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159th FRG Leaders Update 15 December 03

An early Merry Christmas to all FRG Leaders and 159th families. It was a great day yesterday. I was in a brief with our 101st Division leadership when we got the word that US forces captured Saddam Hussein. We all gave a long loud cheer. Many soldiers and families have sacrificed a great deal to get us to this point.

At the meeting we discussed our plan to successfully transfer our mission to other units and then redeploy. Various units within our 101st division will do a Transfer of Authority (TOA) with units coming into this area. We will do that in phases and then move back to Kuwait.

You will get much more detailed information as we go but I want to give you the overview. The plan I outline below is just that- a plan. As we get closer we gain confidence it will happen but please remember that circumstances very well could change and cause delays. It is very important that Northern Iraq remains as stable as possible so it is vital that we give the new units the chance to take over the mission properly before we leave.

A few of our soldiers will fly from Mosul back to Ft Campbell. The vast majority will drive vehicles or fly in helicopters to Kuwait, clean them and prepare the equipment for shipload. Then these soldiers will fly back from Kuwait to Ft Campbell.

Our first flight out will be on/about 2 January (T) from Mosul. It will carry back those few key soldiers from the Div, Bde, each Bn and Co needed in the rear to help get ready for the rest of us.

In early Jan we will drive HHC 159, HHC and B/7-101, C/1-58th, B/8-101 and several other non -159th units down to Kuwait. Most of these soldiers will fly out of Kuwait the 3rd week of Jan, once the equipment is ready to load on ships.

4-101 and A/7-101 will depart Iraq as part of the Rakkasans. A few A/7-101 soldiers will fly out from Mosul on/about 15 Jan with most of the infantry soldiers. The rest will fly helicopters or drive vehicles to Kuwait and then fly out the first week of Feb.

5-101 will depart Iraq as part of the Bastogne BCT. A few 5-101 soldiers will fly out from Mosul on/about 26 Jan with most of the infantry soldiers. Most will fly helicopters/drive vehicles to Kuwait and then fly out of Kuwait the second week of Feb.

9-101, 50th Med, and a team from C/1-58th will depart Iraq as part of the Strike BCT. A few 9-101 soldiers will fly out from Mosul on/about 3 Feb with the majority of infantry soldiers. Most will fly helicopters/drive vehicles to Kuwait and then fly out of Kuwait the third week of Feb.

When our soldiers arrive at Ft Campbell they will turn in weapons and do some other important events- like reuniting with families then go on a three-day pass. They will follow this with 7 days of required activities done on a ½ day schedule. After that the soldiers will be offered the opportunity to take block leave. MG Petraeus set the goal to give every soldier the opportunity to take 30 days leave.

For 159th Bde, I will require all soldiers to take at least two weeks leave in the period available when they return (after the mandatory ½ days) and 12 Apr (end of spring break). They are encouraged to take up to 30 days. However, if that is not feasible they can take the balance of leave (up to two weeks) during the second period from 15 May and 13 Jun 03. Once our equipment comes back we will need to collect and recover it then begin our Ft Campbell based training.

I hope this helps as you plan for the wonderful day when you and the other families are reunited. Our tremendous Rear Detachment team will continue to work with you. Please share this with all our families. Lisa and I want to thank you all for your leadership with our families and FRGs in the 159th.

COL William T. Harrison Thunder 6

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