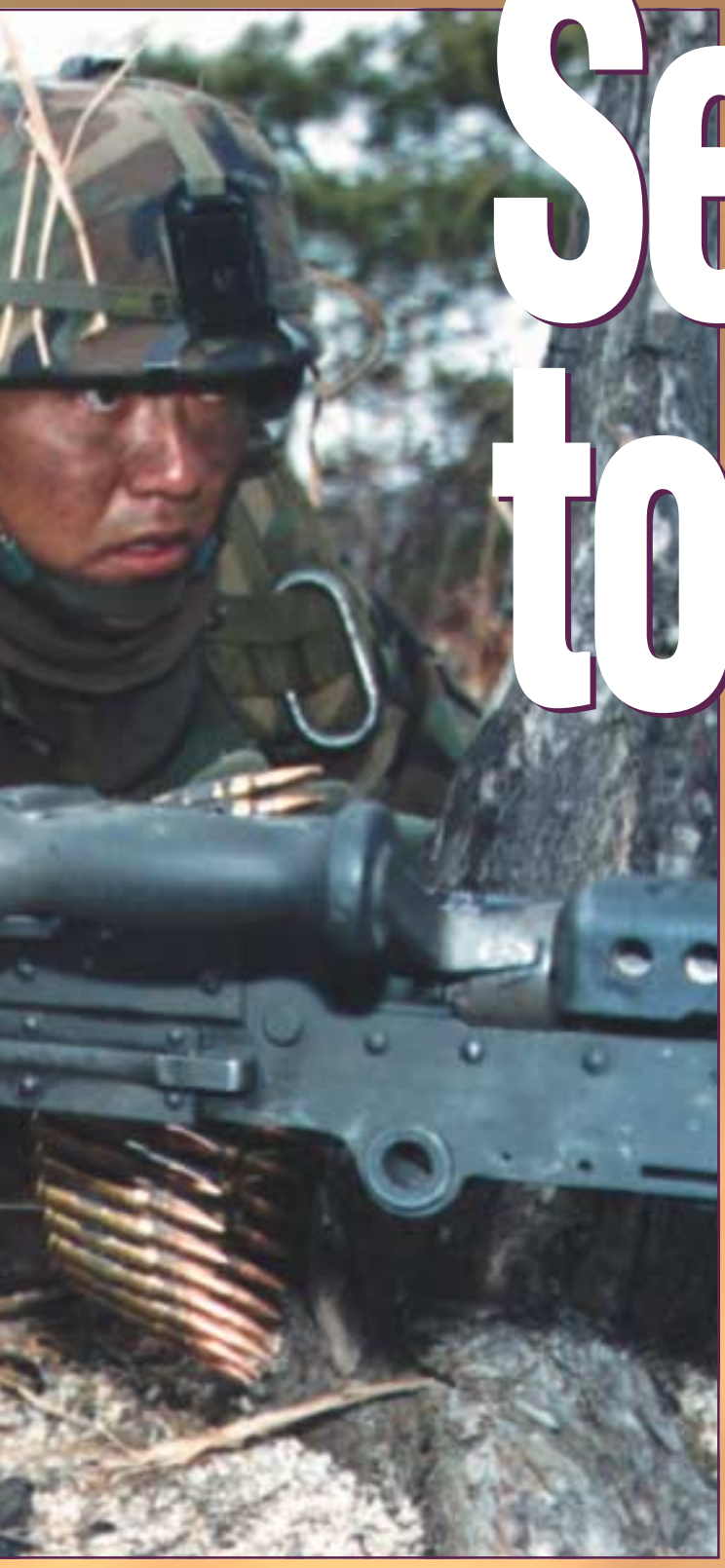
Soldiers Online

Spotlight on the Army Divisions

PFC Joseph Welchel of the 2nd Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 503rd Inf. Regiment, aims downrange during a 2nd Brigade exercise.



Second to None

Story by MSG John Brenci
Photos by Yu Hu Son

ONLY a few miles from a very real and potentially fierce opponent, in a land still technically at war, the vigilant "Warriors" of the South Korea-based 2nd Infantry Division stand ready to fight at a moment's notice.

The enemy is so close, in fact, that soldiers in the division's northernmost camp can see the North Korean flag flying. Their sleep is disturbed by music and propaganda blasting over loudspeakers. This is no exercise.

"We're arguably the most forward-deployed combat battalion in the Army," said 1LT David Rittgers, executive officer of Company C, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry. "Day in and day out, we're within mortar range of North Korea. It puts a certain urgency in the things we do."

While you might think most soldiers would avoid being that close to the enemy, Rittgers requested assignment to the 1-506th at Camp Greaves. "To me, this is the quintessential infantryman's Korean experience — very close to the border, very little mystery as to what your job is. It

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MSG John Brenci, a former Soldiers staffer, is chief public affairs NCO, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Office. Yu Hu Son is the 2nd Inf. Div. PAO staff photographer.

Candidates for the Expert Field Medical Badge move a mock casualty through the obstacle course at Warrior Base near the DMZ.

gives you a sense of purpose."

In most cases, 2nd Inf. Div. soldiers are just 12 miles from the enemy, dispersed through 17 camps over an area about the size of Rhode Island.

These soldiers stay combat-ready because they are aware that, in the event of war, they have only minutes to grab their gear and roll out. They are the guardians of peace and freedom on the Korean peninsula, and they're equipped to accomplish that mission.

"We have an extremely capable force, given the environment," said MAJ John Sutherland, 2nd Inf. Div. deputy G-3. "We are capable of vertical envelopment — the ability to air assault — as well as high-tempo ground maneuvers. Our heavy/light mixture facilitates operations in mountainous terrain, and our additional firepower, both on the ground and from the air, makes our division the most powerful division on the peninsula — north or south."

Also known as the "Indianhead Division" and "Second to None," the 2nd Inf. Div. is the Army's only doctrinal medium division with two armor battalions, two mechanized-infantry battalions and two air-assault battalions, which make up the two combat brigades based in Korea. The division also owns an engineer brigade, an aviation brigade, a division support command and the largest division artillery organization in the Army. And more than 1,800 Korean augmentees to the U.S. Army, or KATUSAs, support the division.

The 1st Bde.'s tank and mechanized-infantry battalions are equipped with Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles. The 2nd Bde. fights with mechanized infantry, air-assault battalions and a long-range reconnaissance detachment.

The 3rd Bde. at Fort Lewis, Wash., was the division's continental U.S.-based force, but was recently designated as the new Intermediate Brigade Combat Team. The 1st Bde., 1st Inf. Div. at Fort Riley, Kan., is now the CONUS-based reinforcing brigade for the division, and is similar in design to the division's armor-heavy 1st Bde.

The division's lethality doesn't stop with the armor and infantry maneuver brigades. The division's artillery includes 18 Paladin self-propelled howitzers and 36 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems.

The size of DIVARTY is directly related to the fact that North Korea uses artillery as its foundation. "DIVARTY is the lead element in the division's initial fight against an artillery-based enemy," said MAJ Ken Britt, assistant DIVARTY S3.

The Engineer Bde. is another key combat multiplier for the division, because of its ability to bring counter-

An assault float-bridge company gives the 2nd Div.'s engineers the ability to span the many rivers that crisscross the division's area of responsibility.

mobility, survivability and mobility to the battlefield.

"We can create minefields to hinder the enemy's movement; dig in tanks and make fighting positions for infantry strongholds; and we have the demolitions, personnel and equipment to breach enemy obstacles and minefields," said CPT Greg Sovich, assistant S3 in the 2nd Engr. Bn.

The engineers also provide river-crossing capability with an assault float-bridge company.

Then, there is the Aviation Bde.

"The firepower you get from the Apaches and Kiowa Warriors, and the air-assault capability you get with the Black Hawks are especially critical in a place with steep valleys, mountains and restrictive terrain like Korea," said MAJ Gustavo Blum, Avn. Bde. executive officer. "Finally, you've got the EH-60 Quick Fix helicopters — which are Black Hawks fitted with special electronic mission equipment. They give the division a huge capability in terms of finding the enemy, intercepting transmissions and jamming."

Heike Hasenauer

Keeping tank guns ready for action is just one aspect of the 2nd Inf. Div.'s constant state of readiness.

Real-World Training

Being armed with such technology still isn't enough to ensure success on the battlefield. The soldiers using that equipment have to be highly trained. To maintain a razor-sharp combat edge, 2nd Inf. Div. soldiers execute a training program with more than the average level of realism.

"The training is hard, and we expect a lot out of our soldiers. About 340 days out of the year, one unit or another is in the field," said division CSM Charles Fitzpatrick, who has been with the 2nd Inf. Div. five times in his Army career. "That's why they're the best, because they know the enemy could attack any day."

The training tempo is high because the division is spread out, there is a high rate of personnel turnover and all the division's forces are within enemy artillery range — facing both conventional and chemical rounds. Because of that fact, the division strives to maintain the ability to "fight tonight."

High-speed training and the importance of the mission are two of the factors that many 2nd ID soldiers say have motivated them to stay in the Army.

"Don't change the training we do," CPT Brad Nadig requested of his brigade commander during a recent counseling session. "We've done more preparation and more mission-essential training in the last two years than I did as a CONUS-based tank platoon leader with three National Training Center rotations," said the former commander of HHC, 1st Bn., 72nd Armor.

Realism and high-tempo training was exactly what SGT Ruben Romero, a team leader for Co. C, 1st Bn., 506th Inf., was looking for. "I had heard how close the unit was to the DMZ, and I knew I'd see some realistic training," he said. "The squad movements, platoon movements and trench warfare are incredibly realistic. Every time we go to the field, we see signs warning against land mines. It's a constant reminder that a potential enemy is just on the other side of the mountain."

According to 1SG Eugene Bauer, Co. D first sergeant, 702nd Main Support Bn., "there is no place in the Army where you can go to the field like you can in Korea. You're allowed to do a lot of the tactical things other places don't allow. For instance, in

The KATUSA Multiplier

IT'S August of 1950 and GEN Douglas MacArthur, commander of the United Nations forces in Korea, must build up the understrength American units thrown into the fight at the onset of the Korean War.

He knows he needs to buy time for the United States to send over more troops, and that Eighth United States Army has to have immediate help to stop the oncoming enemy

The answer then, as it is now, was the Korean Augmentation to the United States Army, or KATUSA, program. Today, KATUSA soldiers are integrated into virtually all Army units in Korea, from squad level up. They live, work and train with their American counterparts.

Many U.S. soldiers experience Korean culture first hand through their relationship with KATUSA soldiers, and many visit KATUSA friends in their homes and meet their families.

At its peak in 1952, KATUSA strength had reached 27,000. KATUSA strength declined after the 1953 armistice. In July 1971, following the reduction of American troops in Korea, the number of KATUSAs assigned to serve with U.S. Army units stabilized at about 7,000.

KATUSAs are usually assigned to a unit for two years — providing continuity of operations and expertise that might be lost as a result of one-year rotations by U.S. soldiers. — *MSG Kim Danek*

The ROK army special forces Tae Kwon Do team demonstrates its skills during KATUSA Week activities.

An M1A1 Abrams from the 4th Sqdn., 7th Cav. Regt., sends a round downrange during a night-fire exercise.

Germany there are a lot of training areas where you're not allowed to dig in," said Bauer. "Here, you're encouraged or even required to do things like triple-strand concertina wire."

The DMZ is often a stone's throw away during exercises and gunneries, so division soldiers like CPL Scott Muetz, a mortar platoon squad leader with 1st Bn., 72nd Armor, try to stay alert and watchful. He got pretty spooked late one night during a recent live-fire exercise near the border. Using night-vision devices, a soldier in Muetz' platoon spotted a lone figure on the top of a nearby hill.

"This close to the border it could have been either a North or South Korean," said Muetz. "It makes me uneasy at night, but it keeps me on my toes — a little paranoid — which is good. It puts it in the back of your mind that North Korea is there and is a threat. They've got that music playing all night, and it's pretty creepy."

Coalition Warfare

Because of the threat, the division trains constantly with its ROK counterparts to build and enhance partnerships and teamwork. As a result, the division is highly skilled in coalition warfare.

The division conducts joint training exercises such as "Warpath II," where a ROK army brigade functioned as the division's 3rd Brigade for the exercise. During "Foal Eagle," an annual exercise, the division trains force-on-force with elements of the ROK army.

"We face a large and well-equipped enemy force," said MG Robert F. Dees, the division's commander. "We are only a lanyard pull away from chemical warfare. This threat gives the division a constant battle focus and a sense of urgency."

Should hostilities break out, the division supports the Republic of Korea with U.S.-unique capabilities.

The division's ROK army partners are equally poised to meet and defeat any threat. "ROK soldiers are extremely well trained, particularly at the small-unit level," Sutherland said. "They are excellent 'defile' fighters — meaning they fight well in narrow draws and valleys."

Quality of Life

The soldiers in the 2nd Inf. Div. might be close to the enemy and far from home, but a constantly improving quality of life and a great battle focus make the division an outstanding training ground for young soldiers.

This is not the Korea many soldiers might remember from the past. Soldiers now enjoy a number of state-of-the-art barracks and Internet cyber cafes that greatly improve their connectivity to family and friends back home. "It's not like the open-bay Quonset huts I lived in during my first tour here in 1976," said Barry Napp, Area 1 public affairs officer and former Army captain. "Our goal, in Area 1, is to have all soldiers stationed north of Seoul living in Army-standard barracks by 2007."

Floods that inundated South Korea in 1998 caused more than $200 million in damage and destroyed structures at several of the camps. This turned out to be the silver lining for the division. New construction and flood mitigation will ensure that such destruction doesn't occur again.

"Just now, two years later, we're seeing the fruits of those funds," said Napp. "This month we've opened up three new facilities: a renovated community activities center; a two-plus-two Army-standard barracks; and a headquarters.

In addition, family members who aren't command-sponsored also have a place to call home at one of five Pear Blossom Cottages located throughout the division. These provide family members a place to cook and do laundry, a place for children to play, or

The 2nd Infantry Division in History

ONE of the few active-Army units organized on foreign soil, the 2nd Infantry Division came into being at Bourmont, France, on Oct. 26, 1917, and received its early training at the hands of the French army.

The division was initially composed of one infantry brigade, one marine brigade and one artillery brigade. During World War I the division was twice

Soldiers of the division's Battery B, 15th Field Artillery, pose for a photo at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in March 1923.

During construction at Camp Red Cloud's golf course, engineers put in a sump that will help alleviate flood damage during Korea's monsoon season.

simply a location where spouses can get together.

Morale, welfare and recreation are all vital to soldiers living and working in "Warrior" country, but the improvements within the division aren't just limited to the quality of life.

A New Century

In the last four years the 2nd Inf. Div. has seen many equipment improvements. Last summer the Sentinel radar system added additional early warning capability. Day or night, soldiers now have 360-degree airspace coverage, even with adverse weather and electronic countermeasures.

To enhance combat readiness, the division stood up a new Div. Avn. Sprt. Bn. last fall in conjunction with the reorganization of the Maintenance Sprt. Bn.

The Javelin missile system now brings improved lethality and survivability for infantry soldiers. It is a "fire-and-forget" missile that locks on before launch to attack moving and stationary targets.

In 2001, the improved Fox nuclear, biological and chemical reconnaissance system will give the division a fully integrated detection, early warning and communication capability.

Next year, the Apache Longbow will move in. "The Longbow gives the division an enhanced capability to find, acquire and engage targets many times more quickly and under adverse weather conditions," said Blum.

All the recent and future improvements will make the division an even greater force to be reckoned with and more capable of accomplishing its mission .

"If you can soldier in Korea, you can soldier anywhere," Dees said. □

During World War II action in France a 2nd Inf. Div. soldier plants a sign advising that the area has been cleared of mines.

commanded by Marine Corps generals.

World War I

In early spring of 1918, while attached to the French army, the 2nd Inf. Div. participated in its first major campaign, Chateau-Thierry, which proved to be the turning point for the Allies in the war.

The historic battles at Soissons, Mount Blanc and the Argonne Forest also contributed greatly to the Allied victory. For the division's heroic actions at Mount Blanc and Soissons, it was awarded the French Fourragere, a green shoulder braid which each soldier assigned to the division still wears on the left shoulder of the dress uniform.

Finally, the division participated in the Meuse Argonne offensive. After the Armistice, the 2nd Inf. Div. moved into Germany with the Army of Occupation.

In April of 1919, the division moved to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where it served as an experimental unit to test new ideas and innovations.

World War II

In October of 1943 the division moved to Ireland, where it trained for 10 months in preparation for the invasion of Europe.

After landing at Omaha Beach on D-Day plus one, the division battled its way through France, Belgium, Luxemburg and Germany, eventually advancing to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia.

Because the war in the Pacific was still being fought, the division shipped to Camp Swift, Texas, in July 1945 to prepare for departure to the Pacific Theater. One year later, the division was moved in swift succession to Camp Stoneman, Calif., and Fort Lewis, Wash.

The Korean War

With the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the division was alerted for movement to the Far East Command, arriving in July 1950 and fighting for the duration of the war. The division participated in the breakout of the Pusan perimeter, protection of the Eighth Army's flank during the initial Chinese onslaught, and the halting of the Chinese winter offensive at Wonju.

The division returned to the United States in 1954 and was inactivated in 1957, but was activated in 1958 at Fort Benning, Ga., and for three years was a training division. It returned to Korea on July 1, 1965, and is now the only Army division in South Korea. — *Barry Napp, Area 1 Public Affairs Officer*

A soldier of the division's 9th Inf. Regt. shares his rations with a Korean woman near the Nakton River in 1950.