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Photo by Sgt. Angel Turner, 4th BCT

Col. William Benson (right), commander, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Menton, senior enlisted advisor of the 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., uncased the brigade colors during a Welcome Home Ceremony at Cooper Field, Aug. 1 at Fort Hood, Texas.

4th BCT uncases colors, welcomes home Troops

By Sgt. Angel Turner

4th BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div.

FORT HOOD, Texas— More than 300 Soldiers assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, marched across Cooper Field where Family, friends and fellow Soldiers greeted them in a welcome home ceremony here, Aug. 1.

Signifying completion of their mission, the final redeployed Soldiers, uncased the unit's colors.

"This has been a great chapter in the division's history," stated Maj. Gen. Anthony Ierardi, commanding general for the 1st Cav. Div. "The long knife brigade did a fantastic job at a very critical time during our mission

in Afghanistan. We're very proud to have this unit and all the Soldiers in the unit back."

The unit returned home from a nine-month deployment to Regional Command-East where Soldiers worked alongside Afghan National Security Forces to help strengthen the Afghan nation's fighting capabilities.

Similar to Operation New Dawn, Soldiers took on more of an advisory role, assisting their counterparts where needed.

"It was a real different mission," said Col. William Benson, commander, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. "(Soldiers) actually had to let the Afghans do most of the work and that isn't always easy. Taking a step back and allowing the Afghan Army and Police to take the lead is sometimes the most difficult thing to

do but it's the right thing to do to get them in a position to get them in charge of their own security."

"The Afghan Army and the police that we partnered with over there are better because the efforts of these Soldiers and the leaders who are out here on this field," Benson added.

A large formation of Soldiers quickly turned into small groups overwhelmed by emotion as children, spouses, parents and friends ran to their loved ones embracing them.

"To have all the Families out here tonight welcoming them home is a great thing for our community and for Fort Hood," Benson said.

The redeployed Soldiers will go through various training and classes as part of their reintegration process followed by 30 days of leave.

The final redeployed Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division walk across Cooper Field during a Welcome Home Ceremony Aug. 1 at Fort Hood, Texas. Soldiers completed a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan where they helped train the Afghan National Security Forces. (Photo by Sgt. Angel Turner, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., Public Affairs)



Dragon Battalion conducts airborne mission

By Staff Sgt. John Couffer
1st BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div.

FORT HOOD, Texas – Guided by wind currents and suspended by parachutes; bundles of ammunition, food, fuel and water descend on their designated targets.

Soldiers of the 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st “Ironhorse Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division conducted a low-cost, low-altitude aerial resupply mission July 16 to 18, here.

This marks the first time in Ironhorse history that such an exercise was conducted.

“This mission is groundbreaking for the brigade,” said Monroe, La. native, 2nd Lt. Dexter Harris, a Quarter Master Corps officer assigned to Forward Support Company G attached to the Dragon Battalion, who aided in planning the event.

Harris explained the main purpose of LCLA is to expediently resupply troops on the ground when other methods endanger Soldiers’ lives are not feasible or are too costly.

“The system is relatively cheap and saves the Army time, money and lives,” Harris explained. “Anything we can do to save Soldiers’ lives will be the best option.”

In conducting this event, the Dragon Battalion is writing the standard operating procedures necessary so any unit in the brigade can conduct an LCLA.



Photo by Spc. Fred Brown, 1st BCT

Cpt. Quenton Benjamin (left), a logistics officer, and Spc. Simone Des Islets, a power generation equipment repairer, both assigned to 1-82 FA, 1st BCT, stand back after offloading a cargo bundle from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter midflight during a low-cost, low-altitude aerial resupply mission July 17, at Fort Hood, Texas. The main purpose of LCLA is to expediently resupply troops on the ground when other methods endanger Soldiers’ lives, are not feasible or are too costly.

“Not only is it the first time being done,” Harris said, “but it’s laying the foundation for everyone in the brigade ... whether we deploy to Afghanistan, any other indigenous nations or (the National Training Center).”

Coordination for training was done via Ironhorse air mobility liaison officers, the Air Force and their drop zone instructors at Fort Hood.

Harris explained that during training, the Air Force used a Hercules cargo aircraft to better aid in hands-on training instruction but during the actual event Army Chi-

nook cargo helicopters were used.

The Air Force DZIs taught FSC G Soldiers how to secure and run a drop zone, stage orange panels that mark the drop zone and how to recover the supplies.

Dropping cargo is not something the Ironhorse Brigade normally does.

“This brigade does not ordinarily (conduct) this type of mission,” said Orangeburg, S.C. native, Capt. Quentin Benjamin, commander of FSC G.

He added special operations, air assault and airborne units nor-

mally perform these tasks.

“Conducting LCLA operations broadens the capabilities of the brigade,” Benjamin said. “It gives (the Ironhorse) brigade another asset of getting supplies to its Soldiers.”

The whole point of the training is so FSC G can resupply fellow 1-82 FA with anything at anytime over any terrain, all while keeping fellow Soldiers out of harm’s way, Benjamin said.

The training certified FSC G on LCLA functions and procedures, for instance, one Soldier certified as a “lead” Soldier.

Watsonville, Calif. native, Spc. Pedro Duarte, petroleum supply specialist assigned to the Dragon Battalion, who took part in the event, explained that a “lead” Soldier is one of two Soldiers on either side of supply bundles in an aircraft who are in constant communication with the pilots and who push the bundle out when the red light turns green. The lights indicate to Soldiers when the aircraft is over its designated drop area and is ready to drop its cargo.

Duarte said being chosen to conduct LCLA training was a privilege and he feels the training prepared him to perform the task in the future.

“When we deploy, this training will benefit us, our company and our battalion,” said Duarte. “If they need us, we’ll be ready.”

Air Cav hosts Spouse Spur Ride

Photos by Sgt. Christopher Calvert
1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div.

Ashley Bailey, an Army spouse, low crawls through mud and under barbed wire during 1st Air Cavalry Brigade’s Spouse Spur Ride July 9. During the event, spouses performed Physical Readiness Training, maneuvered through confidence and leader reaction courses, fired weapons using the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000, and learned the basics of land navigation, ultimately allowing them a glimpse into the daily life of their Soldiers.



Lisa DeGolyer, an Army spouse, executes the swing, stop and jump event during 1st Air Cavalry Brigade’s Spouse Spur Ride July 9.



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Rail Gunners train with Ravens

By Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – The Battle of Fleurus in 1794 marked the first time in history in which a military utilized aerial surveillance during combat. The hot air balloon, L'Entreprenant (“The enterprising one”), gave the First French Republic Army the upper hand during the battle as they fought a Coalition Army comprised of Great Britain, the Dutch Republic and the Habsburg Monarchy.

In today’s modern military, aerial surveillance and photography play an integral role in most missions, from planning through to execution. Having the ability to control aerial surveillance is what gives Soldiers an advantage over our adversaries, and in order to have that control, they need specialized training.

Soldiers from the 41st Fires Brigade “Rail Gunners” spent two

weeks learning how to operate the Raven unmanned aerial vehicle in combat situations here.

The Raven is a hand-launched, rapidly-deployable, remote-controlled vehicle used by the Army. The small vehicle’s versatility allows U.S. Soldiers to use it in a number of different situations.

“With this you can go ahead before you plan a fire mission on a particular area and you can send the Raven instead of Troops,” said Staff Sgt. Preston Johnson, the instructor and air traffic controller with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

The Rail Gunners were quick learners. They moved past learning the basics and on to the advanced flying techniques, Johnson said.

“I’m really looking forward to using this,” said Spc. Ryan Dickinson a Multiple Launch Rocket Sys-



Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires

Spc. Cory Cunningham re-assembles a Raven unmanned aerial vehicle after a rough landing at Fort Hood, Texas, June 27. Soldiers from the 41st Fires Brigade spent two weeks learning how to operate the raven, which is a hand-launched, remote-controlled vehicle used by the Army.

tem Fire Direction Specialist with Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Bde.

The raven can fulfill a number of roles for a field artillery unit.

Utilizing the Raven, a unit can spot enemy forces up to 10 kilometers away, determine their direction of travel and ensure routes are free of possible threats.

From homeless immigrant to officer

By Sgt. Omar Estrada
3rd Brigade Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Sipping a cold coffee with a smile on his face, 2nd Lt. Jung Soon Park, platoon leader for Company B, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, recounts the details of his experience.

Park explained how he was born to hard working parents in 1976 in the city of Seoul, South Korea and from childhood had dreamed of becoming “a somebody in life”. His parents encouraged him to attend a local college after high school.

“I was on my second year of college when I received orders to join the Republic of Korea’s Army” Park said. “It was heart breaking knowing I had to stop my education, but it was also rewarding knowing that I was serving my country”. But the break cooled Park’s passion for education.

After completing his service, Park decided to travel to the U.S. instead of returning to college in South Korea. He left with a transla-

tion book to aid him with his limited English, \$500, and a dream for a better life.

Upon arriving in Maryland he decided to buy a Greyhound bus ticket that would give him passage to 30 states in 45 days. Park searched for months but was denied employment due to his immigration status. This drove him to sleep at the bus terminals, in city parks, and occasionally in homeless shelters across the country.

Park tells how he felt some homeless had it better than him at times.

“One time I asked a homeless man if he could share his TV with me, since he had enough change to deposit in the slot at the TV stands at the bus terminals.” With a long look into the half drank cup of coffee he took a deep breath and said, “That was hard... those were hard times.”

Eventually someone hired him and Park used his first earned money to buy clothes so he could attend a Korean church he found on

his ventures. It was at this church he met a pianist named Sung Min Yoon, the girl that would eventually become Park’s wife.

“I noticed that Jung Soon was smart, with a positive attitude and saw life in a very different perspective,” Yoon said. “He always saw the positive side of the negative.”

Park’s wife encouraged him to apply for his permanent resident paperwork and later they jointly decided that Park joining the United States Army could benefit their newly formed family.

In June 2008 Park enlisted into the U.S. Army and attended Basic Combat Training at Fort Knox, Ky. Afterwards he would attend Advanced Individual Training at Fort Lee, Va., and become a shower, laundry and textile repairer specialist. Upon arrival to his first duty station at Fort Bragg, N.C., he immediately fell back into pursuing his education by attending college classes on nights and weekends.

Park said he worked hard on exceeding the minimum standards



Photo by Sgt. Omar Estrada, 3rd BCT PAO

2nd Lt. Jung Soon Park, platoon leader for Company B, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. poses for a family picture outside his home with wife Sung Min Yoon and their twin daughters Sue-In Park and Sur-ah Park, Jun 4.

for everything from physical training tests to correspondence courses to education. He also applied for and received his citizenship status during this period. Park said “quit” was not in his vocabulary. This

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Live The Legend!

Air Cav Vietnam vet recalls life as Combat Tracker

By Sgt. Christopher Calvert
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas – Growing up with World War II veterans as close friends and a Battle of Manila hero as a father, John Dupla had little doubt what he wanted to do when he grew up.

It was his turn to give back as a Soldier like those who sacrificed so much before him.

Surrounded by a rich military history, Dupla said hearing war stories of the past from friends and family inclined him to volunteer for enlistment in 1966, despite the ongoing Vietnam War.

“I grew up influenced by men who parachuted into Normandy with the 101st Airborne,” Dupla said. “Hearing of their valor, as well as of my dad’s in the Philippines as an (Military Police), really made me feel like it was my turn to serve. They had done their share, and it was just natural for me to do mine.”

Upon graduating initial entry training and the U.S. Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga. as an airborne infantryman, Dupla was immediately deployed to Vietnam with the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 9th Cavalry Regiment.

No sooner than Dupla hit the ground, he was given the opportunity to volunteer for a new and upcoming program which was being developed that he knew little about.

“They were looking for jump qualified air troopers to parachute into the jungle as part of Combat Tracker teams,” Dupla said. “I volunteered for it because I was always told while growing up to get into the smallest unit possible, as small, tight-knit groups are closer and often take better care of themselves.”

Dupla and his fellow volunteers were then sent under provisional orders to the British Jungle Warfare School in Malaysia, where they were trained as Combat Trackers by contracted British Soldiers alongside New Zealanders and Australians.

“We were broken up into teams which included a team leader, a dog handler, a Labrador retriever, a visual tracker, and a cover man to watch the visual tracker’s back,” Dupla said. “As visual trackers,



Courtesy Photo

John Dupla, a Combat Tracker during the Vietnam War with Combat Tracker Team 7 attached to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 9th Cavalry Regiment, poses with a confiscated North Vietnamese Army recoilless rifle in Vietnam during 1967 – 1968. CTT 7 was later dubbed the 62nd Infantry Platoon Combat Trackers before the program ended in the early 1970s. The purpose of a CTT was to reestablish contact with the enemy and locate lost or missing friendly personnel. The methods used in completing these missions were visual and Canine Tactical Tracking. The unit was usually supported by a platoon or larger force and worked well ahead of them to maintain noise discipline and the element of surprise.

we were taught to develop a sixth sense utilizing many methods Native American scouts used, such as looking for broken twigs and turned over leaves and rocks; only difference was we were in the jungle.”

After graduating the two-month course, Dupla returned to Vietnam and his Combat Tracker Team was placed on call for the entire 1st Cavalry Division.

He then began executing missions with Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Teams.

“When a group of Soldiers were ambushed and killed, they’d call us,” Dupla said. “Our job was to track the enemy down and see where they were hiding at, as well as to locate lost or missing friendly personnel. Our Labs were great for this, as they were trained not to bark and alert the enemy, unlike bloodhounds and beagles, so our position was never compromised.”

As the Combat Tracker program matured, Soldiers never parachuted into the jungle as originally planned, and when the contract with the British Jungle Warfare School expired, U.S. Soldiers who graduated the course became the teachers for future Combat Trackers.

Estel Matt, one of the last trackers attached to 1-9 Cav with the 62nd Infantry Platoon Combat Trackers, was trained by Dupla’s graduating class and would go on to engage in numerous dangerous missions.

He even used the same British black Labrador, Sam, as Dupla had before him.

“It was a very unique situation, as we rotated throughout Vietnam with our small team, and we would see other members of our platoon only a few times during the course of the deployment,” Matt said. “It was pretty intense. We only went in the field to reestablish contact, so every mission was an extremely dangerous situation.”

Matt said the bonds him and his fellow Combat Trackers developed while undergoing such extreme situations in Vietnam still exist today, despite the program ending and Soldiers living for more than four decades separated from each other.

“We were closer than brothers,” Matt said. “It’s something you can’t describe. We shared such fear and stress together; we’ll always have love for each other.”

Being so close as friends, yet far away in distance now, Vietnam veteran Combat Trackers pioneered official organizations in the 1990s, including the Vietnam Dog Handlers Association and Combat Tracker Teams of the Vietnam War, whose members meet annually across the U.S. to gather and exchange stories.

“We had our first large-scale gathering in St. Louis in 1999, and have been meeting at a different location every year,” Dupla said. “Our organizations not only help members stay in touch, but they also promote the fact that 54 Labradors contributed to saving multiple lives in Vietnam and were the forefather to today’s more advanced K-9 programs.”

During the war, Dupla said he and his fellow battle buddies didn’t think a lot about what they were doing, but now, looking back, they couldn’t be any more proud of their accomplishments.

“When we were in Vietnam, we took it one day at a time and just kept focused on making it out alive,” Dupla said. “In hindsight, what we did was amazing and really saved lives. There are approximately only 300 Combat Trackers left, and I hope they all know they’re unsung heroes.”

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positive mental attitude led to his career advancements.

In 2010 he completed his Bachelor of Science in computer information technology, became a noncommissioned officer in 2012, and almost a month after was accepted into the Officer Candidate Course where, upon completion, he was commissioned as a 2nd. Lt. in the Signal Corps.

Park now serves in the 3rd “Greywolf” Brigade Combat Team where he can apply these lessons learned. He said he is thankful to serve the nation that afforded him these opportunities and plans to continue “to go above and beyond when it (comes) to following orders and doing the right thing in the absence of orders.”

