAVALRY REGT.

Back from Haiti, Then On to Bosnia, The Army's "Light ACR" Remains "Always Ready"

2nd ACR peacekeepers patrol the streets of Port au Prince during deployment that ended this year.



The 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (Light), the longest continually serving unit on active duty, has had a demanding and challenging year, with deployments to Bosnia, Hungary, the NTC, and reconstitution following its deployment to Haiti.

The regiment trained up for and executed a December '96 NTC Rotation, supported the Partnership for Peace exercise, COOPERATIVE NUGGET 97, in June, executed a Mission Rehearsal Exercise as part of a JRTC rotation in July for its Bosnia deployment, and deployed to Bosnia in support of Operation JOINT GUARD. In August, the Regimental Headquarters Troop deployed to Germany to participate in a CMTC Rotation with 1st Armored Division, making it the only unit in the United States Army to go through all three Combat Training Centers in one year.

The 2nd ACR, a "light" armored cavalry regiment, is a unique unit. The "2d

Dragoons" primary mission is to serve as the XVIII Airborne Corps' armored cavalry regiment. In that role, the regiment is structured along the lines of a traditional "heavy" armored cavalry regiment, but is equipped with "light" combat systems that facilitate rapid strategic deployment.

The regiment is organized with three ground squadrons, an aviation squadron, and the regimental support squadron, along with separate engineer, military intelligence, chemical reconnaissance companies and an air defense artillery battery.

Each ground squadron is made up of three cavalry troops equipped with HMMWVs mounted with M2 .50 caliber machine guns, MK-19s, two 120mm mortars, and TOWs. The squadron also has an antitank company equipped with HMMWV-mounted TOWs and an organic M198, 155mm towed artillery battery of eight guns. With a total of 72 TOW missile systems, the regiment is

the most lethal antiarmor force in the corps.

The regimental aviation squadron, our 4th Squadron, is equipped with 36 OH-58D Kiowa Warriors and 16 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. The Kiowa Warriors provide the regiment not only a superior aerial reconnaissance capability, but also lethal strike power when loaded with Hellfire missiles and 2.75-inch rocket pods. The Kiowa Warrior is also a valuable observation platform for the regimental fire support system as an executor of conventional artillery fires and COPPERHEAD missions.

The highlight training event for 1996 was the regiment's National Training Center rotation. The entire regiment, minus its 2nd Squadron, deployed to the NTC. We also received several attachments from XVIII Airborne Corps, including two artillery battalions, an engineer battalion, a signal company, and elements of a corps support battalion.

This allowed the formation of a lethal regimental combat team and the exercise of the complete wartime command and control structure. To the surprise of many, the regiment proved itself to be every bit as lethal as a heavy armored cavalry regiment, and executed one of the best deep battles seen at the NTC, destroying the lead battalions of the OPFOR regiment through the combined use of attack helicopters, CAS, and indirect fires far forward of the ground squadron's main defense line.

After the first of the year, the regiment began preparation for its deployment to Bosnia in support of Operation JOINT GUARD, under the command of the 1st Armored Division. As part of the preparation, Department of the Army accelerated the move of 4th Squadron from Fort Benning to Fort Polk, reuniting all the units of the regiment on one post, greatly facilitating our train-up, and enhancing our ability to provide quality family support to our deployed troopers.

All deploying troopers received individual readiness training (IRT) to train them on the skills they will need to operate in Bosnia. The final day of training culminated in the troopers running a base camp, complete with guard towers, barbed wire, gates, and situational training involving tasks ranging from dealing with media to operating checkpoints, observation posts, and coordinating patrols.

We then conducted troop STX lanes to exercise the command and control between the troops and squadron tactical operation center. The troop lanes focused on the essential tasks identified for Bosnia: checkpoint operations, handling of refugees, weapon storage area inventories, as well as force protection issues.

The capstone of our deployment training was a mission rehearsal exercise (MRE) for the entire regiment. This was conducted at Fort Polk in July and was run by the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). The two-week exercise tested the regiment in all areas of command and control, and challenged the troopers in the execution of required tasks. The base camps in Bosnia were fully replicated, along with the realistic simulation of political and economic conditions which make this peacekeeping mission unique and challenging. Refugees seeking resettlement within contested areas, as well as personnel indicted for war crimes, were simulated to create the realism reflecting the conditions in which the 2d ACR will be operating. The civil military affairs elements were fully simulated, to include non-governmental organizations/international organizations and other agencies which are currently working in-country. This gave troopers and commanders the experience needed to deal with the non-military portion of the mission. The level of

conflict trained during the MRE ranged from peacekeeping through active faction fighting between the former warring factions.

The 2d ACR deployed into country in two main elements. The first elements departed for Tazar, Hungary, August 13-15, and deployed into Bosnia during the last two weeks of August. The second movement arrived in Tazar during the last two weeks of September and included the aviation squadron, regimental support squadron, and remainder of the deployed force. 1st Squadron remained behind at Dragoon Base, Fort Polk, to continue support of the JRTC and care for the families of the deployed soldiers.

The notable exception to this deployment schedule is the regimental HHT, which flew to Frankfurt, Germany on 16 August for a command post exercise (CPX) and MRE in conjunction with the staff of 1st AD at the Combat Training Maneuver Center in Hohenfels. MOUNTAIN EAGLE V was conducted from 17-28 August, integrating the staffs of 1st AD and 2d ACR in preparation for joint work in Bosnia.

The 2d ACR is now conducting peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. The remainder of the year will see us continuing to enforce the peace in Bosnia and keeping in mind the Regiment's motto, "Toujours Pret" (Always Ready).