

170th Infantry Brigade Combat Team – Regional Command North, Afghanistan

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‘Avengers’ Run Supplies

By [BayonetPAO](#)
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U.S. Army Spc. Justin L. Hastings, a Brandon, Fla., native, mounts an M249 Squad Automatic Weapon to a mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicle before a 215-mile supply run from Camp Deh Dadi II to Forward Operating Base Griffin, Afghanistan June 28. Hastings is a gunner with Combat Logistics Patrol Security Platoon B, 24th Brigade Support Battalion, 170th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, one of only two platoons in the brigade who run resupply missions across the brigade’s area of responsibility – more than 400 miles from west to east.

Story and photos by Sgt. Christopher Klutts, 170th IBCT Public Affairs

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Soldiers with A Company, 24th Brigade Support Battalion, 170th Infantry Brigade Combat Team set out on an approximately 200-mile mission June 28, to escort supplies to Bayonet Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Griffin, Faryab province – their 37th mission in four months.

The Soldiers are with A Company’s Combat Logistics Patrol Security Platoon B; one of only two platoons in the brigade who run supplies east and west of the Regional Command North logistics hub, Camp Deh Dadi II.

They are proud of the sometimes 10-hour drives they make to keep their fellow Soldiers equipped for the fight, said Capt. Benjamin M. Gonzalez, the A Company commander.

“We are the only unit from the brigade that travels the whole battle space and there is a sense of pride in that,” said 1st Lt. Mark A. Pijanowski, a Tampa bay native, now the platoon leader for Platoon B.

Hours before the mission to FOB Griffin, Pijanowski briefed his Soldiers i

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From left, U.S. Army Spc. Justin L. Hastings, a Brandon, Fla., native, Sgt. 1st Class Jason N. Gouty, a Dayton, Ohio native, and Spc. Alicia F. Martinez, a Chicago native, inventory equipment before a 215-mile supply run from Camp Deh Dadi II to Forward Operating Base Griffin, Afghanistan June 28.



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In a secure conference room at Camp Deh Dadi II. A sergeant from the battalion's intelligence cell briefed previous enemy activity along the planned route. The company first sergeant and commander listened as Soldiers answered Pijanowski's questions during a back brief.

What would you do if your vehicle rolled over? What would you do if you were taking small-arms fire? What would you do if you saw an improvised explosive device on the road?

The brief was another step in preparation; a phase of the mission that started four days earlier and would end when the Soldiers left their camp's gate.

"It's not a difficult task but it is definitely a long ride. There's a lot of planning that goes into it; everything from the load that you are carrying, to the Soldiers that are going, to the status of the vehicles and sensitive items is factored into the mission," Gonzalez said.

To bolster the local economy, the U.S. Army hires Afghan truck drivers to move certain supplies across the country. Soldiers support the hauls by providing security. The shipments A Company Soldiers escort range from wood for base construction to military vehicles, said Sgt. 1st Class Jason N. Gouty, the platoon sergeant for Platoon B.

After the brief, the Soldiers mounted .50-caliber machine guns onto their trucks and staged their vehicles for departure. Gouty and Pijanowski performed final vehicle inspections, and the U.S. and Afghan combat logistics patrol hit the road.



Children talk to a Soldier with Combat Logistics Patrol Security Platoon B, 24th Brigade Support Battalion, 170th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Balkh province during a 215-mile supply run from Camp Deh Dadi II to Forward Operating Base Griffin, Afghanistan June 28.

The drive to FOB Griffin is a relatively straight shot on the mostly asphalt Highway 1. Aside from a

few urban areas, the majority of the trip is through rural desert flanked by mountains. The patrols usually move at night, to both prevent attacks by insurgents and avoid bumper-to-bumper traffic in cities like Mazar-e Sharif and Meymaneh.

At night, parts of Highway 1 look similar to a Southwestern state, with its painted white shoulders and yellow divider under the glow of headlights. The similarities are not enough for Soldiers to forget they are in a combat zone.

"You always get the same feeling when you are in the gun turret. Something always could happen. You're always on your toes but you get used to it. It doesn't bother me at all," said Spc. Justin L. Hastings, a Brandon, Fla., native, now a gunner with Platoon B.

The long drives are physically strenuous as Soldiers wear nearly 60 pounds of protective gear. Unlike a 10-hour road trip in the U.S., the Soldiers don't have the luxury of pulling over when they get tired or to stretch their legs. They usually make one stop: a tactical halt to refuel where Soldiers dismount to pull security.

The trips also become monotonous. Soldiers talk about everything from work to music to their mid-tour leaves, while drinking energy drinks to stay alert.

But the monotony doesn't justify complacency, said Gouty, a Dayton, Ohio native, who is on his third combat deployment.

During their return trip from FOB Griffin, the chatter stopped when they noticed a man videotaping the patrol, a warning sign of an attack, as they drove through a traffic circle around midnight. Everyone's eyes in Gouty's vehicle scanned for potential threats as metallic sounding voices from other trucks in the patrol echoed in their headsets.

The tension slowly dissipated after there was no explosion or small-arms fire. The patrol swept away from the city.

Pijanowski said morale is high, as most Soldiers volunteered for positions in the security platoons and were hand-picked through an interview process. Others were assigned without volunteering but were given the option to take different jobs while deployed. No one left the platoon.



Soldiers with Combat Logistics Patrol Security Platoon B, 24th Brigade Support Battalion, 170th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, pray before a 215-mile supply run from Camp Deh Dadi II to Forward Operating Base Griffin, Afghanistan June 28.

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