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**Changing of the Guard: 39th Brigade takes over mission from outgoing unit
~ Transfer of Authority ceremonies shifts responsibility into the hands of the 39th**

*by Maj. Craig Heathscott
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BAGHDAD, Iraq—Contrasting with the orange-tinted skyline resulting from a sandstorm, the bright blue and red 'colors' of Task Force Bowie stood out as it was hoisted high into the air marking the transition of authority between the 151st Regional Support Group and the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team here at Camp Victory. The Bowie colors replaced the Task Force Lexington colors which had flown over this base camp for the past year.

The transition marked the culmination of over six months of training for the Arkansas Soldiers and one-year of service in theater for their Massachusetts National Guard counterparts here in Iraq. The two commanders—Col. Kendall Penn with the 39th and Col. William Callahan with the 151st—had worked closely together over the last few months to ensure this day would come to fruition. And, most importantly, that the Base Defense Command here at Camp Victory would continue to run as effectively going forward as it has for the past year under Callahan's watch.

The mission that Penn inherits from Callahan is very dynamic, has many moving parts and is a 24-hour operation focused on protecting the largest base camp in Iraq. It includes manning guard towers, entry control points as well as controlling the outside battle space in order to defend the Victory Base Complex. Additionally, the mission involves Civil Military Operations in which Soldiers work with local Iraqi citizens to improve quality of life. This can range from providing micro-grants in order to start small businesses as well as other opportunities to improve the economy to providing veterinarian services.

"We have been thoroughly impressed with Col. Penn and his staff," said Callahan. "They have displayed a very professional attitude, and their experience was imminent very early on in this process.

"We had a great advantage in that they were able to send their advance team over here early in the process, so we could start working out any potential problems early. So ultimately, when they arrived to conduct the 'Relief in Place,' it was more like an over

watch period. It was a ten-day period in which they've been running the show for the past five days," continued the outgoing commander.

"I have no doubt they will be successful in this mission just as my Soldiers have made this a successful mission during our time. We made a difference here, not only in defending the base but in helping the Iraqi people rebuild a new Iraq," he said.

As the ceremony started, Callahan joined his Command Sergeant Major, Kolleen Dickinson, in retiring the unit's Task Force Lexington colors in order to make way for the new flag to be hoisted up the flag pole at base headquarters. Immediately following the casing of colors, the commander of the Bowie Brigade was joined by his Command Sergeant Major, Steven Veazey, as they pulled the cover off their Brigade flag—the 'uncasing' of their colors.

In the background, **Master Sgt. John Doss, of Little Rock,** and **Staff Sgt. James Howard, of Austin, Ark.,** unfurled a miniature Task Force Bowie flag, attached it, and sent it up the flag pole to indicate a new command had just taken over the camp.

"It was an honor to participate in this ceremony," said Doss, who is now deployed to Iraq with the 39th for the second time. "It felt good to see the Bowie flag flying over the base."

With his Task Force Bowie flag waving above, Penn addressed the crowd, "We've done a lot of training and preparation in finally getting boots on the ground here at (Camp) Victory. Colonel Callahan and his team fell in on a very complex mission—multi-services and multi-functions at the largest base camp in Iraq. All of this, and everyone benefited from being safe and secure under his leadership. We hope to pick up where he left off, and at the same time, be able to strive for continued improvements."

Considering what it took to get here for the 39th and the duration of the deployment for the 151st, the ceremony was short-lived. The emotion it brought to these Soldiers in attendance was clear however. Standing at attention in the midst of an all-to-familiar sandstorm that lasted all day, the feelings between this group of approximately 130 Soldiers were clearly in contrast—one group relieved, another group anxious.

The 151st was clearly relieved that they have completed their yearlong mission and now look forward to a return to Family and friends back in the states.

"I'm very excited today as this has been a long deployment, and we feel a great sense of accomplishment. But, we are ready to go back to our Families," said Callahan, whose unit was one of the last National Guard units to fall under the requirement to spend 12 months in theater, which is something the 39th is familiar with from their previous deployment to Iraq.

"Our Families, our communities . . . they have all been very supportive, and they have continued that support throughout our time here. That support means so much in that it allows our Soldiers to concentrate on their mission. It gives us energy knowing we're

supported back home through care packages, and all the things provided to us from the students at the various schools. It just gives us a sense of home while here. We demand a lot of Soldiers and that support makes it easier.”

And for the 39th Brigade, they are anxious to put their training to good use and begin putting the mission behind them.

“We’ve said all along that the road home goes through Baghdad, and we’ve arrived,” said **Capt. Jerod Burns, of Searcy**. “We own this place now so-to-speak, and we’re looking forward to getting into some type of daily routine and begin marking those days off the calendar. It’s comforting to know that we’re looking at nine months or so here in country as opposed to the 365 days the 151st just completed.”

“We hope to be in their boots in a few months by being able to lay claim to have completed a successful mission with plane tickets in hands ready to go home to the ones we love,” he said.

Upon arriving in Iraq, the battalions of the 39th Brigade were assigned to various locations across the country. Joining the headquarters element at Camp Victory and surrounding areas in Baghdad, the **1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment, headquartered in Malvern**, will conduct its Transfer of Authority ceremony tomorrow. The remaining battalions located outside Victory are as follows: **1st Battalion, 206th Field Artillery, headquartered in Russellville**, and the **217th Brigade Support Battalion (142nd Fires Brigade), headquartered in Booneville**, are stationed in Taji, Iraq. The **2nd Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment, headquartered in Searcy**, is stationed in Al Asad; and the **1st Squadron, 151st Cavalry Regiment, which is headquartered in Warren**, is located in Tallil, Iraq.

Each of the battalions within the 39th Brigade will be conducting their TOA (Transfer of Authority) ceremony over the next few days.



























