

FALCON SUMMIT

AUGUST 2013



MANIFEST

4 TF Falcon Command messages

6 Chaplain's Corner

8 CW5 Smail's promotion

9 News from the Renegades

10 Renegade promotions/
Christmas in July



11 Ravens partner with Egyptian
Hospital

12 From Iron Warrior



13 Iron Warrior-Reaper TOA

15 TF Iron Warrior host crash/fire
drill

16 From TF Dragon



17 500-hour maintenance

18 Colossal Night Operations

19 From TF Tigershark

21 Tigershark Soldiers recognized
MG McConville

22 From TF Knighthawk

24 Married and deployed

26 From TF Phoenix

29 Teamwork in action - slingload

FALCON SUMMIT

AUGUST 2013

Falcon Summit is published in the interest of the servicemembers of the 10th Mountain Infantry (LI) Division's Combat Aviation Brigade.

The Falcon Summit is an Army-funded newsletter authorized for members of the U.S. Army, under the provision of AR 360-1. Contents of the Falcon Summit are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or Department of the Army.

10th Mountain Division Commander
MG Stephen Townsend

10th CAB Commander
COL David Francis

10th CAB Chief Warrant Officer of the Bde.
CW5 Jeffrey Fitzgerald

10th CAB Command Sergeant Major
CSM Chad Cuomo

10th CAB PAO
CPT Peter Smedberg

10th CAB PAO NCOIC
SSG Todd Pouliot

CONTACT
318-481-6597

TASK FORCE TIGERSHARK
FOB Salerno
LTC Chad Ward
CSM David Paul

TASK FORCE KNIGHTHAWK
FOB Shank
LTC Matthew Braman
CSM Robert Parmer

TASK FORCE PHOENIX
Bagram Airfield
LTC Anthony Meador
CSM Peter Garretson

TASK FORCE RENEGADE
Bagram Airfield
CPT Eric Trivette
1SG Timothy Ros

TASK FORCE DRAGON
FOB Fenty
LTC Glen Heape
CSM Michael McGee

TASK FORCE IRON WARRIOR
Mazar-e-Sharif
LTC John Kovac
CSM Sean Livolsi

TASK FORCE REAPER
Mazar e Sharif
LTC James Schreffler
CSM David Gail

COVER PHOTO

A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from 2nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Knighthawk, makes its approach into a landing zone at Forward Operating Base Shank.



E Company, 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, maintain proficiency with their individual M16 rifles at the range on Forward Operating Base Salerno in Khowst Province, Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)

From Falcon 6:

Task Force Falcon Families, Friends, Soldiers:

Another month has passed since we last spoke and I could not be more proud of the efforts made day in and day out by our Soldiers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Task Force Iron Warrior for their dedication to service and professionalism as they begin their redeployment back to Pennsylvania. Your efforts here were nothing short of phenomenal and it was an honor to have you serve as a member of the Task Force Falcon Family. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Task Force Reaper to our formation. Your Soldiers and equipment will soon be put to the test as you pick up where Task Force Iron Warrior left off; we are looking forward to great things in the days to come.

Each month, Task Force Falcon selects a theme we would like to communicate to our Soldiers and Families. Teamwork is the focus for the month of August. Everything we have accomplished to date has been the result of many individual efforts supporting a unified effort enabling us to accomplish the mission. You can peer inside any hangar, shop, section, or crew within our area of operations and will be amazed by the collaboration taking place. No single person is responsible for our success; teamwork is the driving force behind all we do.

Task Force Falcon Soldiers continue to accomplish incredible feats and Command Sergeant Major Cuomo and I are extremely proud of all they have done. Soldiers from our ranks have been repeatedly recognized by Major General McConnville, the Combined Joint Task Force - 101 Commanding General, for their extraordinary service during the hot summer months here in Afghanistan. Our brave men and women continue to execute a wide variety of missions ranging from retrograde operations to direct aviation support to ground commanders across eastern and northern Afghanistan. I ask that both our Soldiers and Families back home stay strong as we near the half way mark of our deployment.

The support we have received from the Families back home, as well as the Fort Drum community, continues to inspire us. Your support and dedication has been a tremendous source of strength allowing us to accomplish our mission. We ask that you continue to keep us in your thoughts, as you are in ours, and follow us on the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade Facebook page to stay current on all Task Force Falcon activities. Thank you for all that you do!

FLY TO GLORY!

COL David J. Francis
Task Force Falcon
10th Combat Aviation Brigade
Falcon 6



From Falcon 65:

Task Force Families, Friends, and Soldiers:

We are now three months into our deployment and still going strong. I am continually impressed by the performance of our brave men and women and honored to serve alongside each of you. Task Force Falcon has been operating in some of the world's harshest, most rugged terrain, and has been standing up to conditions of our current operating environment exceptionally. This is a testament to the long months spent preparing for this endeavor at our home stations.

Families and Friends: thank you for all that you have done and continue to do. The support systems we have in place are top notch and are instrumental to our success during this nine-month sepa-

From Falcon 7:

Task Force Falcon Families, Friends, and Soldiers:

I am very proud of the dedication and professionalism of 10th CAB and Task Force Falcon Soldiers. As the summer months are nearing an end, I ask that we continue to maintain the high standard of excellence expected of our Soldiers. This means enforcing the current uniform and personal safety equipment standards already in place and ensuring we always do what is right. By now, we have all settled into our daily routines; please be cognizant of your surroundings and avoid letting complacency set in. Force Protection continues to be a top priority of mine.

I am continuously amazed by the love and support we receive everyday by our Families and loved ones back at our home stations. Your support is a constant source of encouragement used to draw the motivation needed to accomplish the mission. We are extremely fortunate to have the support systems we have in place; for that I would like to personally thank you.

ration. Your strength is inspiring and serves as a constant source of motivation. Task Force Falcon is blessed to have you in our corner. Thank you.

FLY TO GLORY!

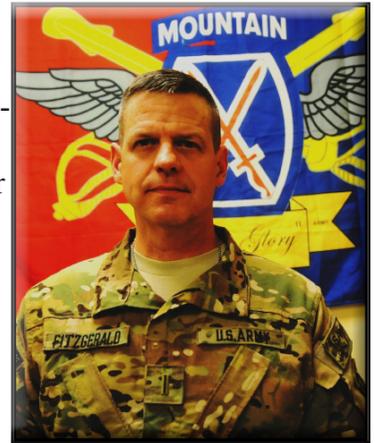
CW5 Jeffrey Fitzgerald

10th Combat Aviation

Brigade

Chief Warrant Officer of the Brigade

Falcon 65



As we approach the half way mark of our deployment, I ask that all of our aviators, maintainers, and support personnel continue to give your all. Task Force Falcon is a top-notch organization and it is an honor to serve shoulder-to-shoulder with each of you.

FLY TO GLORY!

CSM Chad Cuomo

Task Force Falcon

10th Combat Aviation Brigade

Falcon 7



The Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain (MAJ) Jerry Johnson

Greetings again to everyone from Bagram. I am excited to see pictures of my son Jeremy's graduation from basic training at Fort Jackson, SC from D/1-13, "40 Rounds" Battalion. He did well and is now set to go back to SUNY Potsdam, drill full-time with the 77th Engineers across the street from the airfield, and become a contracted cadet with the Golden Knights Battalion, commanded by an aviator, LTC Anthony Dimarco. Congratulations son, you make your dad proud. And that is a great segway to our 10th CAB August theme, Teamwork. He had to work with the members of his unit to succeed during his nine months of training, and will have to keep applying the same principles to succeed in college, ROTC, and life. As I think of Teamwork, I personally look at two areas. On one hand, I am part of a military team, working in a brigade while also serving the larger population in theater as a chaplain. So in my work it is important to cultivate that team spirit, whether I am doing projects for 10th CAB or the CJTF-101 Command Chaplain. Others will write on this subject in this newsletter, and it is important. But my focus is on the marriage relationship.

When we speak of Teamwork in marriage, my absolute favorite book and supplemental video curriculum is *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, by Dr. John Gottman. Those who have been in the brigade may have been to one of our retreats where we provided some of the material. Dr. Gottman presents "The Sound Relationship (or Marital) House," with seven principles that are found both in the video series and book. The diagram is interesting because he describes the foundations, the stories, and the attics of a healthy marriage.

Gottman has done more than 30 years of studying couples at his "Love Lab" apartment at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is confident that he can predict divorce with

about 96% certainty simply by watching videos of couples interacting with each other. The first three levels of the relationship house pertain to nurturing friendship: Love Maps (knowing your partner by asking lots of open-ended questions); Fondness and Admiration (the antidote for developing contempt when times are difficult), and Turning Towards Instead of Away (that "emotional bank account" has at least five deposits for every one withdrawal). Masters of relationship know their partner, switch from a negative frame of mind when it comes to partner's mistakes (works for kids, too), and turn towards "BIDS" (bidding to get their partner's attention to start a conversation). Couples who are best friends are successful in BIDS to deal with conflict about 86% of the time, whereas couples who eventually divorce are only successful 33% of the time. So Gottman's research essentially shows that couples who are happy with each other also tend to be gentle. This gentleness leads to overcoming negative times, repairing any short-term damage that may result from mistakes or disagreements. Over time couples who develop this friendship have stronger passion, romance, and sexual intimacy than those who do not. To become best friends, it takes years of Teamwork.

The friendship leads to another story of the house, "Positive Sentiment Override." Couples who think positively will not end up gridlocked when their problems occur. Others tend to think negatively, which is why they are not able to successfully apply many of the principles we teach at Strong Bonds retreats in the realms of better communication and conflict resolution. Gottman also asserts that in the times we are living in it is very important for men to accept influence from their wives, something that may not have been the case forty or fifty years ago. Positive Sentiment Override allows these couples to succeed in "Regulating Conflict." There are two types of problems in marriage, the ones that are solvable (money issues, disciplining children, expectations for sex and romance, hobbies and interests) and ones that are going to be a perpetual part of the

marriage forever (the husband leaves his clothes on the floor, the wife is not a “morning person”). Gottman’s “Salt Shaker” analogy states that 69% of couples fight (or at least disagree) about the same issues. Couples who are best friends learn to handle the issues that are not ever going to fundamentally change, while regulating the damage to the relationship. For my wife Carrie and me, a simple example is what we like to watch on television. She is a huge fan of crime dramas like Law and Order, NCIS, CSI, Hawaii Five ‘O, and the like. I love “The O’Reilly Factor” and the argumentative political news shows. Plus sports of course. There were times, especially after deployment, when this difference in preference was a greater issue. I guess we shall find out this winter what this deployment yields on that front. But if we are working as a team and best friends, we will not judge each other for our personal choices in an area like this. In successful marriages, the couple works at these other more important core issues. Others enter into what Gottman terms “Gridlock.” Gridlock eventually leads to either divorce or an “H-Framed” marriage where the couples essentially live separate lives. For those of us who are deployed, the challenged is to avoid an “H-framed” mindset while we are apart that will cause us to go in different directions when we are back together. Our reunions in a few months should be joyful and overflowing with anticipation about what the future of our marriages can look like.

The last story of the house and the attic are where the couple thinks about the future, “Supporting One Another’s Dreams” and “Creating Shared Meaning.” Masters of relationships find out what one another’s dreams are and work hard to actually build a life together, which creates real meaning in the long term. The existential or experiential part of this process takes place as couples talk about these dreams, thinking back to the marriage vows, “in sickness and in health,” “for better or for worse,” “for richer or poorer.” These couples focus a great deal of their time on what they want their legacy to be, what their tombstone should look like. They ask if their children are proud of the example they are leaving for the next generation. Men who are preoccupied with their military career need to slow down enough to allow their wife to express her dreams of the future.

This is a capstone of a wonderful marriage.

So if you are married, think about your game plan for building a strong marital house in these last few months of our separation. Get a copy of Gottman’s book for less than \$10 on an online book retailer and do some of the exercises to see where you are at. When we return home to NY we will try to present the video curriculum to a wider audience. And if you have children, think about some of the same concerns. Those who are single, well it is your job to read a wide range of material about relationships in order to prepare yourself to be the best partner possible. Gottman’s material is second to none when it comes to Teamwork and starting with friendship. Until next time, take care and enjoy the start of school and football season back home.

Take care everyone, Many Blessings, Chaplain Jerry



Aviator achieves fourth downrange promotion as warrant officer, final promotion a first as Family watches from Ohio

By Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – His family never got to see his previous promotions as a warrant officer since they had all been presented overseas. Chief Warrant Officer 5 Timothy Smail's promotion to the highest warrant officer rank was once again presented overseas, at Bagram Airfield, July 9, but this time, via video teleconference, his family was able to watch. In addition, three of Smail's most recent commanders joined his colleagues for the ceremony; Brig. Gen. Robert Lewis, currently the deputy commander of 101st Airborne Division and Regional Command – East; Col. David Fee, currently the rotary-wing plans chief for the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command; and Col. David Francis, the current 10th CAB commander.

"There are only 650 chief warrant officer fives in the Army

out of nearly 500,000 Soldiers," Lewis said. "It is a miniscule hole to get through. I've known Tim a long time and it is an honor to pin it on."

Smail said he first enlisted in 1988 for a two-year stint to make some money for college. He was stop-lossed during Desert Storm. After serving as an infantryman for three years and a medical lab technician for another three years, he had the opportunity to become an aviator and his love for flying has kept him in the Army for the past 25 years.

"Senior warrants take the tough missions," Lewis said. "They're someone to help (ground troops) break contact, someone who will say, 'let me (air mission command) it' when the weather is a little crappy. Conversely, we need senior warrants to be able to say, 'not this way', 'there's a better way'."

Smail has five deployments during his career; once to Panama during Operation Just Cause, Once to Iraq, and three tours to Afghanistan. He also earned his bachelor's degree in professional aeronautics in 1999 from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

"There's a lot of great officers who don't achieve this rank so it's very humbling for me,"



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Brig. Gen. Robert Lewis, deputy commander of the 101st Airborne Division and Regional Command – East (Afghanistan), affixes the rank of chief warrant officer 5 onto the uniform of Chief Warrant Officer 5 Timothy Smail, July 9, at Bagram Airfield. Lewis was one of three of Smail's most recent brigade commanders present for his promotion to the highest warrant officer rank. In addition, Smail's family was able to watch the ceremony via video teleconference from Ohio. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)



Smail said. "It is definitely an accomplishment that I thought I'd never see. I just wanted to make my family proud."

Watching from the 179th Air Lift Wing, Ohio Air National Guard, in Mansfield, Ohio, were his mom, dad, stepmom, brother, his two children, and two aunts and uncles.



News from the Renegades



Approximately 30 Soldiers from 277th Aviation Support Battalion's A and B Companies, in addition to Headquarters Support Company, departed Fort Drum, NY, about a month ago for Bagram Airfield, as the 10th CAB's retrograde platoon, according to the unit's platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Marques Jones. The retrograde platoon is made up of Soldiers from a wide range of occupational specialties; supply specialists, aviation maintainers, communication security maintainers, and transport operators; working together to classify aviation and service parts to be sent back to the U.S. The platoon's goal is to save the Army over \$250 million by returning the parts back into the Army system. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



Spc. Tiffany Arca, a human resources specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company's human resources section, reenlisted July 27, at Bagram Airfield, to stay at Fort Drum, NY, for three more years. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



Maj. Charles Cain, 10th CAB communication section officer-in-charge, administers the Oath of Reenlistment to Staff Sgt. Robert Fach, a 10th CAB communications noncommissioned officer, Aug. 8, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)

Renegade Promotions



Maj. Lance Kunz, 10th CAB flight surgeon, affixes the rank of first lieutenant to the uniform of Stephanie Rodriguez, a medical platoon leader assigned to Headquarters Support Company, 277th Aviation Support Battalion, Aug. 12, at Bagram Airfield. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



Master Sgt. Tawanna Moses, 10th CAB logistics non-commissioned officer-in-charge, affixes the rank of sergeant first class to the uniform of Maricruz Carmona, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th CAB, supply noncommissioned officer-in-charge, during a ceremony Aug. 1, at Bagram Airfield. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



Master Sgt. James Lightborne, 10th CAB human resources noncommissioned officer-in-charge, affixes the rank of specialist to the uniform of Jennifer Patterson, a human resources specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th CAB, Aug. 1, at Bagram Airfield. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)

Christmas in July



From left, foreground, Spc. Stephen Stine, Spc. Matthew Nicholls, Spc. Kenneth Compton, hold gifts during Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th CAB, Christmas in July, July 25 at Bagram Airfield. Numerous gifts were donated from stateside sponsors. The event raised morale during the middle of a hot summer. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



Ravens partner with Egyptian Hospital to provide shoes, school supplies to Afghan children

Spc. Ramona Gately of C Company, 277th Aviation Support Battalion, organized a shoes and school supplies drive and distribution in partnership with the Egyptian Hospital at Bagram Airfield July 16. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



From Iron Warrior 6, Mazar e Sharif

Families, Friends, and Soldiers of 1-104th ARB and Task Force Iron Warriors,

We are proud to have served with both Task Force Destiny and Task Force Falcon in support of Operation Enduring Freedom XIV during our deployment rotation. In reflection we have seen the improvements that ANSF forces have made in both abilities and capabilities to secure their own country. We are optimistic this trend will continue and in the remaining months of coalition support and the ANSF will be able to fully secure their borders and repel further insurgency.

As we close out our time in Afghanistan, we want to recognize two of our Pennsylvania Guardsmen that paid the ultimate price in service to our country. CW3 Matthew Ruffner and CW2 Jarett Yoder gave their lives on 9 April 2013 while serving in RC-East. They are men that we have worked with for years and they will be sorely missed. We especially thank Task Force Dragon. LTC Glenn Heape and his formation shared this tragedy and we are eternally grateful for the manner in which his team reacted during and after the loss. Glenn, my personal thanks for your leadership in the care and custody of my Soldiers.

Initially we came to theater as Task Force Shadow Warriors. During the consolidation of all U.S. rotary wing assets in RC-N, and being fortunate enough to combine with elements of the 1st Armor Division, we emerged as one, forged unit to become Task Force Iron Warriors. My most thankful reflection is the manner in which this team combined, the atypical solutions that were emplaced, and the cohesiveness attained. The units' bond through the challenges of reduced manpower, tragedy, and mission requirements in a region with an expansive operational reach met the challenge. I am honored to have served with the Task Force Iron Warriors team.

We would also like to take the opportunity to welcome Task Force Reaper, 1-135th ARB from MOARNG. We wish them all the best and pray for safe flying and successful missions throughout their duty in Afghanistan. Good luck and Godspeed for a safe deployment and return.

IRON WARRIORS, ROLL ON!



TF Falcon honors TF Iron Warrior, welcomes TF Reaper

By Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB

BALKH, Afghanistan—The 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Task Force Falcon welcomed to its formation the 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, of the Missouri National Guard, during a Transfer of Authority ceremony Aug. 14, at Mazar e Sharif Airfield. Additionally, the 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 104th Aviation Regiment of the Pennsylvania National Guard were recognized for their achievements during their 9-month Afghanistan tour.

“I’m from Pennsylvania, but I don’t think I’ve ever seen a happier group of Pennsylvanians,” said Col. David Francis, 10th CAB/TF Falcon commander, with a smile. “You had an incredible maintenance record, an outstanding ready-to-launch rate and mission success record. Thank you all for your service, for what you’ve done for the people of Afghanistan, for RC-North, and for the 10th CAB.”

“TF Reaper are coming in at a very difficult time; coming in amidst the fighting season and dangerous environmental conditions. The challenges are steep but your leadership is up to the task. You are well-led and ready to fulfill the mission. I am confident in your leaders, aviators, and Soldiers.”

Over 300 Soldiers from Pennsylvania and about 35 Soldiers from 1-285th ARB of the Arizona National Guard deployed as the 1-104th ARB Regt./ TF Shadow Knights in December 2012. Lt. Col John Kovac, 1-104th ARB/TF Iron Warrior commander, thanked the members of his task force for their contributions and service.

“You have excelled at your craft in every section and in every field of service,” Kovac said. “I look forward to continued service with all of you, but your most important task now is to spend time with family and keep safe during your transition.”

Earlier in their deployment, retrograde and consolidation resulted in the relocation of the 1-104th ARB from Forward Operating Base Kunduz to



From left, Command Sgt. Maj. David Gail and Lt. Col. James Schreffler, 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Reaper, command sergeant major and commander, respectively, uncase their unit’s guidon during a transfer of authority ceremony Aug. 14, at Camp Marmal near Mazar e Sharif. The ceremony marks TF Reaper, of the Missouri National Guard, replacing 1-104th ARB from the Pennsylvania National Guard. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)

Camp Marmal in Mazar e Sharif. Upon the relocation, then TF Shadow Warriors merged with TF Iron Knights, emerging as the consolidated TF Iron Warriors, headquartered by the 1-104th ARB.

“Together the co-joined Iron Warriors accepted the task of consolidating all U.S. rotary-wing assets in (Regional Command – North) and set the stage for successful combat aviation support to RC-North, the most expansive region in theater,” said Kovac. “This teamwork provided daily airworthy assets and capable aviation aircrews that supported a multitude of coalition formations, both conventional and special operations forces of different nations. To our comrades and coalition partners it has been a pleasure working with you and your teams. The professional dialogue and working together to solve our joint challenges was done so with friendship and in a true joint spirit.”

The ceremony marked the beginning of 1-135th ARB/TF Reaper’s assumption of authority and responsibility providing U.S. rotary-wing support to the RC-East area of operations.

“Today we close out a chapter of success in the line-

age of the 1-104th Shadow Warriors and TF Iron Warrior, and begin another for the 1-135th Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion and TF Reaper,” said Lt. Col. James Schreffler, 1-135th ARB/TF Reaper commander. “Lt. Col. Kovac, you and your team have provided us with a solid, cohesive foundation on which to build on in the coming months.”

“TF Reaper provides awesome capability and combat power to RC-North, and our coalition partners. However, we also have an awesome responsibility; to guarantee the proper applications of the rules of engagement, tactical directives, and combat imperatives. By ensuring compliance we will continue to be a combat multiplier and an enabler to RC-North, (ISAF Joint Command), and ISAF towards providing peace, security and stability to the Afghan people.”

The 1-104th ARB traces its lineage to June 1, 1960 when it was organized and federally recognized in the Pennsylvania National Guard at Washington, Pa., as part of the 28th Aviation Company, an element of the 28th Infantry Division, the oldest active division in the U.S. Army.

In 2004, 112 Soldiers from the 1-104th ARB completed a 16-month deployment to Kosovo as TF Shadow. In 2005, 65 Soldiers from the unit deployed with the Michigan National Guard and completed a 17-month deployment to Kosovo as TF Talon. Sixty-eight Soldiers deployed to Iraq with the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade from 2009 to 2010.

The 1-135th ARB provided state emergency assistance to the State of Louisiana in the fall of 2005 shortly after hurricanes Katrina and Rita ravaged the state. In 2006, A Company, 1-135th ARB deployed as part of the 1-149th ARB from the Texas National Guard in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Participants of the ceremony dedicated a moment of silence to two aviators who paid the ultimate sacrifice, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Matthew Ruffner and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jarret Yoder, both AH-64 Apache helicopter pilots with TF Iron Warrior, who were killed in a helicopter accident while supporting ground troops April 9, 2013.



From left, Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Livolsi and Lt. Col. John Kovac, 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 104th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Iron Warrior, command sergeant major and commander, respectively, case their unit’s guidon during a transfer of authority ceremony Aug. 14, at Camp Marmal near Mazar e Sharif. TF Iron Warrior, from the Pennsylvania National Guard, marked the completion of their 9-month deployment and were replaced by 1-135th ARB from the Missouri National Guard. Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



From left, Col. David Francis and Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Cuomo, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Task Force Falcon, present a gift to Col. John Kovac and Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Livolsi, 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 104th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Iron Warrior, before a Transfer of Authority ceremony at Camp Marmal near Mazar e Sharif in Balkh Province, Afghanistan. Task Force Iron Warrior was relieved by 1st ARB, 135th Avn. Regt., Task Force Reaper, who assumed responsibility for U.S Army aviation in Regional Command - North. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)

TF Iron Warrior hosts joint crash/fire training for American, German firefighters

By Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB

As the seering sun slowly fell below the dusty horizon, the call came in that a U.S. CH-47 Chinook helicopter had crashed just off the runway at Mazar e Sharif Airfield. Firefighters from the German Fire Department and the American Fire Department quickly put on their protective clothing, stepped into their respective trucks, and moved toward the fiery scene. Despite the early evening darkness, the temperature remained over 100 degrees Fahrenheit as the firefighters set up a perimeter around the aircraft with their vehicles, dismounted, and began attacking the flames with water cannon and hoses.

In a matter of minutes, the flames were contained and the rescue team began recovering the aircrews who suffered various injuries; unconsciousness, broken bones, and minor injuries. The rescuers had to disconnect safety restraints and radio communication cords before attempting to extract the aviators. Once they were free of straps and cords, the aviators were pulled out of the aircraft and carried or dragged to a safe distance from the smoldering helicopter.

Fortunately the flames were simulated, as were the injuries and the crash. Task Force Iron Warrior, a Pennsylvania National Guard aviation unit flying in support of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade conducted the fire/crash drill in partnership with the American and German Fire Departments July 29-30, at Mazar e Sharif Airfield.

“This is good training for everyone,” said David Fritchie, Assistant Chief of Operations for the American Fire Department at Mazar e Sharif Airfield. “It is important that we learn to work together.”

Fritchie explained that the German Fire Department is overall responsible for airfield coverage and there is a mutual aid agreement between the two departments. The German firefighters are located on one end of the airfield where international aircraft are based and the Americans are located on the opposite end where the U.S. aircraft are located.

According to Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Hogan,

TF Iron Warrior safety officer, who organized the training, the American Fire Department arrived in April when additional U.S. aircraft arrived. Within the first few months of their arrival, Hogan invited the American firefighters to participate in the crash/fire drill in order for them to gain familiarization with the unit’s aircraft.

“Since the Germans are the primary responders for the airfield, I felt I should talk to them,” Hogan said. “The Americans are closer so they’d likely respond sooner. The Germans observed the previous drill and asked to be involved with future drills.”

Hogan added that the training is very helpful because the Germans’ rotation cycle is relatively short, ranging from a few weeks to a few months.

German Fire Chief Walter Martin spent two months at the northern Afghanistan airfield a year ago and arrived 14 days ago for a three-month rotation.

“The German firefighters provide service to the entire airfield,” Martin said through a translator. “We do not have these aircraft in Germany so we must practice rescuing air crews from these aircraft.”

Hogan said his goal is for the American and German fire departments to be able to respond as a team.

“This training keeps each crew, day and night, proficient,” Hogan said. “Most importantly, if something bad happens, it won’t be the first time they’ve seen each other.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)

TF Dragon AO, FOB Fenty



Maintenance platoon conducts overhauls, keeps aircraft mission-ready and aircrews safe

By Sgt. Armando Avila, Task Force Dragon

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – A platoon of AH-64 Apache maintainers from D Company, 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Task Force Dragon, based at Jalalabad Airfield, Afghanistan, conducts 500-hour phase maintenance inspections to keep the fleet of Apache helicopters mission-ready, and the pilots who fly them, safe. In addition, the platoon also conducts 125-hour and 250-hour phase maintenance inspections, all which help maintain combat readiness and the highest safety standards.

“A 500-hour phase is a requirement to help identify discrepancies you can’t see with the naked eye,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Pedro Gonzales, a phase-team leader assigned to D Co., 1-501st Avn. Regt., TF Dragon.

The 500-hour phase inspection is basically an overhaul of the Apache conducted after every 500 hours of the aircraft’s flight time. It consists of breaking down the major components such as the two engines, the rotor head, the transmission, and the gear boxes. There is a long list of inspections that must be done along with the breakdown of the Apache to ensure the components of the helicopter are within tolerance.

Once a phase maintenance inspection is scheduled, the maintenance platoon sergeant ensures that his shop is properly set up and that necessary resources are on hand so there are no delays.

“I make sure that we have parts that we will need and parts that we might need on hand about two weeks prior to starting a phase,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jose Cadengo, D Co., 1-501st Avn. Regt., TF Dragon, maintenance platoon sergeant. Cadengo added that the required time to complete a 500-hour phase inspection in theater is 14 days, but can be accomplished in less. It all varies on how many repairs the aircraft might need.

After the breakdown of all the major components and



AH-64 Apache helicopter maintenance Soldiers assigned to D Company, 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, Task Force Dragon, inspect for deficiencies during a 500-hour phase maintenance inspection June 27, at Forward Operating Base Fenty. (Photo by Sgt. Armando Avila, Task Force Dragon)

the long list of inspections that have to be done, the Apache is re-assembled. Safety is the number one concern throughout any maintenance; the safety of the Soldiers working on the aircraft and the safety of the crews flying the aircraft. During the re-assembly, it is very important Soldiers working on the aircraft maintain 100 percent accountability of all their tools since a forgotten item could have catastrophic consequences. Also, it is important that Soldiers avoid wearing rings, watches, bracelets, or anything loose. These items can get caught which can lead to injury. Cadengo makes sure the Soldiers of D Co. exercise safety in every maintenance job that comes to them.

“The Soldiers pull from each other’s knowledge,” Cadengo said. “I have seen all the new Soldiers that came straight from (Advanced Individual Training) do a full circle. I am very impressed. Watching the aircraft turn on and seeing the rotors spin and run properly gives all the Soldiers a sense of accomplishment and pride.”

Despite temperatures above 115 degrees Fahrenheit daily, the platoon has completed three 500-hour phase inspections this summer.



“Colossal” Night Operations



Soldiers from B Company, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, race into the back of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter flown by Company B, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, during a rapid response drill at Forward Operating Base Fenty, July 22. The CH-47’s and their crews perform a variety of missions; from hauling large shipping containers to transporting Service Members from one base to another, and participating in air assault missions. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Tillman, a native of Woodward, Okla., who serves as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter flight instructor and flight engineer, assigned to B Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th CAB, fuels his aircraft during a stop between night missions at Forward Operating Base Fenty, July 22. The CH-47’s and their crews perform a variety of missions; from hauling large shipping containers to transporting Service Members from one base to another, and participating in air assault missions. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Spc. Isaiah Holt, a native of Paducah, Ky., who serves as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter door gunner with B Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, loads ammunition into his 240H machine gun as he prepares for the evening’s mission, at Forward Operating Base Fenty, July 22. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Spc. Lloyd Hanley, a native of Houston, who serves as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter crew chief with B Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, talks to the pilots over his internal radio after raising the rear ramp of the helicopter July 22, at Forward Operating Base Fenty. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

From Tigershark 6 and Tigershark 7

“Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” - Vince Lombardi, Jr.

Tigershark Teammates,

CSM Paul and I continue to be amazed at the incredible work and effort of the Tigersharks! Our formation continues to do an amazing job here in Afghanistan and at Fort Drum, and we routinely receive comments from senior leaders and peers from a multitude of units that mention the professionalism, commitment, competence and discipline of the Tigersharks. This unit is full of tremendous Americans who strive to do the right thing regardless of location, circumstances, or challenges, and the effort you and your Families give is indicative of the character you possess.

Our Soldiers continue to provide support to 4/101 Brigade Combat Team - the Currahees, 2/10 BCT - the Commandos, 4/3 BCT - the Vanguard, their Afghan National Security Forces partners, and Special Operations Forces, accomplishing it all in an outstanding manner. Since our arrival, we have expanded our operational capacity and increased mission requirements, and our teams have done it without missing a beat. Additionally, our Soldiers at Fort Drum continue to lead the charge to maintain our equipment that remained there as well as train hard on physical fitness, combatives, marksmanship, and other required Soldier skills.

The retrograde of equipment and personnel here at Salerno continues to go well and is more noticeable each day. We have saved millions of dollars by sending parts and equipment to be reintegrated into our Army. This has neither decreased our operational tempo nor has it decreased the morale of our Tigershark Soldiers. We see motivated Soldiers with great attitudes, and leaders enforcing the high standards to ensure we are operating safely, efficiently, while maintaining our effectiveness on the battlefield. I've received some questions about services at Salerno, and we will experience some of the reduced services we anticipated and briefed to Soldiers and Families prior to the deployment. I expect some of the interruptions to be for a short time as we transition to another location in Afghanistan. We will keep our Rear Detachment team updated, and our Team at Fort Drum can expect updates with more detail in the next 30-45 days.

We will change some of our teammates soon as we will farewell our CH-47 - Nomads, our Medevac Company - C/2-149 and our AH team from A/1-104. All have done an incredible job supporting not only the Tigersharks but Task Force No Mercy previously. The professionalism, competence, and selfless service of these great Americans are truly inspiring. I want to thank them and their Families for the sacrifices they have made and continue to make so that we can have the best military in the world.

Our Team continues to perform incredible feats that keep the fleet of aircraft, support and forward arming/refueling point equipment operating. Our ability to keep the equipment operational has enabled our pilots and crews in the fight. That teamwork comes from discipline and commitment at the individual level. The coordinated efforts in our area has created a more secure environment for the Afghan people, a stronger Afghan Security Force and more opportunities for the people of this area. Indicative of these opportunities is the statistic that I recently heard - 150,000 Afghan girls now attend school in Khowst Province. That is a direct reflection of the security and advancement in this area, and that security and hope stems from the efforts of many with a portion of that Team being our Tigershark Soldiers.

The teamwork among the Tigershark Soldiers and Families is exceptional, and I want to say thank you to each of you for your continued support of our Soldiers and Families.

LTC Chad Ward, Tigershark 6

CSM David Paul, Tigershark 7

Tigershark AO FOB Salerno



Soldiers from the 801st Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, transport a simulated casualty to an awaiting HH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from C Company, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment, a combined New Hampshire and Michigan National Guard medical evacuation unit flying with Task Force Tigershark, during a mass casualty exercise on Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, Aug. 6. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)



Two Task Force Tigershark AH-64 Apache helicopter maintainers communicate with the pilots of an Apache during a test maintenance run-up Aug. 6, at Forward Operating Base Salerno in Khowst Province, Afghanistan. Maintainers and test maintenance pilots work together daily to keep the task force's aircraft mission ready and safe. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)



Two Soldiers hook up slings from a container onto a Task Force Tigershark CH-47 Chinook helicopter during a slingload operation at Forward Operating Base Salerno in Khowst Province, Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)



C Company DUSTOFF, 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Tigershark, conduct hoist training May 10, at Forward Operating Base Orgun E. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Marleah Miller)



TF Tigershark Soldiers recognized for excellence

By Capt. Pete Smedberg, 10th CAB

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan – Six Task Force Tigershark Soldiers were recognized for their performance in a small ceremony here. The Soldiers, who serve in a wide variety of military occupational specialties, were awarded a commander's coin from Maj. Gen. James McConville, the Combined Joint Task Force-101 Commanding General.



THE SOLDIERS RECOGNIZED

Staff Sgt. Craig Kubicar, a Supply non-commissioned officer from B Company, 2nd Battalion, 104 Aviation Regiment of the Pennsylvania National Guard was recognized for an outstanding job in preparing, shipping, and accounting for battalion equipment as it was shipped from Pennsylvania, to Fort Hood, Texas, and on to Afghanistan. Staff Sgt. Kubicar also assisted in the retrograde of Forward Operating Base Salerno by accounting for and turning in \$90,000 worth of equipment and ammunition.

Sgt. Ashley Corey, a MEDEVAC crew chief assigned to C Company, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment of the Texas/Oklahoma National Guard was awarded for her role in helping to save a wounded Afghan National Army soldier during an urgent MEDEVAC mission. Sgt. Corey was asked to perform outside of her military occupational specialty while performing cardio pulmonary respiration on the Afghan soldier wounded by an improvised explosive device.

Sgt. Michael Brooks, a power plant repairer assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion (Attack), 10th Combat Aviation Brigade was recognized for completing over 200 work orders in 30 days while serving as a production control administrator. Sgt. Brooks also helped two Soldiers secure their future by reenlisting while serving as the company's retention non-commissioned officer.

Spc. Timothy Stalica, a pump mechanic assigned to E Company, 1st Battalion (Attack), 10th Combat Aviation Brigade was recognized for his maintenance skills, which were instrumental in keeping the unit's 350 gallon-per-minute pumps operational. Spc. Stalica's efforts were also critical in the maintenance of the unit's gator vehicle fleet and in conducting refueling operations at the forward arming and refueling point.

Pfc. Harold Beard, an AH-64 Apache helicopter crew chief assigned to B Company 1st Battalion (Attack), 10th combat Aviation Brigade was recognized for taking the initiative to conduct a detailed post-flight inspection of a helicopter which revealed damage that may have caused harm to the crew in a later flight, had it not been detected. Pfc. Beard was not required to conduct this inspection; he took the initiative to ensure his aircraft would be ready for its next flight.

Pfc. Kevin Aviles, a UH-60M Blackhawk helicopter crew chief assigned to B Company, 2nd Battalion (Assault), 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, was recognized for his actions as a late deployer and non-rated crew member. Pfc. Aviles represented his company with distinction during the Task Force Tigershark Soldier of the month board.

Congratulations to these brave men and women for their exceptional service, professionalism, and dedication to the mission. Task Force Falcon communicated the theme of professionalism during the month of July. These Soldiers are the epitome of what it means to be a professional and Task Force Falcon is honored to have them in our ranks.



From Knighthawk 6 and Knighthawk 7, FOB Shank

Families and Friends of Task Force Knighthawk,

There has been plenty going on since last month. I have addressed most of those in my last letter to you which is still available to read on the TF Knighthawk Facebook page. The Task Force continues to carry a major load in the fight in Regional Command-East. Day in and day out they fight around the clock in support of our Afghan and Coalition partners. We had a very busy schedule during the historical slow Ramadan holiday period keeping the pressure up on the enemy.

With our move complete the Soldiers of the Task Force have been spending their off duty time making their work and living areas better. We finally have internet in the barracks again so the ability to reach back to home from the comfort of everybody's room is now up and running. We are also in the process of consolidating the FOBs MWR facility down near our living area. The outstanding food service Soldiers of the Task Force just recently added a fourth meal so Soldiers have easy access to the round-the-clock meals. The Chaplain has started a weekly moral night at the HHC building complete with food, a movie of the week, and games that has been a great way for folks to get away from work and socialize.

We had a great month of promotions and selections within the Task Force. CW3(P) Rhoden, CW3(P) Pierce, and CW3(P) Locke were selected for CW4. CW2(P) Reape, CW2(P) Cheeseman, CW2(P) Reading, and CW2(P) Lee were selected to CW3. SGT(P) Varner was promoted to SSG and has become the Battalion Standardization Instructor. Additionally SGT Thornell and SGT Evans were selected for Warrant Officer Candidate School and will make great future aviators.

As we completed our first 90 days we reach the time where we begin to say goodbye to some of our attachments. By the next Falcon Summit C/1-501's "Steel Hunters" will be back to Fort Bliss and we will have integrated an AH-64 Company from Fort Hood that will be with us till we return home.

Your Soldiers continue to do amazing work here in Afghanistan and are making history everyday! Thanks again for the great support from back home; we could not do what we do without you! Climb to Glory! Fly to Glory!

LTC Matt Braman
Commander, Task Force Knighthawk!

Families and Friends of Task Force Knighthawk,

As this is my first newsletter since arriving in theater, many things have transpired. The Knighthawks resolve to overcome every obstacle placed in front of us is obvious by our accomplishments. We completed the difficult task of deploying and even more challenging was our move to a better and safer facility. From the senior leaders to the most junior Soldier, the Task Force rallied together and accomplished the entire move while conducting simultaneous missions, building in most cases, facilities from the ground up to support the mission. The standard of living improved with power being supplied to the barracks and other MWR assets being coordinated to allow Soldiers to maintain contact with loved ones at home. Almost 100 Soldiers have already been awarded for accomplishments and many more are on the horizon for presentation. Efforts by Chaplain Werho, SPC Holle, and every level of the command are striving to keep the morale high and provide Soldiers with the best environment possible.

The Task Force has many difficult tasks ahead of us but it is without a doubt our fine Soldiers will accomplish every mission and arrive home proud of their accomplishments. Be as proud as I am of your loved ones, our Soldiers, and know they are making a difference far from home.

Be safe and take care on the home front.

HOOAH!

CSM Robert D. Parmer
Command Sergeant Major, Task Force Knighthawk





A flight medic assigned to 2nd Assault Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Knighthawk, conducts hoist training from an HH-60 Black Hawk helicopter July 25, at Forward Operating Base Shank. (Courtesy photo)



CH-47 Chinook helicopter maintainers conduct maintenance on a Chinook at Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province, Afghanistan. (Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Koth, Task Force Knighthawk)



CH-47 Chinook crew members inspect a blade during a pre-flight inspection at Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province, Afghanistan. (Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Christopher Koth, Task Force Knighthawk)



Spc. Robert Ivey and Spc. Gusten Hammond, both motor transport operators with A Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, prepare to sling load cargo to a 10th CAB/TF Falcon CH-47 Chinook helicopter on Forward Operating Base Shank, July 15. Soldiers routinely conduct slingload operations to transport heavy equipment and supplies in Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)



Soldiers assigned to E Company, 2nd Assault Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Knighthawk, refuel a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at the forward arming/refueling point at Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province, Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)



An unmanned aerial vehicle maintainer assigned to F Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, Task Force Knighthawk, performs post-flight maintenance on a UAV July 24, at Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province, Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)

Battlefield bliss; deployed couple cope with separation from children, share daily challenges

By Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB

Anthony and Stephanie Thomas have three children, ages 13, 10 and 2. Husband and wife are both U.S. Army staff sergeants and between the two of them they have seven deployments overseas.

Although they have deployed at the same time once previously, Stephanie to Iraq and Anthony to Qatar, they are currently deployed together, for the first time, at Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province, Afghanistan. Although both recognize the benefits of being deployed together, the separation from their children weighs heavily on their minds daily.

Although they are assigned to the same battalion and they are working on the same base, their respective jobs have them work-

ing opposite shifts. Stephanie, the supply noncommissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-10 Assault Battalion, Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, works during the day; and Anthony, a petroleum supply supervisor assigned to E Co., 2-10 Assault Bn., TF Knighthawk, works the night shift.

“We rarely get to spend any time together,” said Stephanie, “I see him but I don’t really get to see him.”

For the most part, when they see each other, it is when their off-time overlaps in the early morning or before Anthony’s shift when he comes to visit his wife at her office for a couple hours. But every 14 days TF Knighthawk Soldiers



Staff Sgt. Anthony Thomas and his wife Staff Sgt. Stephanie Thomas pose for a portrait with their children, Anthony, 13; Alaysia, 10; and Alivia, 2. The Thomas’ are serving together at Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province, Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)

get a rest-day and Anthony and Stephanie were able to synchronize their rest-day so they could spend it together.

“We normally go to one of the shops to eat, do laundry, see a

movie, and Skype with the kids together,” said Stephanie. “The reset day is a benefit.”

Being able to see his wife, even if it’s just one day every two weeks and a few hours each day, is the greatest benefit during the deployment together for Anthony as well. It is common for Soldiers to experience stress during deployments and Anthony said for the two of them being able to talk face-to-face each day makes a tremendous difference.

When the indirect fire alarm sounds, they worry about each other; worry where the IDF may have hit and whether it hit in the area where their significant other is working, said Stephanie.

“I get to know she’s ok,” Anthony said. “I can see her and make sure she’s alright.”

But both agree that the worst part of being deployed together is that they are both away from their kids at the same time,

“I think I would feel better if one of us had stayed (with the kids),” said Stephanie. “But with our positions, it just wasn’t feasible. Just missing that time with them; being there for them; their safety; not having that control you had since they were born, missing milestones. My youngest doesn’t wear pull ups to bed anymore and she’s learning her ABCs. I think they are doing good. They understand - well, the youngest has no idea; she just know we are gone. We sent her a picture with a voice recorded on it. She runs around the house with it and pushes the button which tickles her. We talked about it before we left. They’re strong. They know we will be back.”

Anthony echoed his wife’s preference for one of them to have stayed home with the children and added he worries about how they are handling the separation.

“I think it’s stressful for the kids,” he said. “They’re getting older now; becoming teenagers and I think they need us.”

The Thomases first met in 1995 in The Bronx, NY, when Anthony, who was from Queens, NY, was visiting his cousins who happened to be Stephanie’s friends. They were soon dating. Anthony enlisted in the Army in 1997 and when he received orders to Fort



Foreground, from left, Staff Sgt. Stephanie Thomas and Staff Sgt. Anthony Thomas sing during a lunchtime company karaoke party July 6, at Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province, Afghanistan. Stephanie, a supply noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-10 Assault Helicopter Battalion, Task Force Knighthawk, and her husband, a petroleum supply supervisor assigned to E Co., 2-10 Assault Helicopter Bn., TF Knighthawk, have been married since 2000 and are currently serving together in Afghanistan. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)

Hood, Texas, Stephanie went to the military entrance processing station and asked to be stationed at Fort Hood, too, before enlisting herself. They were married a few years later in 2000.

Serving overseas has been trying for the Thomases. Both lost their mothers to cancer while they were overseas; Anthony, during his 2007 deployment to Iraq; and Stephanie, when they were stationed in Korea in 2011.

“She watched my kids when I deployed to Iraq,” said Stephanie of her mother. “This is a sad deployment because my mom can’t watch them.”

The Thomas children are being looked after by a family member while their parents are serving in Afghanistan. Stephanie considered how she was handling the current deployment.

“I don’t think I’m doing good,” she said with a smile as she wiped a tear from her eye. “Some days are harder than others. I try to put in my mind that I have a job to do, that it’s temporary. I want people to know I signed up because I enjoy serving my country although it’s difficult leaving my family. I want to complete my mission and do my job to the best of my ability and make it home safe to my family.”



From Phoenix 6, Bagram Airfield

Phoenix 06 Fireplace Chat

TF Phoenix Families, Friends, and Soldiers hello again. As summer is in full swing I am sure all of you have found your schedules busy with vacations, camps, activities, and of course , work in some form or another on top of everything else. I understand the amount of rainfall this summer in the North Country has precluded a lot of days outside for any form of outings. Hopefully, August will yield more sunshine before school begins after Labor Day. The pace of operations here in Regional Command - East has kept everyone extremely busy. I can assure you there are no bored Soldiers in TF PHOENIX regardless of which FOB they're currently stationed. I am pleased to tell you the Task Force has been doing extremely well and I could not be more proud to be serving with such a fine group of Soldiers AND Families.

We recently integrated B/2-149th from the Texas/Oklahoma National Guard, a Chinook company, and they've been doing very well. Working with the rest of the Task Force, this company has completed training with our E/3-10 Soldiers sling loading refuel equipment and personnel. Additionally, they have supported the massive retrograde process as FOBs close down here in RC-East. A/3-10 continues to fly the U.S. military leadership and do so in a very professional manner. You'll be happy to know C/1-10; Blue Max, continues to provide the security effort for Bagram Airfield and the security response force for the 101st Division. Blue Max has been doing extremely well and they continue to fly safely in light of all the environmental challenges. A/2-10 is still providing the much needed assistance for the Task Force flying a lot of passengers in and around RC-East.

I'm happy to say that C/3-10 continues to move through their deployment with poise and efficiency and I couldn't be more pleased with their mission execution. They have evacuated US and Coalition Soldiers, Afghan Security Forces Soldiers, and even a US military working dog. HHC/3-10 continues to provide world class command and control for our very heavy mission. We couldn't do what we do each day without their valuable support. We also have two herculean maintenance efforts taking place. First, D/3-10 continues to provide high quality maintenance support to our enormous fleet of aircraft. Continually undermanned and under pressure, they have fixed, repaired, phased, and prepared aircraft every day to make mission. B/277th has so far provided the BDE's phase maintenance capability and have pumped out over 23 phases. Both companies work 24 hours a day and their workload never eases. I am in awe as I watch them work daily and in the punishing Afghanistan heat.

For everyone at home and abroad I wish for you a continued safe and great summer. Please continue to follow the TF PHOENIX and 10th CAB Facebook page as photos and captions are uploaded often. We're almost through the hot summer days here in RC-East and we too will be looking for snow here in the fall. My best to each of you and your families. Until next month,

Born of Fire!
LTC Anthony A. Meador
"PHOENIX 06"



From Phoenix 7, Bagram Airfield

Phoenix Family,

Hello again! We are all staying pretty busy over here and the time seems to be flying by. For the most part, everyone has settled into their own particular daily schedule or what we refer to as a daily “battle rhythm”. It is getting hotter every day as we push into the summer season, but spirits continue to be high and the Soldiers of this task force continue to perform their missions impeccably well despite conditions. Again, this is due to the quality of Soldiers in this task force and the incredible support of our Families and friends. I cannot thank you enough for your continued efforts, prayers, and support.

To recap some key events in June:

On 14 June, we celebrated the Army’s Birthday, commemorating 238 years of service to our great nation. I have always felt that being a Soldier is the most honorable of professions. Therefore, on this day, we reflected upon all those years of faithful service that we - US Army Soldiers and their Families - have dedicated in defense of our country, and remember all the Soldiers that came before us.

Also on that same day, we celebrated Flag Day which commemorates the official adoption of our National Colors 236 years ago. Happy Birthday Old Glory!

Speaking of birthdays...Happy Birthday to those Soldiers and Family Members what celebrated birthdays in June - this included my wife, Crystal...love you baby and happy 25th...! Also, I hope all the fathers had a Happy Father’s Day!

For July:

We celebrated Independence Day on 4 July. The E/3-10 “Executioners” hosted an outstanding event to help lift spirits and strengthen the bonds between the Soldiers of the Task Force. We enjoyed cake and beverages and a chance to unwind a bit. We are very appreciative of their efforts.

On 8 July, we said farewell to the California National Guard who began the journey home after their 9-month deployment - job well done “Golddiggers” - and officially welcomed the Texas/Oklahoma National Guard crew to the Phoenix team. We look forward to working with them for the remainder of our tour.

As for the rest of July, there is a lot to be accomplished and every day brings new challenges. However, I have no doubt that we will succeed and we will all be just fine. That’s all for now...talk to you next month!

Again, thank you all for your prayers and continued support.

One team, one fight!

Born of Fire!

Phoenix 07



An OH-58D Kiowa Warrior from C Company BLUE-MAX, 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Phoenix, flies a security mission over eastern Afghanistan. (Photo by 1st Lt. Jeremy Huggins, Task Force Phoenix)



Spec. Chris Cox, a door gunner with B Company, 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 249th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Phoenix, takes his position for a flight on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter July 24, from Forward Operating Base Shank. (Photo by Capt. Pete Smedberg, 10th CAB)



Spc Malcolm Beal and Pfc. Joshua Branham, avionics maintainers assigned to the Avionics Platoon, B Company, 277th Aviation Support Battalion, Task Force Phoenix, ensure an Advanced Flight Computer System is running properly. The AFCS is a major computer system on an aircraft. (Courtesy photo)



From left, Sgt. Jesse Caron operates the hoist as Spc. Julie Culp and Spc. Ryan Blomquist inspect a hoist cable during a 40-hour hoist inspection on an HH-60 Black Hawk helicopter July 27, at Bagram Airfield. The HH-60 is the medical evacuation version of the Black Hawk. The three Soldiers are Black Hawk maintainers/crew chiefs assigned to C Company DUSTOFF, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Phoenix. The hoist is used to evacuate patients when the crew is unable to land. During the inspection, the entire cable is unspooled and meticulously inspected for damage. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th CAB)



Born of Fire!

Teamwork; the key to success

Soldiers assigned to E Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, Task Force Phoenix, stand by as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter approaches the 500-gallon fuel containers about to be sling loaded July 30, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo by Capt. Pete Smedberg, 10th CAB)



Soldiers assigned to E Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, Task Force Phoenix, 10th CAB, sling load two 500-gallon fuel containers July 30, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Sling load operations require tremendous teamwork between the pilots, crew, and ground personnel. (Photo by Capt. Pete Smedberg, 10th CAB)



Pfc. Chiquita Albritton, assigned to E Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th CAB, utilizes a grab hook during sling load training on Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, July 30. E Co., 3-10 GSAB, conducts sling load training to enhance cargo movement in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Photo by Spc. Alexander Naylor, Combat Camera)



TF Phoenix conduct slingload training

By Capt. Pete Smedberg, 10th CAB

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – As a lone CH-47 Chinook helicopter lumbered towards the sling load yard on Bagram Airfield, Soldiers on the ground scrambled into position. Today’s mission—sling loading two 500-gallon fuel containers while conducting jump forward arming and refueling point operations (FARP)—sounds simple in theory, but would not be possible without a team of professionals from various organizations working together to reach a common goal.

Petroleum supply specialists from E Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, along with riggers from the 101st Sustainment Brigade (Task Force Lifeline) and a Chinook crew from B Company, 2nd Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, must all work in unison to make today’s mission a success.

Long before the Chinook took to the skies to conduct the sling-load operation, E Company Soldiers were hard at work transporting today’s cargo, two 500-gallon fuel containers, to the sling-load yard. While the Chinook crew was transporting personnel and supplies around the battlefields of eastern Afghanistan, E Company Soldiers and riggers from the 101st Sustainment Brigade were conducting rehearsals on the sling-load yard to ensure each member of the team knew their role in order to guarantee success on the day’s mission.

Conducting Jump FARP operations is a skill these aviators and petroleum supply specialists must be proficient at in order to ensure Task Force Falcon helicopters and ground vehicles remain fueled while working in forward environments away from the confines of Bagram Airfield and other established forward operating bases.

After conducting numerous rehearsals, the CH-47 Chinook helicopter set down on the sling-load ramp. A flight engineer disembarked the helicopter to discuss strategy with 2nd Lt. Tyreese Huggins, E Company’s Distribution Platoon platoon leader, under the spinning blades of the Chinook, before re-boarding the aircraft to execute the mission.

In a matter of seconds, the massive Chinook was airborne with its wheels hovering just feet above the heads of E Company Soldiers, as the crew chiefs leaned out their crew doors to relay the position of Soldiers on the ground to the pilots of the helicopter. Inside the Chinook, the flight engineer peered through a small hole in the floor while communicating to the pilots the position of the Soldiers and cargo below the aircraft, which are being pelted by rotor wash. In less than thirty seconds, the fuel containers are attached to the aircraft and are airborne above the ramp, as the Soldiers beneath the aircraft battle the rotor wash on their dash to safety.

The cargo is soon set down and the process repeats itself five more times. Today’s mission is only a training exercise.

The level of synchronization required to execute this mission is nothing short of spectacular. Without the support of the 101st Sustainment Brigade riggers, the fuel containers would not be properly rigged for transport.

Without the actions of E Company petroleum supply specialists, the cargo would not be present on the sling-load yard for the day’s operations. Without the Chinook crew chiefs and engineer communicating with the pilots, the aircraft would not be in the proper position to keep its crew and personnel on the ground safe.

Without the skill of the pilots, the aircraft would not even be in the air to conduct the mission.

Teamwork is the key to all that we do. No one person is responsible for making missions like this a success. Without the efforts of all the players involved, missions like the one described above would not be able to be conducted to standard.

Each individual in the Task Force Falcon team brings a unique set of skills to the table. This is a microcosm of the coordination and teamwork taking place everyday across the task force and is the reason we are successful.

