

# Spotlight

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## 1-9 wages 'war' against Utah Guard

By Tony S. Moyers  
Panorama staff writer

Getting "over the hump" has many different meanings to soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment.

To some, it was making it to the top of a hill they climbed Aug. 23 at Camp W. G. Williams, Utah. To others, it was finishing their "last" exercise before the unit breaks up.

But to most, it was making it back to their loved ones at Fort Ord after their second consecutive deployment.

When they returned to Fort Ord after a 19-day deployment to Honduras, soldiers from Co. A, 1st Bn., 9th Inf., thought they would be able to recover from their deployment over a few weeks; with 50 days from discharge from the Army, many from Co. A, 1-9 Inf. thought they had already finished their last exercise.

But 72 hours after their return, they were on their way to Utah with the rest of the 1-9 Inf.

"The young soldiers here are always prepared for deployment, even right after getting back. That's what a light deployment is," said Capt. James Mendiola, command sergeant major for 1-9 Inf. "After Honduras, the soldiers were pretty well acclimatized for the Utah weather."

When they set down at Camp Williams, soldiers packed up and took up defensive positions in the foothills north of Salt Lake City. The high altitude (6,000 feet above sea level) caused problems on the climb for some of the soldiers.

"It was the worst type of terrain there is," said Spec. Michael Franklin, Co. A, 1-9 Inf. "Between the dry heat and high altitude, it gave a realistic

challenge. You have to rise to the occasion, or it will kick your butt."

Although the Utah terrain posed problems for 1-9 Inf. soldiers, the largest complaint was about the time between deployments.

"The married soldiers miss their wives," said Spec. Terry Kaas, Co. A, 1-9. "Even those with girlfriends would like a chance to see them again. We weren't on Fort Ord five days before we moved out again. We're almost used to this, though. I wasn't surprised—they're always throwing something at us."

"The men usually know they will have some time off after an exercise," said Sgt. Robert Reed, squad leader, Co. A, 1-9. "This gave them a new stress to see how they can conform to it."

Morale didn't pick up until "enemy" contact was made. But, as soon as the first contact had been made, spirits lifted immediately.

The firefight lasted for less than 15 minutes, but in that time, one platoon from Co. A, 1-9 Inf. stopped and turned back an entire company.

"We got to show what we can do," said Sgt. Reed. "We got to prove that we're the best in the division. We proved that in missions in Arkansas, at the Joint Readiness Training Center against the 82nd Airborne Division, in Honduras against the 2-9 Inf. Regt., at the Advanced Anti-tank Weapon System—Medium (AAWS-M) testing site and here against 3-9 Inf. Regt."

Only two contacts were made with the "enemy" during the exercise, which ran Aug. 23-26. Opposing forces, which were made up of Co. A, 3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment and the Utah National Guard, were surprised and ambushed by Co. A, 1-9

Inf. during their first encounter.

In the second encounter, Co. B and Co. C from 1-9 Inf. attacked the opposing forces. Co. B dropped in by way of air assault, while Co. C snuck into the enemy area and cut off the "enemy's" escape route.

The battles were watched and refereed by soldiers from Fort Ord's 3rd Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment. The referees supervised and declared winners in the battles. Maj. Jeff. Karhohs, 1-9 Inf.'s executive officer, said the supervisory support helped both sides in the battles learn a lot.

"If you come on a training exercise with us, you'll see a type of training that you won't see in any other division in the Army," said Pvt. 2 Glen Spillman, a radio-telephone operator with Co. A, 1-9. "We do things differently than anyone else in the Army—we have to, because we have a different mission than anyone else in the Army."

Although the exercise ended early Aug. 26, transportation back to Fort Ord was delayed until Aug. 28 because of problems with the C-130 "Starlifter" cargo-passenger flights. The Manchus spent part of the two extra days in the field in a leadership reaction course at the National Guard camp.

"I'd much rather do something like this than sit around wasting time," said Spec. Lamont Byrd, radio telephone operator, Co. A, 1-9 Inf. "It teaches us to work as a team."

"It was a good way to pass the day," said Spec. Alexander Murphey, assistant machine gunner for Co. A.

The deployment was an emergency deployment readiness exercise that tested the Manchus' readiness to deploy on short notice.



Photo by Tony Moyers  
**TWO INFANTRYMEN** move across Utah scrub brush, toward a defensive position.

### Infantry radio operators struggle with 'monster'

By Tony S. Moyers  
Panorama staff writer

"Alpha one-nine, Alpha one-nine, this is Echo six-three."

The words faintly announce themselves over a receiver hidden in the cover of the Utah scrub. A whispered reply comes back. Without the message, the entire mission could go bad.

"We carry a lot of responsibility. We have to keep on top of everything that's happening," said Spec. Tim Leckie, a platoon leader radio telephone operator for 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment. "We know most things even before the platoon leader does—we have to, because it's our job to let them know."

It's easy to find the radio telephone operator (RTO), and at times, he's the most popular person in a platoon, according to Pvt. 2 Glen Spillman, a platoon sergeant radio telephone operator for 3rd Plt., Co. A, 1-9 Inf.

Spillman's and Leckie's unit recently deployed to Utah during an emergency deployment readiness exercise.

"Everyone comes to you and asks, 'What's going on?'" Spillman said. "It makes you feel good to be able to let them in on what's happening. You're in the know—you better be, or you take heat because you're not."

But, the life of a RTO does have its drawbacks, the operators said.

"It's hard humping that heavy thing (around 25 pounds) up a hill," Leckie said. "I'm not the only one with a heavy load, but I have my ruck plus the radio—it's heavy."

"We call it 'the monster' because it feels like one after a while on your back," Spillman said. "But the thing that really makes me mad is when I have to carry it and it don't work—then it's just dead weight."

When the platoon reaches a rally point, while the rest of the platoon is

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Photo by Tony Moyers  
**SNIPER TEAM** Sgt. David O'Rear (with rifle) and Pvt. 2 Glen Spillman sight the enemy during a training exercise in Utah.