

15 Aug 1961 - 1962

HEADQUARTERS  
26TH SIGNAL BATTALION  
APO 154 US FORCES

26SB

18 March 1963

SUBJECT: Unit History

TO: See Distribution

WEATHER OR NOT

"This necessitated the hand carrying of pole line equipment and materials into a very hazardous terrain. The handicap of working on treacherous terrain in heavy rains during electrical storms and correcting the damaged section of pole line in a minimum of time indicated the efficiency and willingness of members of this Battalion, which is in keeping with the finest traditions of the Signal Corps."

This quote by Lt Col Allen C. Deming, then commander of the 26th Signal Battalion, aptly describes the fortitude and willpower of his men in their efforts to repair the trunk circuits between Seoul and Chunchon, Korea which had been destroyed by sabotage during June 1952. This aggressiveness and esprit has always been present in the men of the 26th. They have always believed and lived up to their motto, "Weather or Not." This traditional esprit will become more evident in the following pages, which outline the history of the 26th Signal Battalion from its inception in 1933 to the present.

The 26th Signal Battalion was originally constituted 13 July 1931 in the Regular Army as the 5th Signal Construction Battalion. However, it was not activated until 10 February 1941, at Camp Clayborne, Louisiana. On 7 August 1941 just seven months after the 5th Signal Construction Battalion was activated, it was redesignated the 26th Signal Construction Battalion.

Little is known of the Battalion's activities during WWII since few records have been preserved. However, it is known that the Battalion participated in five (5) major campaigns and received one decoration. The campaigns were Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe. Its decoration, a Meritorious Unit Commendation, was received for the Battalion's efforts in the war during the period 13 June 1944 to 17 February 1945.

It was during this period of the 26th Signal Construction Battalions first activation that its Coat of Arms or Unit Crest was adopted. The crest which is in the shape of a Roman shield, has four distinctive markings. Running horizontally through the center are three telephone poles connected by two wires. Above the telephone poles is a bolt of lightning and below is a demi-sun. Surrounding the shields base is the Battalion's motto "Weather or Not."

The meaning of the crest is as follows: the pole line running through the center of the design indicates the type of work that the battalion performed, namely, the construction of telephone pole lines. The three poles were

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symbolic of the three companies which composed the battalion at that time. The lightning at the top of the shield was indicative of bad or inclement weather, while the demi-sun issuing from the base was an indication of fair weather. The meaning of these three symbols pointedly explains the motto, by suggesting that the battalion will carry out its mission of pole-line construction regardless of the prevailing weather conditions.

Today, the meaning of the crest has changed slightly, since the 26th is no longer a construction battalion. The telephone poles no longer stand for the three companies in the battalion or for the primary mission of the battalion. Instead, as they stand straight and tall, they are a symbol or outward sign of excellent communications. This is further substantiated by the fact that they remain so through good weather and bad, as indicated by the lightning bolt above and demi-sun below.

Actually the slight change in the meaning of the crest has meant little to the men of the 26th, for they have always believed and lived by the basic principle attached to their motto. No matter how tough the existing problems, conditions or hardships may be, they have always exerted their maximum effort in an attempt to accomplish any mission given them.

Shortly before the end of the war, the unit was redesignated the 26th Signal Light Construction Battalion. This took place on 14 May 1945, and the battalion was inactivated on 17 December 1945 at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

This inactivation was short lived, however, due to the conflict in Korea. On 27 September 1951 it was again redesignated the 26th Signal Construction Battalion, and just six days later was reactivated in Korea on 2 November 1951. The Battalion Commander at this time was Maj Allen C Deming.

At the time of activation the battalion consisted of three companies, "A", "B", and "C". Due to the extreme shortage of equipment, personnel, and pertinent regulations, it was difficult to organize the Battalion Headquarters at this time. The personnel and equipment that were available and utilized came from the 590th Signal Construction Company and the 403rd Signal Construction Company which had just been inactivated. The Battalion Staff Sections were started by screening EM who had been assigned to the 403rd and 590th Signal Construction Companies, who were best qualified for skilled administrative jobs in the Battalion Headquarters. The selected men required long hours of close supervision by the Officers and Key Non-Commissioned Officers in order to attain efficient operation standards. Due to the large number of basic pole linemen assigned to the Battalion, and the extreme shortage of skilled pole linemen, maintenance jobs which had to be completed in a minimum amount of time were accomplished through on the job training under the direct supervision of Officers and NCO's.

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Upon activation of the Battalion in November it was assigned to the primary mission of maintenance, with a zone of responsibility to include the Wonju-Suwon open wire lead and all Army open wire north of there, plus all lead cable and some long lines in the Seoul area. The most prevalent problem area during the early months of the war was the shooting of insulators and wire by saboteurs.

The fortitude and initiative of the men in the 26th was again indicated in January 1952. During this month the Battalion was assigned the additional job of installing cable in EUSAK "Advance Compound" and a lateral cable between "Scotch Advance" and "Comet Advance". Due to the fact that tape armored cable was not available, lead sheath cable was placed in six inch pipe for conduit. The pipe, obtained from the Engineers, proved to be very useful conduit where fairly straight runs of cable were encountered.

By September 1952 the 26th had firmly established itself as an effective and efficient construction Battalion. This fact is confirmed by looking at its accomplishments and responsibilities up to that month.

At that time the Battalion was maintaining approximately 214 miles of pole line with 1271 metallic circuit miles of open wire trunks. It also had the responsibility of maintenance and rehabilitation of 117 miles of cable sheath, while maintaining 103 long locals and trunks which totaled 542 metallic circuit miles. In addition to this, the Battalion had also recovered 786 miles of Spiral-four and field wire by September.

This huge work load, complicated by shortages of qualified men and equipment, did not slow the men of the 26th. During the conflict they managed to participate in five (5) campaigns and were awarded two decorations. The campaigns participated in were the UN summer-fall offensive; Second Korean Winter; Korea, summer-fall 1952; Third Korean Winter; and Korea, summer-fall 1953.

Of the two decorations awarded to the Battalion, one was a Meritorious Unit Commendation awarded to the Battalion for its efforts from 1 February to 31 July 1953. Company B received a second decoration, also a Meritorious Unit Commendation, for its effective participation in the war from 1 August 1953 to 27 July 1954.

The attitude and effectiveness of the men in the 26th Signal Construction Battalion during the Korean War can probably best be summarized from an excerpt from a letter written by Major Allen C Denning, then Commanding Officer, to Lt Col Donelson, the Chief Signal Officer for EUSAK.

"During the month of July (1952) a major break occurred in the Wonju to Chunchon tall circuit lead, caused by flash flood which destroyed 18 spans of open wire line. To initiate emergency service, 80 reels of Spiral-four were procured from the 4th Signal Operations Battalion. Emergency service was "

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restored in a minimum amount of time and reroute around the danger area was immediately initiated. Officers and Enlisted personnel were required to work 24 to 48 hours continuously in order to repair this break. The esprit de corps shown by personnel of this Battalion that were required to bridge this important link in communications is further proof of their ability and desire to complete any mission regardless how difficult or hazardous the assignment may be. At this same date the heavy rains in the Seoul area have completely disrupted the existing cable facilities in the Seoul-Yongdong Po-Inchon area. All cable personnel and Officers of the Battalion that were not completely committed on other maintenance responsibilities requirements, worked night and day with utter disregard for rest or comfort to correct the interruption of service caused by these heavy rains".

On 15 April 1954 the 26th Signal Construction Battalion was completely reorganized and again redesignated as the 26th Signal Battalion. With the end of the Korean War the Battalion was inactivated on 28 May 1955 in Korea.

On 15 August 1961, the 26th Signal Battalion was again activated at Flak Kaserne, Ludwigsburg, Germany as part of the 505th Signal Group. Many of the Officers and Enlisted personnel of the reactivated 26th came from the 585th Signal Company. The remainder of the equipment and personnel were obtained from other Signal units which were being deactivated.

The activation of the 26th Signal Battalion was not a result of the crisis in Berlin which existed at this time, but of a change in policy concerning field exercises. Previously these problems were conducted on an Army level by 7th Army. Because of the immense size of the exercises which resulted from an Army level problem, only a few of them were held each year. To facilitate more frequent and more extensive field problems a new policy was established whereby the exercises would be held on the Corps, Group, Division, or even Battalion level. Obviously, this necessitated the creation of more Signal units. This major policy change was thus primarily responsible for the activation of the Battalion.

With the Battalion activated only 15 days, it participated in its first field problem. This was a NATO exercise called "Checkmate" which ran from 1 to 20 September 1961. The Battalion provided support in the form of three Army Signal Centers, which were interconnected by cable with a VHF back-up. Thirteen major systems which included more than ninety circuits were constructed. Swing shots and reterminations for Division change of commands were conducted with professional ease. This is another indication of the efforts put forth by the men of the 26th, since at this time only two companies had been organized.

Back from the field for a mere five days, Co "D" of the 26th Signal Battalion returned to the field to participate in another problem called "Butzbach". The exercise was originally planned to include only the 16th

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Signal Battalion, but since they had just arrived in Germany they were short equipment and supplies which were still in route. Thus Company "D" provided an AASC which enabled the 16th to operate with the proper training facilities.

The activation of the 26th Signal Battalion was celebrated on 12 October 1961 with the Battalion Presentation of Colors Ceremony. The Battalion colors were presented to Lt Col F. A. Cahill by Major General Adams, Commanding General, 7th US Army Support Command.

General Adams made a brief speech complimenting members on their performances in the past. While the activation order, Headquarters, USAREUR, General Order 266 dated 21 August 1961, was read, General Adams presented the colors to Lt Col Cahill.

The reactivation was further celebrated on 15 October 1961 by a formal dinner and dance at the Ludwigsburg Officers Club. The guests were received by Lt Col and Mrs. F. A. Cahill and Major and Mrs. Eugene F. Poole.

During the period 18-28 October 1961, the 26th participated in Peace-maker/Autumn Shield. This was a two separate division exercise (24th Infantry and 4th Armored) which was directed and controlled by VII Corps Headquarters. The Battalion was given the mission of installing and operating three Army Area Signal Centers in the Corps area and providing communication terminals to the 24th Infantry and 4th Armored Divisions trains. This was the first time communication terminals were provided to Divisions trains from any echelon in this theater.

Exercise Eyeball was staged on the 19th and 20th of December 1961. It was a two day test of Air-Ground coordination and sole user circuits. The 505th Signal Group preceded this exercise with a one week exercise involving four signal battalions. The 26th Signal Battalion was detailed to furnish two AASC's, terminals at VII Corps, and three relay sites. The two AASC's were furnished by Company "A" and Company "C". The Battalion entered the field on 11 December and returned to garrison on 21 December.

The last five months of 1961, 138 days, the Battalion was activated and organized, held a Battalion Presentation of Colors Ceremony, participated in five field problems and spent approximately 70 days in the field.

A different type of field problem, called Long Thrust IIA, lasted from 5 January to 12 February 1962. It was a NATO exercise in which three Battle Groups of the 4th Infantry Division were flown to Germany to participate. Company "C", 26th Signal Battalion heavily reinforced by other units of the Battalion, provided communication for the staging and movement control group at Mannheim, Rhein/Main, and Heidelberg, and linking communication with the exercise area in Eastern Germany. This was the first administrative complexes

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installed by the Battalion.

During this same period, the rest of the Battalion was engaged in another exercise, Marne Rock, which lasted from 7 to 12 February 1962. This was a 3rd Infantry Division exercise directed and controlled by VII Corps in which the Battalion furnished four AASC's. Because Company "C" was already engaged in Long Thrust IIA, Company "C", 440th Signal Battalion was attached to furnish one AASC.

Although this exercise was cancelled by VII Corps, the signal portion was completed and a Battalion signal exercise was executed prior to returning to garrison.

Exercise Strap Through, 26 to 28 February 1962, proved to be a real test of the Battalion's efficiency & ability. Strap Through was a 7th Army Signal exercise, executed from a Readiness test, utilizing most of the 7th Army Signal Units. The purpose was to establish all systems and circuits as rapidly as possible. The Battalion employed three AASC's and the relays and terminals required. All systems were established in less than thirteen hours and all circuits were completed twelve hours later.

From 10 to 15 March 1962 the Battalion participated in a minor exercise, Jigsaw, which was a VII Corps problem intended to test the capabilities of the 34th Signal Battalion. Companies "A" and "B" provided the relays and terminals for the 34th, that were required to establish the direct shots between 7th Army and VII Corps.

The entire Battalion was utilized in Exercise Grand Slam I which ran from 9 to 13 April 1962. The problem consisted of a joint Centag-USAFE CPX, employing the fragmented CP complex of both Army Main and Rear, and also at a jump location (Advance). The entire 505th Signal Group was utilized on this exercise employing the Army Area System Complex for the first time on this large a scale. A total of 17 AASC's were established throughout the 7th Army area.

The 26th Signal Battalion was employed with one of the largest commitments by establishing: 4 AASC's, terminals at two VII Corps positions, terminals at two 46th Artillery Group positions, terminals at two 3rd Infantry Divisions trains positions, and one terminal at each the 24th Infantry and 4th Armored Divisions trains positions.

Between a short break in field duty, the Battalion participated in the Armed Forces Day parade on Saturday May 19, 1962. The Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Francis A. Cahill, performed the annual ritual complete with a color guard and the 82nd Army Band.

Col. Sam J. Clark, commanding officer of the 505th Signal Group, reviewed

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the troops. Company "B", commanded by Capt, Bruce R. Harris, was picked as the best unit in the parade by visiting officers from the 505th Signal Group, as well as Col. Clark himself.

The Battalion returned to the field again on 13 June, to encounter yet another type of exercise. This one, "Med Bravo" lasted until 23 June 1962. It consisted of a medical evacuation exercise of the 7th Corps area, controlled and directed by the 30th Medical Group. Ten different medical units participated in this exercise. The mission of the 26th was to establish the required communications for control and support of the exercise. Two AASC's were established by Companies "B" and "C" in the problem area. Company "D" established the control terminal complex at Group Headquarters. "C" and "D" Companies also established terminals of each of the participating Medical Battalions. A total of three signal complexes and eleven terminals were thus established.

After returning to garrison for only five days the entire Battalion again moved out to the field for Exercise Strap Through II. This problem lasted from 25-28 June 1962 and was executed from garrison after a readiness test. The problem was a 7th Army Signal exercise, controlled and directed by the Army Signal Officer utilizing the 505th Signal Group and the 97th Signal Battalion. The 26th Signal Battalion established the following installations: four AASC's, three Divisions trains terminals, two VII Corps terminals, two relay positions, and one Artillery Group terminal. Also the Battalion simultaneously maintained three Garrison terminals. Seventh Corps "Operation Jigsaw" was conducted along with the exercise as was a 7th Army Signal Messenger exercise.

At 1450 hours 19 July 1962, the 26th Signal Battalion assembled on Frank Field in Flak Kaserne, for a Change of Command ceremony. The reviewing party, Col. Sam P. Clark, Lt. Col. Maurice D. Monteleone, and Lt. Col. Francis A. Cahill then trooped the line, accompanied by the Commander of Troops, Major Eugene F. Poole.

The Battalion Sergeant Major, Joseph W. Arsenaault, then advanced with the Battalion Colors presenting them to the departing commander, Lt. Col Cahill, who in turn passed them to Col. Clark, who officially placed them in the hands of the new Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Monteleone.

The farewell address by Lt. Col. Cahill compared the Battalion to many WWII units who were quickly organized and rushed into combat, remarking that when the Battalion was assembled in 1961, 88 percent of the personnel occupied the grade of E-4 or below. He told how the Battalion within a period of 10 short months had participated in 12 exercises in addition to renovating their barracks and drawing their equipment. Lt. Col. Cahill emphasized that the Battalion was characterized by the first letters of each word of its motto, "WON". At the end of his address each man knew he was a part of this team of winners.

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The new Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Monteleone, then stepped to the microphone and in a short speech let the Battalion know that what he lacked in physical size, he made up for in aggressive spirit. The men of the 26th knew that they still were and would be "Winners".

Between 20-27 September 1962, the entire Battalion participated in an exercise called Fallex 62. This was a NATO exercise that was very similar to two previous exercises, Grand Slam I, and Checkmate. As usual for a problem of this size 4 AASC's were set up. In addition to this, 6 terminals and 1 double relay were installed.

The last exercise of the year, Marne Rock II, was participated in by "A" Company only from 10 to 25 October 1962. Marne Rock II was a 3rd Infantry Division problem, controlled by VII Corps. Company "A's" mission was to supply communications support to the units of the 3rd Armored Division and to some 7th Army support units. The mission was accomplished by setting up one AASC and five terminals with seven systems.

The year 1962 proved to be another great year, worthy of praise, for the 26th Signal Battalion. During that year they participated in nine field problems, through which they spent over 50 percent of their time in the field. However, the test of their true worth and ability was yet to come in February 1963. From 5 to 8 February 1963, the Battalion participated in its first ATT (Army Training Test). During this test, the Battalion as a whole, and each person individually, was graded on the characteristics and aspects of operating in a combat situation. Being tactical the entire time the unit was tested on communications, CBR, defense, security, etc. In short, the unit was graded on every possible aspect of its operation. In the results of the ATT the Battalion was declared Combat Ready. With the completion of the ATT, the history of the 26th Signal Battalion has been brought up to date. To best sum up and reiterate what has been said thus far, the presentation of one more exercise is appropriate. This exercise alone is enough to back up anything said previously about the spirit, willpower, and esprit de corps of the men of the 26th Signal Battalion. This exercise was called "Exercise Marianne", and it took place on 12 May 1962.

This was the day that Marianne, a wispy little blond of five, was introduced to the men of the 26th Signal Battalion,

It all started when Capt. Richard Carty, then Chaplain of the 26th, and some of the men from the battalion met Marianne at a Battalion sponsored Christmas party for children of a Ludwigsburg day nursery. They found a shy retiring little blond with a severely crossed right eye. Neither the Chaplain nor the men could forget Marianne, or how she withdrew from the other children and sought refuge on the lap of the teacher.

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The men made inquiries and found that her parents were unable to pay for the operation needed to straighten Marianne's right eye. When Marianne's parents were asked by the men if they could help, they gratefully accepted. This was the beginning of "Operation Marianne". By the time it was over, the battalion had collected over \$400.00, far more than enough to pay for the operation.

The operation was performed at a German hospital on Valentines Day, and a few weeks later was pronounced a complete success.

During her day in the Battalion, Marianne was presented with a new bicycle from men of Headquarters Company, Company "A", and Company "B". She then traveled to Heilbronn to meet the men of "C" and "D" Companies who gave her a doll carriage complete with doll.

It was "Marianne's Day" for the battalion, and it was a day of races, games, and a big picnic spread. However, it was mostly a day of thanks for the men of the 26th Signal Battalion.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



E. F. IMLER  
1st Lt, SigC  
Adjutant

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