

Truck Company Keeps
1st Marine Division
Rolling

▲ **Not just screwing around**, Staff Sgt. Ruben A. Sanchez, mechanic, uses a screwdriver to fix the valve springs of a broken humvee engine. Sanchez said a piece of metal in piston No.1 was causing the malfunction. Marines from Truck Company, fix nearly 50 vehicles per week.

Photo by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald

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THEY'VE GOT DIESEL RUNNING through their veins. Their language is as raw as the throaty rumble of the huge engines on which they turn wrenches. Skinned knuckles and grease-smearing faces are testament to the work that keeps the 1st Marine Division rolling.

Marines of Truck Company, Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division take on the daily task of keeping Marines and supplies moving across Iraq's Al Anbar Province. They chalk up hundred of miles a day moving through a zone as big as North Carolina and brave attacks just to keep the engines, and the division, in smooth

running order.

"We usually have about 50 trucks in some phase of the maintenance cycle at any given time," said Cpl. T.J. Maglio, one of the company's mechanics. The company has fixed "everything imaginable" since being here. "In conditions like these, anything that can go wrong with the vehicles will go wrong."

The company, comprised of four operations platoons and one maintenance platoon, is here providing vehicular support to units operating from the Al Anbar Province in western Iraq.

Three of the operations platoons are attached to infantry units in the area. The fourth platoon is here providing

▲ A true grease monkey, Lance Cpl. Kimberly K. Nalepka changes a humvee's fuel pump. Nalepka, who hails from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said she enjoys her job as a mechanic but has grown a dislike for the fumes of diesel fuel.

Photo by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald

► Saving lives is all in a days work for Staff Sgt. William R. Milligan, a mechanic with Truck Company, Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division. Milligan, of Llano, Texas, makes armor plates for the doors of the division's vehicles. The armor protects passengers from shrapnel expelled during enemy attacks.

Photo by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald



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Maglio said. The mechanics had to replace several tires. "It gets frustrating when we fix a truck and then something like that happens," he said. "But that's our job."

Once the trucks are ready for the road, they are used to transport troops and cargo to other camps in the province.

"We use humvees and seven-ton

▼ **"Keep on truck'n."** Marines of Truck Co., repair the vehicles used to transport Marines and cargo to the other camps in the Al Anbar Province of western Iraq. Most trucks are brought in for common mechanical problems, while others are brought in after being damaged during enemy attacks.

Photo by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald

trucks to move Marines and supplies around the area of operations," said Staff Sgt. Gregory S. Britt, operations staff noncommissioned officer. "If a unit needs transportation support, we're here to support them."

Convoys can last from a few hours to an entire day. The Marines know leaving the security of the camp is dangerous work, but Britt said they are more than prepared.

"Every time we go out, we do immediate action drills to make sure everyone knows what to do if we are attacked," explained Britt.

Drivers like Lance Cpl. Lindsay M. Zella know how quickly things can go bad. She got her first taste of combat during a trip to the eastern portion of Al Anbar Province. Her convoy was hit

twice by enemy small-arms fire.

"We got hit on our way back here from (Baghdad International Airport)," Zella said. "The Marines in back of the truck, my assistant driver and the gunner all returned fire, but my mission was to drive."

Zella said she was pleased to put all her training to use. Fortunately, no one was injured during the attacks.

"It doesn't matter who you are or what your job is," she added.

"The chance that Marines here will see combat is just as great as any infantryman. Being a driver, I'm just as much of a target."

"When I see the vehicles pull out, I know without us the convoys wouldn't be able to leave," he Maglio said.

"It's rewarding to actually get to see

support to Headquarters Battalion.

From transporting cargo and troops to other camps to revamping broken vehicles, Truck Co., works round the clock to make sure its mission is met. Some of the company's warriors serve as drivers for the scores of convoys leaving here daily. Others stay behind and use their truck-repairing know-how to keep the division's transportation assets up and running.

Between 25 and 40 vehicles are dispatched from the camp's motor pool everyday, said Staff Sgt. William J. Pinkerton, 4th Platoon sergeant. The operations platoon makes sure these vehicles are in good condition before

they go out each day by giving each one a thorough quality check.

Those trucks classified as unfit for travel are left behind for the company's mechanics.

The mechanics see a lot of engine breakdowns and brake problems because of the heat and dust, said Maglio. Each week the Marines go through about 30 gallons of oil and change more than 40 tires.

Still, not all the vehicles are brought in for common mechanical problems. Some need to be repaired following enemy attacks. Razor-sharp shrapnel from mortar explosions and improvised explosive devices shred rubber tires.

▲ **Surgeons of a different kind,** Cpl. T.J. Maglio and Staff Sgt. Ruben A. Sanchez conduct a "heart transplant" by pull the engine from a humvee. With about 50 trucks in some phase of the maintenance cycle at any given time, once Maglio and Sanchez, finish replacing this engine, they will be on to the next sick vehicle and then the next.

Photo by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald

But it's not only vehicles traveling on the roads that are affected. Even trucks in camp are not spared from the effects of enemy action.

A mortar round recently exploded near a seven-ton that had just been fixed,

