

Teamwork Makes REFORGER Move

A Translog Staff Feature

The annual REFORGER exercises have started again. A plane rolls to a halt at the airport terminal, and its 350 passengers walk slowly from the aircraft to the waiting area. Groggy from the eight-hour flight and the onset of jet lag, they pass the time reading books and playing cards as they wait to collect their baggage and board buses to their destinations.

Finally an announcement comes booming from the bullhorn, and battle-ready REFORGER troops march out of the huge Rhein-Main Air Base Aircraft hangar under the watchful eyes of the 3rd Movements Region Air Terminal Movements Control Team (ATMCT).

The 3rd Movements Region, which is a subordinate command of the 4th Transportation Brigade, at Camp King, Oberursel, Germany, oversees the movements of inbound units from the time the aircraft lands until it reaches its POMCUS (Prepositioning of Material Configured to Unit Sets) site or receiving unit.

ATMCTs are responsible for the processing of inbound and outbound passengers and their cargo and equipment during REFORGER exercises. Altogether, ATMCT has processed more than 3,500 passengers on 19 flights for REFORGER exercises. As one rail conductor from ATMCT Operations stated, "We're responsible for passengers from the time their plane lands to the time they depart by bus to their destinations."



Oberleutnant Michael Rotzer writes Reforger convoy information on the UMCC convoy movements chart as SSgt. Robert Hafer looks on.

Baggage is loaded on stake and platform (S&P) trailers hauled by various companies of the 37th Transportation Group while the soldiers are moved to destination by commercial bus.

Members of the seven-person ATMCT team match inbound unit orders with receiving units in USAREUR and record information for later use. The Transportation Movements Coordinators (TMCs) make sure all documents are checked and flight times are properly recorded, unit names properly spelled, and all passengers are accounted for. The reports are then forwarded to Headquarters, 4th Transportation Brigade and the information called in to the 3rd Movements Region at Betts Kaserne, Frankfurt, and the USAREUR Movements Control Center (UMCC) at Camp King. This information is used to track the inbound units and determine the cost of commercial planes and buses.

Keeping track of units and costs can be difficult and challenging when inbound aircraft are diverted or delayed. Diversion of aircraft from one airfield to another may cause problems such as shortages of ATMCT personnel, increases in the cost of using commercial buses, and additional overtime hours for the bus drivers.

SSgt. John W. Redden, Jr., military rail conductor and 3rd Movements Region ATMCT Operations NCO during the operation said, "One day we had four flights coming in. We had one flight delayed so there were two planes unloading at the same time. It took us awhile to sort the two planes out. We worked twenty hours straight from 5 a.m. to 1 a.m. the next day."

Because of the large number of REFORGER troop movements through Rhein-Main Air Base, ATMCT received support from Frankfurt Military Community (MILCOM).

"We coordinated with Frankfurt MILCOM for portable dining facilities and recreational services," Redden added. "Arriving soldiers enjoyed candy and soft drinks, card games and pinball machines during the 2 to 4 hour wait between arrival and departure from the Rhein-Main hangar."

Because of customs regulations, the procedures for processing passengers and baggage for outbound flights differs from inbound. During deployment,

units are sent through customs in the United States, while during redeployment, units are briefed in the hangar by the 42nd Military Police Group (Customs). Troops, along with their personal baggage, pass through the amnesty area and receive a thorough customs check. They must then stay in the waiting area until departure.

Another unit that has played a very important role in REFORGER is the USAREUR Movement Control Center (UMCC). Located at Headquarters, 4th Transportation Brigade, UMCC is responsible for monitoring and controlling cargo movement and troops arriving and departing Europe for REFORGER exercises.

UMCC is in operation 24-hours-a-day with 2 officers and 6 enlisted personnel on the day shift, and 2 officers and 5 enlisted personnel working through the night.

UMCC is composed of four sections—highway, air, land and water. Each section is tasked with preparing a daily situation report from information received from the seven Combined Traffic Centers (CTCs). This report includes types of equipment moved, weight of cargo, number of personnel, unit, and origin and destination. The report is sent by a joint messageform to USAREUR Headquarters in Heidelberg and to the 21st Support Command in Kaiserslautern.

"My job is to monitor the convoys moving through Europe," said SSgt. Robert Hafer, a transportation movements coordinator in the highway section. "Monitor means keeping track of the whole convoy route from start to release point. This includes the overnight rest and refueling stops. I also make sure that convoy route schedules prepared by the 2nd Movements Region and V Corps are followed by the units."

Sp4 JoAnn Small, a transportation movements coordinator in the air section explained her duties. "I keep a permanent log of all arriving and departing flights, all deploying and redeploying units and where the units go after leaving the airport. I call USAREUR Headquarters and the 21st Support Command and pass flight information to them; and Rhein-Main and Ramstein Air Bases call me if there are any changes in the flight schedules."

"Units moving by rail are monitored with the help of a rail timetable book published by the Deutsche Bundesbahn (DB)" said SSgt. Hafer. "This book contains the schedules for all of the REFORGER trains moving through Europe. We also keep in touch with the rail personnel at the various Transportation Movements Offices and the DB Headquarters in Mainz to give and receive rail information."

Hafer also works in the water section, keeping track of cargo arriving and departing the three REFORGER seaports—Ghent, Belgium; Vlissingen, Holland; and Bremerhaven, Germany." The main types of cargo handled at these three seaports," says Hafer, "are containers, MILVANS, and wheeled and tracked vehicles. Once the cargo is unloaded from the



Members of Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 2nd Armored Division, arrive at Rhein-Main Air Base for participation in REFORGER exercise.

Photos by SP4 Redg Abercrombie

ships, it is distributed to the units by rail, highways or sea-air interface."

UMCC has a German liaison movements team assigned to them for assistance with REFORGER exercises. The team is part of the German Territorial Southern Command and consists of three officers and one enlisted member.

"About 75 percent of our job is monitoring convoys, 20 percent is helping with rail problems, and 5 percent is passing flight information," said Hauptmann Peter Ries, a German liaison movements officer. "We receive convoy movement progress reports either by telephone or telex from the CTCs and the German Feldjäger (the German Military Police). We record the information we receive on the UMCC convoy movements chart. Then the highway section takes the information from the chart and uses it to prepare their daily situation report."

ATMCT and UMCC provide important services to the European military transportation system. Through teamwork and cooperation they work together to get the job done. REFORGER, like any other large international exercise, is a joint effort which fully utilizes the capabilities of all military personnel involved—men and women from all walks of life, working together toward a common goal. 

The foregoing story was based on articles submitted by Headquarters, 4th Transportation Brigade Public Affairs Office.