

THE Falcon Flyer

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3rd CAB Weathers Hailstorm

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – More than 80 Task Force Falcon helicopters were damaged when a sudden unprecedented hailstorm hit Kandahar Airfield April 23, where nearly half of the brigade’s helicopters were parked. What happened following the storm was the real phenomenon—returning the aircraft to fully mission capable status without a gap in air support to our teammates on the ground.

The 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade was immediately forced to shift their focus to replace damaged blades, stabilators and windows following the storm. The aircraft also sustained multiple damages to their sheet metal skin and were in need of repair. In order to get these tasks accomplished, the CAB had to enlist the aid from units within the basic force, supporting maneuver units and higher commands in U.S. and Afghanistan. This ‘Enterprise’ of leaders had to unify to realign critical air assets to Kandahar Airfield where commanders on the ground were still conducting missions in Regional Command-South.

The Army and Aviation Enterprise answered the call for assistance. U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command, 36th CAB, 101st CAB, U.S. Army Installation Management Command, International

Security Assistance Force-Joint Command, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, 1st Theater Sustainment Command and Department of the Army staff joined with resounding effect to coordinate a solution for the damages.

Daily video conferences simplified the communication across various command echelons, theater logistical units in Afghanistan and logistical experts across

aircraft,” said Col. Pepin.

For Chief Warrant Officer 5 Marty Calkins, the Brigade Aviation Maintenance Officer, his priority was the oversight of receiving new parts and installation onto helicopters needed for the fighting season. He saw firsthand the Army providing the logistical support required to get the aircraft back into the fight.

“We received immediate support from the aviation task force in Regional Command-East and units in Kuwait, who began sending every blade, canopy and anything else we requested,” said Calkins.

This is where several of the Army major commands aided to provide parts and assistance where needed, demonstrating the Army’s logistical tenacity—all without a noticeable reduction in supporting ground forces with air assets.

Calkins said Aviation and Missile Command had the lead in the United States to begin movement of replacement items, which were mostly helicopter blades. He attributes the quick turnaround for repaired helicopters to the Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group and says that the sheer number of airframe repairs required after the hail storm provided five years worth of experience for the airframe mechanics.

“Their [TASM] dedication, commitment and professionalism throughout the repair processes produced incredible results getting 90 percent of the damaged fleet back into the fight within three weeks—a complete success story,” said Calkins.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Caleb Sharpe holds a piece of hail on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan April 23. The hail size was slightly larger than a golf ball causing damages to Task Force Falcon’s fleet of helicopters parked on the flight line. (Courtesy Photo)

the globe orchestrating resupply efforts, resulting in over half of the damaged helicopters repaired in the first week. Within five days, nearly 25 percent of the blades had arrived for replacement.

Col. Allan Pepin, Commander of Task Force Falcon, 3rd CAB said he was impressed with the enterprise’s response and minimal impact on the mission.

“I remain impressed at the incredible capacity of the enterprise to source resources to support the combatant commander. The enemy had no opportunity to take advantage of the impact on our

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the U.S., Afghanistan and Kuwait. He says the contributions by those involved was what made the quick recovery of replacement parts possible. Lambert also credits the repairs to the TASM, attached to the CAB.

“TASM was a big help in all the repairs,” said Lambert.



SPC Samuel Miller, from Ahwahnee, Calif. fastens rivets to a helicopter stabilator on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. Miller is a 15G Aviation Structural Repairer with the 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group, a California National Guard unit from Fresno, Ca. who is supporting maintenance operations for Task Force Falcon (U.S. Army photo by CPT Chad Ashe)

The 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group from Fresno, Calif. supports the maintenance initiatives for the fleet of helicopters operated by Task Force Falcon, 3rd CAB. The TASMG provides the capability of repairing damaged sheet metal on helicopters, sustaining the helicopters’ outer skin and internal structure.

The California National Guard unit provided over 200 sheet metal repairs for the CAB following the hailstorm. The unit, charged with providing depot-level structural repair for helicopters, keeps Task Force Falcon’s helicopters mission ready in Regional Commands—South, Southwest, and West—an area slightly smaller than Montana.

Spc. Samuel Miller, a 15G Aviation Structural Repairer with TASMG, supports maintenance operations for Task Force Falcon, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade. Miller says that if there are any dents, damages or cracks, he must replace the entire part or repair as needed. His expertise was put to use following the damages when helicopter parts, mostly blades and stabilators, were in need of repair.

“This is my first deployment and it means a lot to me,” said Miller. “I’m proud to serve my country and be out here and do what I was meant to do—fixing aircraft so that the people who are using them can have them when they need them to do the real mission out there.”

Miller understands his role in supporting combat operations and for him; his mission is aircraft structural repairs.

“For me it’s learning and doing what needs to get done and accomplishing the mission. It’s our top priority,” said Miller.

Staff Sgt. Patrick Jubrey, from Fresno Calif., is a 15G noncommissioned officer and helped to supervise maintenance operations for TASMG following the hail storm. He says that his team will complete the mission no matter how big the task is.

“The big end game is support overall. We don’t have big jobs or little jobs; we take on any job and get it done,” said Jubrey. He said the influx of repairs following the hail damages did not slow the unit down.

Although it is unlikely a hailstorm of this magnitude will affect U.S. Army Aviation units again in Afghanistan, if it does, the helicopters will not be out of the fight for long. Pepin, among others in the Army Aviation community and Task Force Falcon, say that the hail storm was not as impressive as the reaction to resupply or repair damaged parts.

“I remain inspired and in awe to serve with our great leaders and maintainers who made this significant challenge and historical event easy to overcome; a remarkable accomplishment by any standard,” said Col. Pepin. •

THE FALCON FLYER

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TASK FORCE FALCON

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3rd CAB Hosts Talent Show

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Task Force Falcon, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers hosted a talent show for all of KAF near the Mustang Ramp flight line July 5. Congratulations to the following winners, and thank you to all of the contestants:

- 1st Place: SPC Janelle Edwards (singing, Task Force Lighthorse)
- 2nd Place: SGT Kyle Garrett (singing, Role III)
- 3rd Place: SGT Jonathan Richie (singing, Task Force Knighthawk)
- 4th Place: SPC Brandon Haines (dancing, 139th Field Artillery)
- 5th Place: SPC Hilary Knutson and Spc. James McCreary (singing and guitar, 189th Signal)



(Above) PFC Paul Ieti from Task Force Workhorse sings his solo while the sun sets near the flight line.



(Above) CPT Jennifer Anderson and SFC Shawanda Byers, command team for B/4-3, Task Force Lighthorse perform their duet.



(Above) 1SG Paul Julien as "Silky J" hosts as master of ceremonies.



(Above) SPC Kenneth Swan from Task Force Knighthawk plays on the keyboard.



(Above) SPC Janelle Edwards from Task Force Lighthorse is announced the first place winner for the talent show.



(Left) KAF personnel watch performances near Task Force Falcon headquarters.



(Right) SPC Brandon Haines performs his dance routine.

Falcon's Got Talent

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Task Force Falcon, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade gathered the talents of Kandahar Airfield to display their singing, musical, comedic and dancing abilities. The CAB hosted the event near the unit's headquarters July 5 to have a little fun while observing Independence Day. Looking closer at the talents, one could see the hidden message a few Soldiers had to offer.



(Above) SPC Janelle Edwards from Task Force Lighthorse performs at the talent show. Edwards placed first in the talent show singing a song by Beyonce titled "Listen."

1SG Paul Julien and SFC Shawanda Byers, both first sergeants assigned to Task Force Lighthorse, 3rd CAB, decided to hold the event for the Soldiers and personnel around KAF to showcase their talents. Both first sergeants were excited about the great turnout and talent variety.

Byers said the intent behind hosting the talent show was to lift morale, celebrate Independence Day and bring the task forces together.

Julien, known as "Silky J" for the event, was the master of ceremonies and said that in addition to the celebrating the holiday, it was also a chance for the performers to give back to peers and friends. Julien kept the audience laughing between acts with his interviews and quick witted commentary.

"We realize what it means to be out here away from your loved ones, your Family members and your friends," said Julien. "We tried to time it around the Fourth of July so Soldiers can come out and enjoy one another."

PFC Paul Ieti, assigned to Task Force Workhorse, 3rd CAB, is a talented singer and recent internet sensation from a YouTube video posting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FNNDkdD7AM>. Ieti and SGT Jonathan Richie, another 3rd CAB

Soldier from Task Force Knighthawk, sang a duet dedicated to the problems Soldiers face that lead to suicidal thoughts. Both Soldiers met at the show's audition and said it was important to collaborate on a song that has a positive message on deployment issues to help others.

Richie, on stage before the performance, said it is important to recognize the precursors for suicide to prevent an attempt.

CPT Patrick Johns, trial counsel for the CAB's brigade judge advocate, was filling a judge's role in a different capacity at the show. Johns said the level of musical talent displayed by the contestants exceeded his expectations and as a judge it was almost impossible to pick a favorite.

"The winners of the competition could certainly pursue careers in music if they wanted, so it's even more impressive that they chose to be Soldiers," said Johns.

SPC Hilary Knutson, a South Carolina National Guardsman from Pickens, S.C., assigned to Company B, 198th Expeditionary

Signal Battalion, had a message in a song written by her about overcoming obstacles. The lyrics to her song "Mountains" say, "warning to my obstacles: better beware. I'm gonna make it through this, these metaphoric fences. Gonna be relentless 'cause I can move mountains."

Knutson says the song reminds her that she doesn't have to let anyone bring her down—she is stronger than that.

"The goal is for the song to be an uplifting one, triumphant even. No one should ever let people's discouragement dictate how hard they go for something," said Knutson. "It's only a barrier if you let it be. Whatever it is that's holding you back, it's not worth it."

At the end of the night, and after the votes tallied, the winner was SPC Janelle Edwards, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, Task Force Lighthorse, who inspired the crowd singing a song by Beyonce titled "Listen."

Most attendees would say that there was more than one winner. From the audience members, judges and performers, everyone won by showing up for the larger talents displayed by the flight line in a place far away, with a little slice of home for the holiday. •



(Above) SPC Hilary Knutson is shown singing her song titled "Mountains."

MARNE AIR WARRIOR

CW2 Calvin Esslinger is a UH-60L Blackhawk Pilot in Alpha Company 4-3 Attack Helicopter Battalion, Task Force Viper. Since CW2 Esslinger's arrival at FOB Wolverine he has set the standard as a pilot, personally flying 185 hours over the course of 45 combat missions, including 2 deliberate and 12 hasty air assaults. In May alone, he flew 3 hasty air assaults, resulting in the removal of 3 detainees, 2 motorcycles, 2 AK-47s, 160 rounds of ammunition, 1 pistol, 30 pistol rounds, 30 PKM rounds, and fragmentary grenade from the battlefield. CW2 Esslinger has also completed 31 Air Movement Recon missions, safely moving hundreds of coalition personnel and supplies around the battlefield.

CW2 Esslinger also serves an integral part in the day to day operations of the company as a supply officer. He has facilitated the turn-in of over \$126,000 in excess Organizational Property to date and has prepared over \$111,000 of Theater Provided Equipment from 12 different Line Item Numbers to be turned in to the KAF Mobile Redistribution Property Assistance Teams (MRPAT). He has prepared dozens of meticulous documents comprising over \$25 million in ORG property, to split the A/4-3 property book between three separate Task Forces as part of Task Force Viper retrograde operations.



Happy 4th of July from some Task Force Brawler Senior NCOs

“Wishing all the task force Soldiers and their Families a Happy 4th of July, especially my wife Janeth and children Vanessa and Alexander.”

CSM Antonio Lopez

“Happy 4th of July to my wife Christina, my two daughters Catherine and Victoria, and to all the Family and friends of the Death Dealers.”

1SG Mark Carl

“To my wife Stephanie, I miss you very much and just know that I wish I was with you this 4th of July. I promise to make it up next year.”

SFC Brian Smith



Marne Air Social Media

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