

# 203rd Military Intelligence Battalion changes command

Story and photo by

**RACHEL PONDER**

APG News



Colonel Lisa Price, National Ground Intelligence Center commander, right, hands the 203rd Military Intelligence Battalion (Technical Intelligence) colors to incoming Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Troy Heskett during a change of command ceremony at Fanshaw Field July 11.

The 203rd Military Intelligence Battalion (Technical Intelligence) welcomed its incoming commander and paid tribute to the departing commander at a change of command ceremony at Fanshaw Field July 11.

Lieutenant Colonel Troy Heskett assumed the title of battalion commander from the outgoing battalion commander, Lt. Col. Avery Penn who served 29 months.

Sergeant Holly Gilmore gave welcoming remarks and acted as the narrator for the ceremony. The host of the program was Col. Lisa Price, commander, National Ground Intelligence Center.

Gilmore gave a brief history of the 203rd Military Intelligence Battalion stating that the function of battlefield technical intelligence began after American Forces suffered considerable technological surprises at the hands of German forces in North America during World War II. Avoiding technological surprise remains a core goal of the 203rd Military Battalion. As the nature of warfare becomes more complex with advances of technology, the essential value of TECHINT contribution to the current intelligence picture also increases.

“Currently the 203rd Military Intelligence Battalion has a detachment deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” Gilmore said. “As the nature of warfare becomes more complex with advances in technology, the 203rd Military Battalion remains committed to the task of mastering this challenge.”

The battalion Chaplain (1st Lt.) Mark Lans, gave the invocation, asking for continued blessing for Penn and Heskett.

At the beginning of the ceremony Penn’s wife Isabella Maria Da Silva-Ortega was presented with a bouquet of open red roses to symbolize the growth and flourishing during her service as the battalion’s first lady. A bouquet of closed red roses was given to Heskett’s wife, Andrea, symbolizing the blossoming that will continue during her husband’s command.

Gilmore said that the passing of the unit colors from the old commander to the new commander points out the ever changing nature of the Army, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

“The transfer of the battalion colors this morning is significant in many ways. The history, traditions and accomplishments of the battalion are embodied in these colors,” she said.

During Price’s remarks, she said that Penn was a unique individual and officer who will be missed, that he made great contributions to the intelligence community and thanked him for his service.

“He has successfully overseen the organization and has done a tremendous job in running the battalion’s daily operations,” she said. “Lieutenant Colonel Penn shouldered enormous responsibility for quality intelligence support for a country at war.”

Price said that she is looking forward to working with Heskett. She added that Heskett has extensive experience that has prepared him for the job.

“The challenges will be great but you can overcome them with creativity and hard work,” Price said. “I know that you will stay focused on the task and succeed.”

“The three biggest tasks I have for you are take care of the battalion, take care of the mission and take care of the Family,” she said.

Price concluded by thanking the 203rd for their work.

“The Warfighters on the ground are eternally grateful for the work you do,” she said. “You are the best at what you do, don’t change,” she said.

During Penn's remarks he said that he enjoyed being battalion commander.

"I am extremely proud that I have been given this opportunity to command a battalion with such an illustrious lineage," Penn said. "You are the only technical intelligence battalion in the Army's inventory. You are the leader of battlefield exploitation. You do a very lot with very little, and I am very proud of that."

Penn said that during his tenure the 203rd battalion has trained and deployed more than 400 Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen to the weapons intelligence mission out in the battlefield in Iraq for four different rotations, and a month ago Soldiers volunteered and redeployed back to Iraq during a fifth rotation.

"I am very proud of the day to day individuals who keep the lineage and good name and reputation of the lineage of the 203rd alive. It has been a great honor and a privilege [being your battalion commander]," he said. "More importantly I am also proud that you are the only intelligence battalion within the Department of Defense that conducts a joint level exercise twice a year that brings together diverse partners."

Penn concluded by wishing his successor, Heskett, the best of luck in the future.

During Heskett's remarks he thanked Penn for his service, and said that he is grateful for the opportunity to serve as battalion commander for the 203rd.

"Thank you for this opportunity, I am honored," he said.

#### *Lt. Col. Troy Heskett*

Heskett was born in Leesburg, Va. He graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1986 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry. Heskett served as a rifle platoon leader, mortar platoon leader, anti-armor platoon leader, and assistant S-2 in the 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Ky.

In 1991, he deployed with the battalion for Operations Desert Shield and Storm.

From 1992 to 1993, Heskett served as the S-2 of the 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment at Vilseck, Germany. From 1993 to 1996 he served as the G-2 training officer, Collection Management & Dissemination; chief, Analysis and Control Element of the 3rd Infantry Division at Wuerzburg, Germany. Heskett then served as a production manager for the National Ground Intelligence Center at Charlottesville, Va.

Upon leaving active duty in 1997, Heskett transitioned to the U.S. Army Reserve as a drilling individual mobilization augmentee assigned to the Army Imagery Requirements Office as a departmental requirements officer.

He was mobilized in support of Operation Noble Eagle in 2003 and remained in the AIRO until 2008 when he transferred to EUCOM J2 Joint Reserve Intelligence Support Element, Army Reserve Element Detachment 8. Heskett served as the deputy detachment commander and the requirements manager.

Heskett's military education includes the Infantry Officer Basic Course, the Military Intelligence Officer's Transition Course, the Military Intelligence Officer Advanced Course, and the Combined Arms and Services Staff School. His civilian education includes a Bachelor of Arts in History from the Virginia Military Institute, 1988.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Ranger Tab, Airborne Badge and Air Assault Badge.