



**21st Theater Sustainment Command
16th Sustainment Brigade
Public Affairs Office**

Warner Barracks,
Bamberg, Germany
DSN 469-8506
Commercial 0951-300-7528
keith.m.anderson@us.army.mil

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Logistics Soldiers complete milestone for deployment to Iraq

MILESTONE

By Sgt. Keith M. Anderson
16th SB Public Affairs

HOHENFELS, Germany — They received the mission. The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment needed a downed AH-64 Apache attack helicopter recovered. The planners from the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in the tactical operations center sent out a convoy to recover the aircraft. But something was wrong. There was a commotion at the entry control point in the TOC. Someone was shouting, and it sounded like British English.

“Listen I can not give you any more information, I’m not just going to blurt out all my information to the whole world, I need to speak to the senior officer,” shouted a man in a British uniform with a British accent to the American Soldiers guarding the ECP.

After some confusion, battalion leaders verified that the man was indeed “Capt. Andy Magee, British Special Air Service” — in fact he was 2nd Lt. Andy Magee, platoon commander, 4 Scots, 7th Armored Brigade, 1st Armored Division — and he had another downed aircraft that he needed the logistics battalion to recover.

Staff Sgt. Scott Swieda, support operations maintenance manager, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th CSSB, had a dilemma. The unit had no other available

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assets to recover the British Merlin transport helicopter. Then he realized that 11th ACR could send a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to airlift the Apache, and he could reroute the original convoy to recover the Merlin.

“For me it was a no-brainer,” Swieda said. “That’s what it’s all about: reaction. And the last thing you want to do is keep people sitting out there.”

The 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, Grafenwoehr, conducted a command post exercise from April 16 to 19 and a mission rehearsal exercise from April 20 to 24 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels. The battalion conducted the exercise to certify for an upcoming deployment to northern Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom VIII.

The exercise tested the battalion’s ability to conduct regular logistics missions in its area of operations and react to significant actions that cropped up.

“This mission readiness exercise was an outstanding opportunity for us to bring our staff together and build the team that we are going to be deploying with,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Bryan Kroontje, command sergeant major, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade. “It allows them to learn how to make the correct decisions to ensure that we accomplish our assigned mission downrange.”

In one scenario, drawn from an actual event in Iraq, the battalion was alerted that a nearby dam was damaged from improvised explosive devices and that it would soon fail and send a 20-foot-high wall of water towards the forward operating base.

In a situation reminiscent of Hurricane Katrina, Sustainment battalion leaders had to plan to relocate and care for FOB personnel and equipment and local Iraqi civilians, and create operations orders, emergency contingency plans and conduct a humanitarian mission.

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The MRE was a unique challenge for planners at the JMRC.

“Combat training centers were not originally designed for functional brigade rotations, they were designed for brigade combat teams,” said Maj. Doug Richter, Adler team operations officer, JMRC. “This is a first for JMRC in that we’re certifying a multifunctional brigade.”

Because the 18th CSSB came to the exercise without any maneuver elements, JMRC added more computer-simulated scenarios, taken from downrange sustainment units, Richter said.

“Putting these things together is a challenge because there are so many levels of detail,” Richter said.

Maj. Gen. Yves Fontaine, commander, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, visited the 16th SB MRE at JMRC April 22 to witness an Army milestone, the final certification for the logistics brigade before its deployment to Iraq.

The exercise was a milestone because the 16th Sustainment Brigade, which stood up in Bamberg July 16, 2007, as the only sustainment brigade in Europe, is one of a handful of sustainment brigades worldwide that is not a part of a combat division.

About 1200 Soldiers from the 16th SB, roughly half of the brigade, will deploy to northern Iraq. The brigade will provide combat sustainment support to U.S. and coalition forces in northern Iraq, and will work to build self reliance in Iraqi security forces, said Col. Martin Pitts, commander, 16th SB.

The 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th SB, has already deployed. The remaining battalion, the 16th Special Troops Battalion, has already certified for deployment and is scheduled to deploy later this year.

(Photo by Pfc. Dane Flott)

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Lt. Col. Christopher Roscoe (right), commander, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, Grafenwoehr, briefs Col. Martin Pitts, commander, 16th SB, and Maj. Gen. Yves Fontaine, commander, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, during a mission rehearsal exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, April 22. Fontaine visited the 16th SB MRE to witness an Army milestone, the final certification for the logistics brigade, the only sustainment brigade in Europe, before its deployment to Iraq.