

46th MHD mobilization

By Maj. Keith Dover
Commander, 46th MHD

The 46th Military History Detachment (MHD) returned to its home station in June following a nine-month deployment to the nation's capitol in support of Operation Noble Eagle.

The three-member unit, based at the 90th Regional Support Command headquarters at Camp Pike in North Little Rock, Ark., had only been in existence for a few months before receiving the call to duty. Unit members had just received their formal military history training in July of 2001 at the United States Army Reserve Command headquarters in Atlanta, and were making plans to conduct a mission at

the National Training Center when they were mobilized. "An MHD is not a place to hide out," said Lt. Col. Tom Ryan, 90th RSC command historian. "The MHD is a valuable asset to the Army and can be called upon for rapid deployment to gather information right from the area of operations so it can be preserved."

The 46th received its marching orders on Oct. 1, 2001 to support the war on terrorism by being mobilized to the Military District of Washington (MDW) to work at the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) at Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C. The 46th, along with the

305th MHD of the 99th RSC from Pennsylvania, was assigned to the CMH as part of the "Operation Noble Eagle MHD Task Force." Two other units were also mobilized as part of the Task Force; the 311th MHD out of the 77th RSC in New York was assigned to document the Army Reserve response to the World Trade Center in New York City, and the 90th



A highlight of the 46th MHD's mobilization came when the unit was selected to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns on June 14, the Army's 227th birthday. The members of the unit (upper inset), Spc. Kelly Strand, Maj. Keith Dover and Master Sgt. Donna Majors, prepare for the ceremony. Unit members, along with a tomb guard, (left inset) render a final salute during the ceremony. (Photos by Roger Wright, Army Center for Military History and Sgt. Bill Miller, 90th MHD)

makes mark on

HISTORY

MHD (sister unit to the 46th from San Antonio) was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve (OCAR), also in the MDW to document U.S. Army Reserve deployments.

The mission of the 46th and 305th was to document the Army's response to the attacks on the Pentagon, which included Department of Defense (DoD) civilians as well. They conducted oral history interviews - the mainstay mission of history detachments - along with the collection of photographs, artifacts, the writing of abstracts and gathering supporting documentation to substantiate information gained in their historical preservation and fact-finding mission. Their work will remain important for generations to come. "It's not just for future historians, but to enable the Army leadership to review and plan for any such future contingencies by the lessons learned that we capture through our work," says Maj. Robert Smith, MHD task force commander.

The 46th made history as it was the first 90th RSC unit to ever "mobilize and deploy from its home station RSC in such a short timeframe," said Col. Randy Erwin, 90th RSC deputy chief of staff G-3, as he made comments during a welcome home ceremony held recently at the 90th RSC. The unit also shared "making history" along with the 90th MHD since this was the first time two MHDs out of the same RSC have been mobilized for such a mission. Other milestones for the 46th included the promotion of Spec. Kelly Strand and Master Sgt. Donna Majors reaching her 30-year service anniversary. Another noteworthy historical event came on June 14, 2002 (227th Birthday of the U.S. Army) when the 46th performed a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery before a crowd of about 300 people.

Although MHDs are small units, they have an enormous task in piecing together the information and preserving it for the CMH. Some of the oral history interviews conducted yielded vivid and sometimes sobering accounts of the events that unfolded on September 11, 2001, including sightings of the plane as it hit the Pentagon



Maj. Gen. David Bockel (*left*), Capt. Keith Dover and Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Dale talk to a member of the construction crew working to repair the damage done to the Pentagon during terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Dover's unit was responsible for preserving historically significant items found during the reconstruction effort. (*Photo by Spc. Kelly Strand, 46th MHD*)

and the eyewitness and first hand accounts of the rescuers that responded, both military and civilian. This was sometimes a very unpleasant mission for task force members as some of them were also tasked with interviewing survivors and close friends or relatives of the attack. Members visited the attack site often through the course of their duties and morale was boosted as they accompanied Maj. Gen. David Bockel and Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Dale on a tour of the devastated area during a visit.

The MHDs were not totally safe and secure in their CONUS assignment however, since the heart of America's military and government was attacked and dubbed by some as a "war zone." How prophetic this observation later became as anthrax made its invisible assault on the MDW and governmental offices in Washington, an enemy which the task force was not trained to combat. Just weeks

after their deployment, the mailroom at Fort McNair tested positive for anthrax and, following the sudden illness of the CMH mailroom supervisor, the mission took on a much different meaning. The mailroom supervisor returned to work later with no further problems and task force members continued with their mission.

Despite the hidden dangers of anthrax and complexities of their historical mission, the MHDs tallied some impressive numbers for their collection efforts: 531 oral history interviews; 122 documents; 4,402 photographs and 55 artifacts. Much of the information gathered by the task force will be part of an official Department of Defense monograph that will be released sometime in the future.

To learn more about U.S. Army Military History, visit the Army homepage at www.army.mil and click on the link to the CMH.