

# FALCON SUMMIT



DECEMBER 2013





# Message from the Commander

## Colonel David Francis, "Falcon 6"

Families, Friends, and Soldiers of Task Force Falcon:

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and in the holiday spirit. You have a lot to be proud of as Task Force Falcon enters the last month of our deployment to Afghanistan. The efforts put forth by our service members have been phenomenal; CSM Cuomo and I are extremely proud of the hard work, dedication and professionalism exhibited by our Soldiers by our Soldiers. This deployment has been a team effort and we would not be where we are today without the contributions made by every member of our task force.



You have a lot to look forward to with the coming New year as our Soldiers start their journey back to Fort Drum, NY, and reintegrate into a garrison

environment. Shortly after our return we will take a break for block leave and have an opportunity to spend some well-deserved down time with our families. I ask that all Soldiers keep safety in mind while on leave; this means drinking responsibly and always having a plan when consuming alcohol. We have come too far to senselessly lose a life over something preventable, like drinking and driving.

I want to also thank our fellow Falcon Soldiers back at Fort Drum who have been working hard supporting the fight. Your contributions to your teammates downrange have not gone unrecognized.

As always, we owe a big "Thank You" to our families, the Family Readiness Groups, and North Country community. Thank you for your unwavering support over the last 8 months; your mission is critical to our success. We look forward to reuniting in a few short weeks back on American soil. Until then, stay safe, happy holidays, and Fly to Glory!

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



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Maj. Gen. Stephen Townsend, 10th Mountain Infantry Division commander, administers the oath of enlistment to 15 Soldiers of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade in a ceremony Nov. 17, 2013. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)**



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Maj. Gen. Stephen Townsend, 10th Mountain Infantry Division commander, back center, poses for a photo with 15 Soldiers of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade who reenlisted earlier Nov. 17, 2013. Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Cuomo, 10th CAB senior enlisted advisor, back left, and Col. David Francis, 10th CAB commander, back right, flank the Soldiers. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)**





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COVER PHOTO

A CH-47F Chinook helicopter flies a personnel and equipment movement mission over eastern Afghanistan.



## Flying lead; Afghan Air Force takes over instruction of crucial air mission planning course

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

KABUL, Afghanistan (Nov. 22, 2013) – It has been a year of significant milestones for the Afghan National Security Forces as they have taken a definitive lead in providing security for Afghanistan. The International Security Assistance Force has moved to an increasingly train, advise and assist role after nearly a decade of combatting the enemies of Afghanistan, shoulder-to-shoulder with Afghan forces. The ANSF have not only taken the lead on the ground, but are beginning to become more independent in the air as well.

The Afghan Air Force achieved several milestones in 2013 to include planning and executing complex resupply missions to remote outposts, evacuating more than 300 villagers during a natural disaster, and launching the largest Afghan-led joint, combined arms operation in more than 30 years. The AAF achieved its most recent milestone this fall when Afghan flight instructors took the lead in teaching their unit's Air

See *AIR OPS PLANNING*  
continued on page 4



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## Message from the Chief Warrant Officer of the Brigade

Chief Warrant Officer 5  
Jeffrey Fitzgerald

Families, Friends, and Soldiers of Task Force Falcon,

Greetings from Afghanistan! It is my hope that you all have a safe and enjoyable holiday season back home as we hope to do the same here in Afghanistan. We are in a very dangerous period in our deployment. Not only are we battling the enemy, we are also fighting against complacency and the elements. Please do not let your guard down over the next few weeks; nothing in Afghanistan is routine. The mission is not over until we all step off the plane back at Fort Drum, NY. Please continue to look out for each other and avoid taking unnecessary risks. It is imperative that we show the 159th the "Falcon Standard" and give them a solid foundation to start from as they begin their transition into theater.



I would like to take a moment to thank all of our Families and the Fort Drum Community back in the rear. Your support has guided us over the last 8 months and we look forward to reuniting shortly. It is my hope that you have a wonderful holiday season as we look forward to reuniting in the new year. Stay safe and Fly to Glory!

CW5 Jeffrey Fitzgerald  
10th Combat Aviation Brigade  
Chief Warrant Officer of the Brigade  
Falcon 65



**Command Sergeant Major's Corner** Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Cuomo, "Falcon 7"

Families, Friends, and Soldiers of Task Force Falcon,

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all of our Task Force Falcon Soldiers and Families!

As we enter this last crucial period of our deployment, it is critical that our leaders enforce the standards and hold each other accountable. Our replacements will be on the ground shortly and will be following the example you set; make sure it is a good example.



In closing, I would like to thank all of our supporters back at our home stations, to include our Families, Family Readiness Groups, and surrounding community. Although many miles separate us this holiday season, you are with us in spirit as we complete our mission here in theater. Stay safe and God bless you all.

**FLY TO GLORY!**  
CSM Chad Cuomo  
10th Combat Aviation Brigade  
Task Force Falcon Senior Enlisted Advisor  
Falcon 7

said of the 10th CAB advisors. "To teach air assault and then going with us on training missions to assess the Afghan students, they've been an invaluable asset to (NATO Air Training Command – Afghanistan, the command responsible for training the Afghan air force). Moving forward they are playing a key role to ensure an effective organic sustainable air assault capability exists well into the future."

Two senior Afghan aviators, both majors, the unit's executive officer and the unit's standardization officer, graduated from Air Assault Planning Certification Class 003 in July, 2013. They are now lead instructors for Air Assault Planning Certification Class 005.

The three-week course, designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of air operations, includes one week of classroom instruction, one week of simulator training and one week of actual flying. Class 005 successfully completed the classroom and simulator portion of their coursework and has completed one training flight as of mid- November. The class is expected to graduate after accomplishing their final capstone flight, which has been delayed in favor of real-world missions.

"Through this course we teach the fundamental skills required for a helicopter pilot in combat," said U.S. Army Capt. Brandt Anderson, the Task Force Falcon team leader for the Kabul Air Wing Partnership and

**AIR OPS PLANNING**

*Continued from page 3*

Assault Planning Certification Course, a course instructed by U.S. Army 10th Combat Aviation Brigade advisors since late spring 2013.

"Afghans are now teaching Afghans," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Brandon Deacon, commander of the U.S. Air Force's 438th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, responsible for advising the Afghan Air Force's 377th Squadron based in Kabul. "The (10th CAB) advisors are now assessing the Afghan's capabilities in teaching their own folks. Now that they have the initial capability, we can move on to ensuring they have trained instructors who can assess their ability to train themselves."

The U.S. Air Force 438th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron consists of advisors from the U.S. Air Force, which mentors Mi-17 helicopter pilots; and the Czech Republic, which mentors both Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopter pilots. The 10th CAB air assault planning advisors augment the overall 438th AEAS mission. Together they comprise the Kabul Air Wing Partnership.

"Because of the complexity of air assault training, the 377th Squadron would not be to this point so soon had they not been part of this team," Deacon

*See AIR OPS PLANNING  
continued on page 5*



## **AIR OPS PLANNING**

*Continued from page 4*

a CH-47 Chinook helicopter pilot with 10th CAB. “Together we work to shape the pilots’ thinking regarding working for the ground force commander, the ability to conduct proper route and mission planning and to give them the skills to plan and execute a time-on-target with or without the use of GPS (Global Positioning Systems).”

During the classroom instruction, such topics as tactical mission planning, navigation and communication systems, air-ground integration, formation flight, reaction to contingencies, and rules of engagement, were presented to the already highly-skilled pilots. On day 5, the pilots planned and rehearsed a flight mission which involved flying to multiple bases.

In week two, the pilots took their flight plans to the simulator, a state-of-the-art mock up of an Mi-17 helicopter cockpit, situated in a large building nearby, to fly their mission.

“The simulator has been a force multiplier because of the high demand for aircraft to conduct combat missions,” Anderson said. “We’re able to enter weather and other variables such as cloud ceiling and winds and see how the pilots respond. They can do almost everything in the simulator that they can do in an aircraft.”

Following a mission in the flight simulator, Nov. 5, 2013, the aviators and advisors returned to the briefing room to conduct an after-action review, a discussion which follows every mission, simulated or real-world. On a large white board at the front of the room was written: Did we accomplish the mission? Was it safe-efficient-effective?

The Afghan lead instructor, the unit’s executive officer, who has received extensive flight training in the U.S. and Italy, led the AAR and facilitated discussion on topics such as planning, briefing, aircraft preparation, and the various phases of the mission. After discussing what aspects should be sustained and what should be improved, it was concluded that it was an all-around good mission.

The Afghan unit’s standardization pilot said he be-

lieves the training is vital to ensure mission success and safety.

“Everything is important,” the Afghan instructor said earnestly. “But in a difficult operation, it is important to drop the soldiers on time.”

A lot of factors are involved in achieving precise timing of aerial missions; from proper coordination with ground forces command and control to calculating wind direction and speeds.

“We have improved a lot,” he added. “We have to have good training to fly in a good manner. Careful briefing and planning is important to be well prepared so we don’t make mistakes in the air.”

The 377th Squadron currently has four Air Assault Planning Certification Course instructor pilots. Future plans for the Kabul Air Wing Partnership include sling load instruction, for which Anderson is currently creating the syllabus which will be handed to the next group of advisors around the beginning of 2014.

“This is a very rewarding mission seeing them succeed and seeing them not need us around as much,” Anderson said. “I’m looking forward to seeing the Afghan Air Force continue to progress and working ourselves out of a job.”

The Afghan aviators, already highly-skilled, have developed a greater capability to conduct efficient and effective aerial operations with what they have learned from the Air Assault Planning Certification Course. A cadre of Afghan instructors to carry on the training will enable the AAF to move toward becoming a professional, independent, operationally capable and enduring air force.

“It doesn’t matter to me if it’s taught by Afghans or U.S. For me everything is the same,” an Afghan pilot, one of the students of the first Afghan-led Air Assault Planning Certification course, said with a smile. “But for my flight engineer, it is better to be taught in the Afghan language because his English isn’t too good.”



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## Chaplain's Corner

Greetings again to everyone from Bagram. We are starting to enter the final leg of the journey, but we are not quite there yet. I am personally looking forward to the Advent services our chaplain teams will be



providing in theater, to offer a sense of hope to our troops who are away from home during the holidays. This is also a time of reflection for me, as it is for those who have been to this part of Afghanistan multiple times. Each visit to an outlying FOB brings memories of the different people I saw and events I took part in during these past eight years. My prayers are for the people of this war torn nation as many of us prepare to head home for what might be a final time. And during these last couple months I am also taking time to think about the home front. Our chaplain teams in theater and at home will be offering some reunion and reintegration training to all of our Soldiers and many of our married couples. The mission is not complete until we reintegrate successfully with those we love.

There is a book that has become a favorite of mine during the past two deployments, Karen Pavlicin's *Life After Deployment*. She has based her observations and words of wisdom upon years of personal experience. I particularly like an analogy that she uses to describe the process of reuniting with our loved ones after being away for many months. It applies to married Soldiers and those who are single; this is regardless of which relationship(s) is (are) the focus of your return home. Her analogy is "Learning to Dance Again."

There is a rhythm, a set of steps to a good dance. When you've been dancing solo, it takes a bit of practice and focus to dance with a partner, to make it work without stepping on each other's feet, to be able to adapt to different songs, and to find joy rather than work in the movements. Reunion also requires remembering moves, adjusting to new music, learning new cues, and trying not to step on each other's feet. You have to get used to a new environment, incorpo-

rate a loved one back into routines, relearn in-person communication, and process what has just happened in your lives. It is a bit like learning to dance again (p. 67).

On page 68 she offers a helpful chart of 11 tips for everyone to apply when they get back together after the lengthy separation.

Tip One – Take Care of Yourselves (Physically, Mentally, Emotionally, Spiritually).

Tip Two – Listen: Openly Communicate (Be Active Listeners).

Tip Three – Don't Compare Your Situation to Other People's (All of them are Hard).

Tip Four – Be Patient and Flexible (Normal Issues will Resolve Themselves).

Tip Five – Reassure Each Other, Show You Care with Your Words and Actions.

Tip Six – Trust Each Other (Love Covers a "Multitude of Sins").

Tip Seven – For Couples, Court, Reestablish Intimacy (Start to Date Each Other).

Tip Eight – For Parents, Expect Children to Test You, Change Routines Slowly.

Tip Nine – Have a Sense of Humor.

Tip Ten – Don't Argue About who had it Worse; Recognize You Each Had Your Challenges and Unique Experiences (Share and Show Empathy for the Others).

Tip Eleven – Give it Time (Rome was not Built in a Day).

She also offers some tips on pages 78-80 for "Rebuilding Relationships through the Changes":

See **CHAPLAIN'S CORNER**  
continued on page 6



**CHAPLAIN'S CORNER**

*Continued from page 5*

Tip One – Spend Time Alone with Each Family Member (Do a Date with Kids).

Tip Two – Stay Involved in Children’s Activities and Interests.

Tip Three – Address Previous Issues (Start a Gameplan NOW).

Tip Four – For Family Members – Honor What Your Service Member Has Been Through and Continue to Support Military Colleagues (Other Families).

Tip Five – Appreciate Life (Do Not “Sweat the Small Stuff, Hunt for the Good Stuff”).

Tip Six – Let Go of the Past (Unresolved Issues Create Bitterness and Anger).

Tip Seven – Stick to Your Budget (All of Us are Receiving a Pay Cut).

Tip Eight – Expect Children to Test Limits (That is Okay; Love Them Unconditionally).

Tip Nine – Recognize and Address Unhealthy Adjustments (Get Help if Needed).

She does provide a “shameless plug” for the chaplains, but you can apply this to our MFLC teams or other caregivers:

Chaplains can be good listeners. Sometimes that is all that is needed, a listening ear. They also have a unique position when it comes to confidentiality. The clergy/penitent privilege is a big plus when talking to a chaplain. What is discussed with the chaplain stays between the counselee and the chaplain. Also, chaplains have a unique perspective in that they address issues from the spiritual standpoint. The spiritual aspect is just as important as the physical and mental aspects. This can help to heal the whole person. Chaplains can also be great advocates and resources to find specific help with problems.

“Chaplains cannot solve every problem, but they can help people find the best resource to get help.” (Retired FDNY Chaplain Randy Imhoff, p. 101)

The bottom line is we are all responsible to begin thinking about our homecomings, and each and every one of us needs to know there are people watching out for us if we struggle.

Take care everyone, Many Blessings, Chaplain Jerry



## *You're the news!*

This news magazine belongs to the Soldiers of Task Force Falcon

Send us photos, stories, and ideas for future coverage, and see your unit’s accomplishments highlighted on our Facebook page

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# REAPER

## *From "Reaper 6"*

LTC James Schreffler

Family, Friends, Soldiers, and Loved Ones of TF Reaper,

Greetings from Northern Afghanistan! Our Task Force has been very busy in the month since the last command update. The Soldiers of Task Force Reaper continue to excel in all areas of their duties. Our Soldiers have undergone several inspections by outside entities while operating at our normal high operational level, and have exceeded the Army standards in each of them. The units of 1-135th and the 1st Air Cav Brigade have come together very well and are providing Regional Command North the aviation assets they need for the coalition forces to accomplish every mission. Our task force operates 24 hrs a day, and has many Soldiers working their assigned job, with additional duties as well, and with this team spirit, everything gets accomplished. Our Soldiers continue to accomplish everything we ask of them, conducting all their duties with a high degree of professionalism and have been recognized for many of their feats by the Task Force Falcon commander.

We have been fortunate with some exceptional fall weather, but November has also brought us some cold night temperatures. Our Soldiers have been utilizing the winter weather clothing issued to them to stay warm. With the temperature changes, there has been some rain, which in turn results in mud-mud everywhere!

The Thanksgiving holiday brought thoughts of home, the holidays of the past, and everyone tries to bring a little of the holiday spirit to Camp Marmal. We had a big Thanksgiving meal, with turkey, dressing and traditional Thanksgiving decorations. Along with the big meal, some of our Soldiers enjoyed an afternoon of flag football, that our teams faired in very well. The holidays will be tough on everyone, but we will enjoy them the best we can. We will stay focused, as the mission continues, and our operations continue.

The leadership of the task force is aware there are many rumors going around about our timeline, and at this point they are all just rumors. We will communicate official information as it becomes available. I am sure everyone can appreciate that this information must be guarded. The official timeline will be put out to your Soldier as soon as possible.

The continued support from home inspires us, giving us strength, and allows us to concentrate on our tasks. We ask that both our Soldiers and Families stay strong and safe through the holiday season and look forward to what 2014 will bring.

Fly to Glory!  
CSM David Gail  
"Reaper 7"





A CH-47 Chinook helicopter aircrew from B Company, 2nd Battalion (General Support), 227th Aviation Regiment, of the 1st Cavalry Division's aviation brigade, attached to Task Force Reaper, facilitate tactical loading training of a Chinook with Afghan National Security Forces. Task Force Reaper, 1st Battalion (Attack), 135th Aviation Regiment of the Missouri National Guard is attached to 10th Combat Aviation Brigade for Operation Enduring Freedom XIV. (Courtesy photo)

A CH-47 Chinook helicopter crewmember from B Company, 2nd Battalion (General Support), 227th Aviation Regiment, of the 1st Cavalry Division's aviation brigade, attached to Task Force Reaper, conducts pre-flight procedures. Task Force Reaper, 1st Battalion (Attack), 135th Aviation Regiment of the Missouri National Guard is attached to 10th Combat Aviation Brigade for Operation Enduring Freedom XIV. (Courtesy photo)



CH-47 Chinook helicopter crewmember from B Company, 2nd Battalion (General Support), 227th Aviation Regiment, of the 1st Cavalry Division's aviation brigade, attached to Task Force Reaper, test fire their M-240H machine guns during a flight. Task Force Reaper, 1st Battalion (Attack), 135th Aviation Regiment, of the Missouri National Guard, is attached to 10th Combat Aviation Brigade for Operation Enduring Freedom XIV. (Courtesy photo)

Members of D Company, 1st Battalion (Attack), 135th Aviation Regiment and 227th Aviation Regiment, display a banner a school sent them, in front of an AH-64 Apache helicopter in a maintenance hangar at Camp Marmal in Balkh Province, Afghanistan, Dec. 14, 2013. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)



## *From “Tigershark 6”*

LTC Chad Ward

Tigershark Families, Friends and Soldiers

TF Tigershark has performed with relentless dedication and exceptional standards. Soldiers are completing missions that expand our capabilities in RC-East and are preparing for the arrival of TF Eagle Attack.

The month of November began with recreation and laughter during the Task Force Organization Day including food, contests, and competitions. The Task Force gathered over a meal to enjoy a well earned break from their labors. During the Halloween costume contest, cheers could be heard across the hangar. The festivities continued as Soldiers demonstrated their physical strength with a strongman-pull. Two person teams took the challenge of pulling one of the Army’s finest aircraft, the AH64D Apache, across the flight line. It is important for our Soldiers to find time in the day to relax and reflect upon the hard work that they do every day and have been doing the entire deployment.

Task Force Tigershark is working hard to prepare FOB Fenty for TF Eagle Attack’s arrival. As our Soldiers are preparing to head home to their families, the mission here remains steadfast. It is essential that we are good stewards of our AO and equipment. With that in mind, TF Tigershark has been conducting 100 percent inventory of equipment. The Soldiers are keeping the equipment in optimal condition and preparing movement of containers in order to setup TF Eagle Attack for success in their future operations. While the Task Force is preparing for the new unit, the mission will always be placed first. The Soldiers tirelessly complete inspections, phases, and continuous maintenance that keep our aviation assets operational and flying. Each of our airframes are instrumental in facilitating unified land operations intended to secure the population, neutralize the insurgency and increase Afghan National Security Force’s confidence in their abilities. TF Tigershark continues to demonstrate excellence in their execution of the mission.

As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded of the many gifts to be thankful for. We are proud to recognize the families we have back home, for their personal sacrifice. TF Tigershark would like to express our sincere appreciation for their selfless support to our Soldiers. Their outstanding contributions enable our Soldiers to complete their missions at the highest standard. Their dedication to our country and its military is commendable. Thank you. Strike at Night!

LTC Chad Ward  
Tigershark 6

CSM David Paul  
Tigershark 7

TIGERSHARK

## Afghan aviators resupply remote bases with partnered close-air support



**NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** – An Afghan Mi-17 helicopter begins a resupply mission to a remote Afghan base in eastern Afghanistan Aug. 5, 2013. The Afghan Air Force, with about 60 Mi-17 helicopters, took over the resupply mission of Afghan bases in the spring of 2013. As the AAF builds its close air support capability, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade AH-64 Apache helicopter crews protect the developing fleet during high-threat missions. (U.S. Army photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Dallas Russell, Company A, 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Tigershark, 10th

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

**NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** – Barg-e-Matal district lies isolated in the heavily-wooded highlands of the Hindu Kush Mountains in eastern Afghanistan's Nuristan province. The few roads leading into the district, which borders Pakistan to its east and Kamdesh District to its south, are narrow and are in poor condition due to continuous landslides. Therefore, transporting supplies and personnel into the district is accomplished almost exclusively by air.

The Afghan Air Force, which has made steady gains in its operational capacity since 2007, took over resupply operations to Barg-e-Matal, and other remote bases in the area, from the International Security Assistance Force in early spring of 2013. While the AAF continues to expand its close air support capabilities,

AH-64 Apache helicopters and crews from the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, provide aerial security for these missions.

U.S. Army Capt. Derek Forst, commander of Company A from the Missouri National Guard's 1st Attack/Reconnaissance Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, flying in support of Task Force Tigershark, 10th CAB, said that without the aerial resupply missions, many of the outposts would be dependent on supplies brought in by foot and pack mule.

"It would take weeks for a convoy to get to most of the OPs," Forst explained. "These missions are keeping the OPs open. It's their livelihood. If it weren't for these resupply missions, the Afghan forces would not have food and water; those outposts would not be open."

See **RESUPPLY**  
continued on page 12



**RESUPPLY**

*continued from page 11*

The OPs and forward operating bases in these remote areas are Afghanistan’s first line of defense against insurgents crossing into the country’s remote north-eastern provinces. Barg-e-Matal district is a known Taliban transit area to and from the northern Pakistani district of Chitral and has been the sight of fierce battles between insurgents, and Afghan and ISAF forces. ISAF withdrew its forces from the area in 2009, to shift emphasis toward securing major population centers. Afghan forces remain in the district, as well as throughout the province, to prevent the free passage of enemies of Afghanistan across the border.

Afghan Air Force Mi-17 helicopter crews fly resupply missions nearly once a week to the remote Afghan OPs and bases. Although each aircraft is armed with two M-240H machine guns, AH-64 Apache helicopters provide security overwatch for them due to the higher level of threat in some areas of the resupply route. In addition to providing greater firepower against threats on the ground, the AH-64 Apache helicopter can alert other aircraft, as well as troops on the ground, of enemy activity in the area.

“We provide security and deterrence,” said U.S. Army Capt. Steven Lancianese, an AH-64 Apache pilot who also serves as the 10th CAB assistant operations officer. “In the areas they are flying, the tactical threat is significant.”

As agreed upon at the 2012 NATO Chicago Summit, Afghan National Security Forces took the lead for security throughout Afghanistan in June 2013, and ISAF moved to an increasingly train, advise and assist role. The AAF has achieved significant successes during the first half of the 2013. On April 12, with very short notice, the AAF was able to plan and execute an 11-sortie mission between six different bases, providing vital reinforcements, ammunition and supplies to retake a remote outpost in eastern Afghanistan in the

wake of an insurgent attack. In July, the AAF launched the largest Afghan-led joint, combined arms operation in more than 30 years.

“They are not junior pilots,” Forst said. “They are excellent pilots. They know what they are doing. They tell us that if we ever have to make an emergency landing, they will pick us up – and they will.”

A handful of experienced pilots from the 10th CAB have been advising Afghan pilots in air mission planning since the unit’s arrival May 2013, a mission they took over from the previous unit, the 101st CAB. The Kabul Air Wing Partnership advisors recently completed training the fourth class of Afghan aviators. U.S. Army Capt. Brandt Anderson, the TF Falcon team leader for the Kabul Air Wing Partnership and a CH-47 Chinook helicopter pilot, said the advisors will now be stepping back in order for the Afghans to begin taking over the training of their own pilots.

Anderson said the AAF has become very proficient at conducting resupply missions and supporting Afghan troops on the ground. Until the AAF develops its own close air support capabilities, the AH-64 Apaches give the Mi-17 crews an added sense of confidence.

“The (Mi-17) pilots can see the AH-64 over their shoulder,” Anderson said. “They know its capabilities and it gives them confidence when they’re flying into high threat areas. Its presence alone is a deterrent.”

Anderson said he believes the AAF will be able to conduct its own close air support within the next year or two. In the meantime, the partnership is an important mission and a unique experience for U.S. aviators.

“Our aviators are not used to partnered operations with Afghans, unlike the guys on the ground,” said Lancianese. “It’s rare for us to be paired up with Afghan aviation elements. It is a very satisfying mission.”



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This news magazine belongs to the Soldiers of Task Force Falcon  
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highlighted on our Facebook page

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Top, with an OH-58 Kiowa Warrior helicopter in the foreground, an AH-64 Apache helicopter takes off for a mission. Bottom, an AH-64 Apache helicopter awaits its next mission. These aircraft are from 1st Battalion (Attack, Task Force Tigershark, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade. (Courtesy photos)



*From Knighthawk 7*

CSM Robert Parmer

TF KNIGHTHAWK Families, Friends, and Soldiers,

Many changes have occurred within Task Force Knighthawk in the last couple of months. We've said farewell to our brothers in arms from Ft. Riley's F Co, 1st Avn (UAS) and welcomed their replacements from Ft. Hood, E Co 227th Avn (UAS). In addition, we said goodbye to our AH-64 Attack brothers from Ft. Bliss, C Co 1-501st and welcomed their replacements from Ft. Hood, C Co 1-227th Avn Regt. As the two fine organizations completed their successful mission and returned home to their loved ones, they have much to be proud of. From disrupting critical supply routes to supporting ground forces, they made a tough job look easy. Task Force Knighthawk's mission has yet to slow down going into the winter months. The cooler weather has moved in and preparation for our return home is in full stride. Companies are working hard to load containers and complete those last inventories before they seal them up and send them on their way to Ft. Drum.

Our Soldiers, your loved ones, are anxious to get back to their families and others just want to get home to a real shower where they can use as much water as they wish. Nine months of combat showers and living the deployment life takes its toll and Soldiers focus on home rather than the mission remaining. We've placed emphasis on focusing on the mission until they are on the plane headed home to be with their families. Our experienced leaders are ensuring the mission remains at the front of their minds as we receive the incoming Task Force Wings from Ft. Campbell and ready them to assume the mission. This focus will ensure when our Soldiers get off the plane at home they will be able to look you and their brothers and sisters in arms in the eye and say job well done. I've been doing this for over 25 years and am proud to say I will close out my career by serving with these fine Soldiers. The mission they've accomplished is second to none. Fine job Knighthawks!

HOOAH!

CSM ROBERT D. PARMER

TF KNIGHTHAWK

FOB SHANK

KNIGHTHAWK

## Rucksack to rotor blades; former infantryman returns to Afghanistan as Army Black Hawk pilot



**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHANK, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Young, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot and unit safety officer with 2nd Battalion (Assault), Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, conducts pre-flight procedures Nov. 26, 2013. Young was an infantryman for 11 years and deployed as part of both Operations Enduring Freedom I and Iraqi Freedom I. He is currently on his second tour to Afghanistan as a Black Hawk pilot. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division Public Affairs)**

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHANK, Afghanistan (Nov. 26, 2013) – U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Young dreamed of being a police officer as a child. To reach that goal, after graduating high school, he enlisted as an infantryman in the U.S. Army with the intention of gaining experience to prepare him for law enforcement. However, a delayed response from a police department to which he had applied, turned a three-year enlistment into a 20-plus-year Army career. Along the way, the 11-year infantryman with two combat tours would become a U.S.

Army helicopter pilot.

Young grew up in Kingstree, a small town in South Carolina, and lived with his grandparents until the age of 12, when he returned to his birthplace of Maryland.

“We were raised pretty well,” he said. “I was brought up and raised helping my uncle on a farm. I learned hard work, that’s for sure.”

At age 15, Young worked at a movie theater where security personnel were all law enforcement officers. He would talk to them about becoming a police officer

*See **ROTOR BLADES**  
continued on page 16*

**ROTOR BLADES***continued from page 15*

and they all told him of the benefits of serving in the military before applying to the force. During his high school senior year, he worked as an administrative assistant at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in Greenbelt, Md., where his supervisors were all military veterans. After graduating from high school, his mind was made up; he enlisted to become an infantryman in the U.S. Army to gain the training, leadership development, and discipline necessary for a career in law enforcement.

Less than a year before the end of his initial enlistment, Young applied to the Capitol Police in Washington, D.C., but did not receive a response. He had to make a decision to reenlist or to leave the service. With just a few months from the end of his enlistment, he decided to reenlist for job security. Ironically, soon afterward, he received the response he was waiting for; the letter stated his background check was complete and listed dates for a physical fitness test and civil service test. But it was too late, Young was on the way to becoming a career Soldier and his infantry training would soon be called upon following the 9-11 attacks.

Early in 2002, Young deployed to Afghanistan with 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment “Iron Rakkasans”, of the 101st Airborne Division; among the first U.S. ground forces sent to oust the Taliban. In addition to providing base security and conducting quick reaction force missions, his unit mostly supported Special Forces Operations by providing outer security during raids. They also conducted village assessments and shuras.

On July, 2, 2002, as Young was getting ready to go on a mission to provide security for a special operations mission to neutralize or capture a high value target, he received a phone call that his wife was in labor. Their first son, Anthony Michael, was born later that day. The mission would be canceled due to a dust storm, he recalled.

For his actions in combat, which included leading his squad as the main effort during a cordon and search mission, Young received the Bronze Star Medal.

He returned to Fort Campbell, Ky. Aug. 2002; his homecoming would not last long. His unit went on leave in September and soon afterward, traveled to the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La., to train for the duration of November. A mere two months later, in Jan. 2003, Young’s unit deployed to Iraq to take part in the initial invasion.

“I was trying to adjust to having a newborn son at home; however, that reunion was short-lived,” he said.

The “Iron Rakkasans” were attached to 3rd Infantry Division for the push up to Baghdad, and eventually settled in Tal-a-Far where the unit conducted entry control point security. It also manned a checkpoint on the border of Iraq and Syria. Young earned The Army Commendation Medal with Valor while on a mission in Iraq.

“After two combat deployments on the ground, I really started to think about life after the Army; thinking about how old I would be after 20 years of service, and realized I would be too old for law enforcement,” he said.



**UNDISCLOSED LOCATION, Iraq** – Then Sgt. 1st Class **Michael Young**, an infantryman and squad leader with 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, has his picture taken with an Iraqi boy in 2002 during a village assessment mission. Young is currently a chief warrant officer 3, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot and unit safety officer with 2nd Battalion (Assault), Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade. (Courtesy photo)

See **ROTOR BLADES**  
*continued on page 17*



## **ROTOR BLADES**

*continued from page 16*

Young was a sergeant first class during Operation Iraqi Freedom I when he began considering a career in aviation. His first experience with aviation was when he was working as the operations noncommissioned officer for 3-187th Inf. Regt. The aviation liaison officer he worked with would often invite him over to the aviation units.

“The pilots were cool and didn’t mind an infantry guy hanging around,” Young said. “My first impression was how professional and organized everything looked. I got to attend one of their Aviation Academics/Pilots classes and I was extremely impressed.”

Although his interactions with Army aviators significantly influenced his decision, Young considered his family as he continued to seriously look into changing careers.

“I had a son now so I wanted to do something more with my life and aviation looked very promising,” he said. “Once I learned that I could become a warrant officer and become a pilot, I felt that would be something that I could do after the military. My wife wasn’t thrilled with the fact that I wanted to be a police officer. She felt that being a police officer was just as dangerous as being in the infantry. So she was extremely happy when I told her I was going to put in a warrant officer packet to become a pilot.”

In his 8 years as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot, Young has returned to Afghanistan twice; with the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade in 2009-2010, and currently with the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade’s Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion (Assault), Task Force Knighthawk. During these deployments, he has flown over areas he previously fought on the ground.

“All the chaos on the ground can be hectic; once you’re in the air flying it’s beautiful,” Young said. “It’s a lot (calmer), more relaxed, than the planning leading up to it. It’s just awesome; especially with the snow in the mountains this time of year.”

Young has earned the Combat Infantryman Badge but says he prefers to wear the Expert Infantry-

man Badge on his Army Service Uniform. “That is the badge which I earned back in 1995 at Fort Drum when I was in 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment from 1994-1997,” he said.

Additionally, Young has earned the Parachutist Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Air Assault Badge, and Army Aviator Badge. It is evident to his fellow aviators that his unique background has enhanced his role as an aviator. His company commander describes him as a model Soldier who is determined and competent.

“With an infantry background and experience as (a noncommissioned officer), he is able to both mentor Soldiers and relay essential information to synchronize aviation and ground force capabilities to best support the mission,” said U.S. Army Capt. Lisa Klekowski, Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion (Assault), TF Knighthawk, commander and a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot, as well.

Nearing 20 years of service, Young said he isn’t quite ready to retire. He has decided to become a U.S. Army

*See **ROTOR BLADES**  
continued on page 18*



**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHANK, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Young, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot and unit safety officer with 2nd Battalion (Assault), Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, removes his flight gear Nov. 26, 2013. Young was an infantryman for 11 years and deployed as part of both Operations Enduring Freedom 1 and Iraqi Freedom 1. He is currently on his second tour to Afghanistan as a Black Hawk pilot. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division Public Affairs)**



**ROTOR BLADES**

*continued from page 17*

fixed-wing pilot which will tack on an additional five years to his career.

“If I enjoy the fixed-wing community, who knows when I’ll get out,” Young said. “But I do plan to retire someday.”

Young is scheduled to return to Fort Drum, N.Y., with his unit early in 2014, where he will reunite with his wife, Amy, and sons, Anthony, 11, and Christopher, 9.



Sgt. Benjamin McLaughlin, a UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter crew chief assigned to C Company “Warlords”, 2nd Battalion (Assault), Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, observes his aircraft’s engine during start-up procedures prior to a night personnel movement mission Dec. 4, 2013, at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan. (U.S. Army Photo by Capt. Peter Smedberg, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Released)



Spc. Russell King, a petroleum supply specialist from E Company, 2nd Battalion (Assault), Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, fuels an HH-60M medical evacuation helicopter from C Company DUSTOFF, 7th Battalion (General Support), 159th CAB, at the forward arming and refueling point at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan, as Spc. Eric Daniels, a fellow petroleum supply specialist from E Company, and HH-60M crew chiefs, look on, Dec 4, 2013. (U.S. Army Photo by Capt. Peter Smedberg, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Released)



# PHOENIX



**Spc. Tyler McConnell, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter crew chief from Texas National Guard, service under 3rd Battalion (General Support), Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, monitors his aircraft's engines prior to a light Nov. 27, 2013. (Photo by Capt. Peter Smedberg, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)**



**Spc. Travis Shoemaker, an aircraft powerplant repairer with D Company, 3rd Battalion (General Support), Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, replaces a combustor drain valve gasket on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter Dec. 11, 2013, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)**



**From left, Spc. Antonio Juarez and Sgt. Eric Carson, OH-58 Kiowa Warrior helicopter crew chiefs with C Company "Blue Max", 1st Battalion (Attack), Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, conduct maintenance on a Kiowa Warrior Dec. 11, 2013, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)**



**Staff Sgt. Inacio Lopez, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter crew chief from the Oklahoma National Guard, serving under 3rd Battalion (General Support), Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, scans his airspace while flying a personnel movement mission over Kunar Province, Afghanistan, Nov. 28, 2013. (Photo by Capt. Peter Smedberg, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)**



## Specialized aviation maintainers repair damaged helicopter's electrical system in painstaking project

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

In an aviation battalion, “Delta Company” is the go-to unit for keeping aircraft in the fight. With platoons of specialized shops such as: power frame, engines, avionics, hydraulics, and sheet metal, Delta Company’s mission is to repair the battalion’s aircraft as quickly as possible allowing the unit to continue its aviation mission. The maintenance its members perform can either be routine or as a result of damage.

Three Soldiers from 10th Combat Aviation Brigade’s Delta Company, 3rd Battalion (General Support), Task Force Phoenix, recently completed the repair of extensive electrical equipment damage on a UH-60M Blackhawk helicopter. The damage was caused by an indirect fire attack in early September 2013.

According to U.S. Army Sgt. Anthony Zielinski, an aircraft electrician assigned to Delta Co., 3-10 GSAB, he, U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Bridwell, and U.S. Army Spc. Clinton Baughman ; both avionics mechanics; took on the task of replacing, or repairing, 86 wires, in addition to three terminal blocks, and three coaxial data bus lines. The project took about eight days to complete.

“There was a push to get the aircraft up as soon as possible to get it back on line,” said Zielinski, who worked seven 12-hour shifts on the project. “A lot of time was spent figuring out what wires went with what system, which wires were best to replace or to repair. Some wires, because of resistance values, we cannot splice them. In those cases, it’s best to run new wire.”

Bridwell, who spent 104 hours on the project, spent the first three days prepping by ensuring all necessary parts were on hand.

“We had a giant mess of destroyed wire,” Bridwell said. “We had to identify what each specific wire was, involving its system, its purpose, and its termination points; and then came the repair.”



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – From left, U.S. Army Spc. Clinton Baughman, an avionics mechanic, and U.S. Army Sgt. Anthony Zielinski, an aircraft electrician, both assigned to Delta Company, 3rd Battalion (General Support), Task Force Phoenix, of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, demonstrate the limited space where they, along with another noncommissioned officer repaired and replaced electrical wires inside the tail boom of a UH-60M Black Hawk during a lengthy and painstaking project to get the aircraft fully mission capable after it was damaged by an indirect fire attack in October. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)**

According to their platoon leader, U.S. Army 1st Lt. Eric Solomon, after receiving the necessary materials, Bridwell and Zielinski worked alternating 12-hour shifts to repair the electrical system as quickly as possible. Baughman contributed about 70 hours to the project.

“The repair itself took an immense amount of attention to detail and dedication to mission,” Solomon said. “Individually inspecting and marking entire bundles of wires for damage and keeping an accurate

*See REPAIRS  
continued on page 21*

**REPAIRS**

*continued from page 20*

log of the damaged wires took hours alone.”

Not only did the project require technical expertise and dedication to proper maintenance, according to Bridwell, but a lot of caffeine as well. The three would spend dozens of hours working in awkward positions in the tail boom behind the cabin, a space too narrow to sit up, inspecting damage and replacing wires. Most of the work was done alone in the tail boom lying on their back or on their side.

“My hands were getting really tired and after the third day, they really hurt,” Bridwell said. “We do a

lot of work out here but rarely its hour upon hour, day upon day.”

Solomon said the efforts of Bridwell, Zielinski, and Baughman are indicative of the work they and their colleagues in Delta Co., have been performing throughout the deployment; production that reduces aircraft down-time.

“The work these Soldiers do is phenomenal, and it allows the task force to continue its full spectrum aviation support across all of Regional Command – East during this critical time in the history of Afghanistan,” said Solomon.



Task Force Phoenix aircraft prepare to take off from a remote base in eastern Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)