

From the Other End of the Supply Chain

DDC'S BRUCE PALMER TRAVELED TO THE OPPOSITE END OF THE DISTRIBUTION PIPELINE TO ASSIST IN MOVING SUPPLIES TO THE WARFIGHTER

By Jessica Walter-Groft, DDC Command Affairs

Recognizing the need to expedite the movement of high priority supplies to the Warfighters supporting Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) and DLA, along with other national logistics providers, established the CENTCOM Deployment and Distribution Operations Center (CDDOC) at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, in January 2004. The mission of the CDDOC is to support the Warfighter by improving in-transit visibility of materiel moving within the distribution pipeline.

DDC Traffic Management Specialist Bruce Palmer was one of seven DLA representatives on the first CDDOC team from January to May 2004. He worked as part of the Sustainment Cell that controlled the movement of cargo and commodities from Kuwait to Iraq.

"Each of the Combatant Commanders in-theater needs to see all of his assets so he can prioritize what is being sent to the front," Palmer said. In the CDDOC, Palmer's job was to prioritize the movement of shipments once they hit the ground in

Kuwait. This enabled the commanders to know what was coming in to the aerial and sea ports 72 hours before it arrived, allowing them to organize their limited ground assets.

"We only had a few hours each day to move the cargo because the supply convoys only traveled by daylight due to the danger of moving through a combat zone full of sniper and small arms fire." Palmer said this was made worse by poor road conditions that turned the 300 mile trip from Kuwait to Baghdad into a two-and-a-half day drive.

Palmer and his team helped to establish better communication between the ports where the supplies were received and the Theater Distribution Center (TDC), the second stop for supplies on their way to the Warfighters in Iraq. "We introduced the port operators to the TDC Commander in order to give the ports a better understanding of TDC operations and how the two could work together. This helped to give the TDC Commander a better idea of what supplies were coming his way and when."

While at the CDDOC, Palmer was in daily contact with his DDC co-workers, getting information about the movement of incoming materiel so he could prioritize the shipments. "The pipeline was always stuffed full of materiel and their support was outstanding-providing information on anything I asked for," he said.

To show his gratitude, Palmer sent the following e-mail message to his comrades in the DDC Logistics Operations Division:

ALCON,

Yesterday, I had the extreme, the ultimate pleasure and honor of riding along on an Air National Guard C-130 while it carried some of our most valuable assets. The small group of 10th Mountain redeploying troops were coming out of Tikrit, Iraq. I boarded with

them in Balad, Iraq. If you have never ridden on a C-130 I must tell you it is almost impossible to hear the person next to you even if they are yelling directly into your ear. But, the cheer that went up as the C-130 lifted off that tarmac was more than deafening.



The quarters Palmer called "Home Sweet Home" for five months while working in the CDDOC Sustainment Cell in Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Being an old (or experienced, I prefer to call it) guy, I got several confusing looks and hands pointing at the patches and emblem on my DCU's [Desert Camouflage Uniform]. I was asked more than once "Who are you and what are you doing here?" I used hand motions to indicate that we could talk once we hit the ground and the engines of the beast we were riding in were killed.

When we landed at Ali Al Saleem Air Base in Kuwait, another round of deafening and drawn out cheers went up and on. As the engines slowly turned down and it got quieter, one soldier asked, "So, okay Pops, who are you and what does 'DLA CIVILIAN' on your patch mean?"

I said, "First of all, I want to thank all of you that can still hear the sound of my voice for your dedication, your sacrifice and your ambassadorship for the past year." Pointing to my chest, I said, "This patch means Defense Logistics Agency, and I work out of the Defense Distribution Center Headquarters where we



Riding in a C-130 with a group of soldiers leaving Iraq, Palmer answered their inquiries about DDC with "We're kind of like your neighborhood Wal-Mart, only we deliver."

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manage all of the 23 distribution centers around the world. That's where your food, clothing and spare parts come from. We're kind of like your neighborhood Wal-Mart, only we deliver."

The response from those tired, weary young soldiers was instant and simultaneous, "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

I got to see it, feel it, and it touched me. Often we come to work, do our thing and head home for the day. Well, I can tell you from first-hand experience, what I saw yesterday was powerful, and I'm extremely proud to share this with you, my co-workers, because it is you they are thanking.

Very respectfully,
Bruce Palmer
CDDOC Sustainment Cell

"This was my way of telling them that their contributions to the Warfighter were monumental and key to fighting terrorism throughout the region."

While Palmer's co-workers were back home in New Cumberland, PA, Palmer was spitting sand out of his mouth and wiping it from his eyes in Kuwait. However, his discomfort did not diminish the pride he felt in assisting the Warfighter from the opposite end of the supply chain. "It was the most eye-opening distribution process I ever saw being on the other end. I was just amazed by the amount of materiel and how good we are about shipping it over there."

For his support of the Warfighter, Palmer received the Joint Civilian Service Achievement Award that reads, "His analytical skills were instrumental in the safe and timely deployment/redeployment of personnel, equipment, and sustainment cargo in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Mr. Palmer's outstanding dedication, professionalism, and commitment ensured success of the largest troop rotation in United States history totaling over 240 thousand troops and 1.2 million short tons of cargo."



DDC personnel meet up at the CDDOC in Kuwait: (left to right) MAJ Joe Farris, USAR, of DDC's Strategic Plans Division; Bruce Palmer of DDC's Logistics Operations Division and CDDOC's Sustainment Cell; LtCol David Fisher, USMC, Executive Officer of Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, PA and DDC representative to the CDDOC; and CDR Daniel Palko, SC, USN, of DDC's Strategic Plans Division.

