

The Spartan Scroll

Summer 2014



SPARTAN COMMAND REPORT



Greetings Spartans, Families and Friends! As the long summer Alaskan days begin to give way to the shorter days of Fall, I want to take this opportunity to address you all personally.

Let me first say how immensely proud I am of all of you. Your unwavering devotion to duty, coupled with your families' support, perseverance, and the professionalism with which you have tackled every mission are truly the things that make the Spartan Brigade the finest combat organization in the United States Army.

I want to thank you for the sacrifices you and your families have made while assigned to the Spartan Brigade. I know that the Operational Tempo over the last eight months has been challenging for all Spartans. From Thailand to north of the Arctic Circle, from Louisiana to the Donnelly Training Area and from Mongolia to Japan to Bangladesh and beyond – if you wear the 4/25 airborne patch on your left sleeve, you've spent your share of time out in the elements away from home and loved ones. You should know that your training has not been in vain. Over the past eight months, our Brigade demonstrated the Department of the Army theme of "Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged." The Brigade built enduring partnerships with allied armies across the Asia-Pacific Theater and improved our joint mission partnerships here in Alaska over the course of multiple large scale training exercises. The Brigade's performance at JRTC resulted in accolades from all who observed our Paratroopers indomitable spirit and discipline. It is clear that you are our Nation's force of choice – and it shows!

When you take a step back and process just what all of you have accomplished since January, it becomes obvious that no other brigade in the Army has been as busy as the Spartan Brigade. It's because of what you, the men and women of the Spartan Brigade, bring to the table that we

have adopted the slogan of, "Anywhere, Anytime." We validated our capability to execute any mission at any location recently when the Army announced that a small element in the Brigade was selected for an operational mission in Europe, requiring a deployment in the near term. A few hundred of our fellow Paratroopers will depart for Kosovo to carry out peacekeeping operations to ensure the people there can look forward to a safe and secure environment.

The Brigade continues to grow and change with Army restructuring, adding six company-sized elements to the formation and re-designating a few of the existing companies. I would like to welcome the 8th FST, 716th EOD Company, 4th Quartermaster Company, 95th Chemical Company, 545th MP Detachment, and an additional Sapper Company, B Company in the BSTB.

In October, we'll transition the 425th BSTB to the 6th Brigade Engineer Battalion and add a Forward Support Company to that Battalion as well. The Brigade's fire-power will increase with the addition of C Battery and its M777 (155mm) Howitzers in October, too. As the formations transform, they have recently or will soon relocate to new facilities. This includes occupying new barracks, motor pools and headquarters from Brigade to Company level.

On a sad note, over the course of the Fall, a majority of the Brigade's senior leaders will transition to new assignments and the Spartan Family will welcome new members. I would like to extend my thanks to all of the departing leaders and their Families for their devotion to their formations and always accomplishing the mission. We all have been truly blessed to have served in such an amazing Brigade – with caring people in a tremendous location. I know that you all will continue to complete our Airborne mission with unyielding determination to stand ready to do our Nation's bidding, no matter what the task. It is a tremendous honor to walk in your ranks.

Airborne! Arctic Warriors! Sparta Lives!

Yours,

Matthew W. McFarlane
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding



Arctic Paratroopers Re-Boot “Prop Blast” Ceremony

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith

Spartan Brigade senior paratroopers recently reintroduced a more than seven-decade-long tradition when they jumped from UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters March 20 onto Geronimo Drop Zone at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

In mid-December 1940, 13 officers of the 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion stationed at Fort Benning, Ga., started the “Prop Blast Ceremony,” naming it after the blast of air that jumpers feel upon exiting an aircraft. During the Vietnam era, however, the ceremony began to take on a less-than-stellar reputation as it became associated with binge drinking and hazing.

U.S. Army Col. Matthew McFarlane, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division commanding officer, said although the ceremony used to be ritualistic and focused on initiation, like the Army, it has evolved and now focuses on leadership and professional development.

“Once you’re in the unit, you’re part of the unit,” McFarlane said. “This is really leader professional development. We have our brigade staff judge advocate out here. We have our brigade chaplain out here. We have a lot of staff officers and field grade officers who spend most of their day working behind a desk and coordinating and managing instead of doing. This allows them to get hands on, get trained at the basic skills they help coordinate [for] the training for their formations.”

McFarlane said the focus is to build the team as the brigade prepares for a month-long deployment to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La. The goal, according to McFarlane, is to make sure leaders of the brigade are proficient in basic soldiering skills and are cohesive as they arrive into a stressful environment at the JRTC.

The Arctic leaders landed on Geronimo Drop Zone, which is a circular DZ surrounded by snow-covered mountains. The troops used steerable MC-6 parachutes to land, and then donned snowshoes to prepare for a long movement out of the valley, performing individual skill tasks along the way to ensure they are as proficient in basic warrior skills, as are their paratroopers.

“That’s what’s great about our United States Army,” McFarlane said. “We draw lineage that starts from the very first day of our Army. We have a bond with people we serve with now and with people that formally served in our units. We carry on tradition and carry on the honor that they established in whatever war they fought in, whatever training event they executed in, so it’s a great way to carry on some tradition and understanding on how the units evolved and what’s special about each unit.”

Maj. James B. Lee, the 4-25 IBCT chaplain, said the experience was an airborne tradition and not a rite of passage or initiation.

“It was truly part of being a paratrooper,” Lee said. “In that sense, that’s what made it meaningful to me.”

Lee said the time they spent together as leaders and staff preparing to go to the JRTC was genius.

“We have a lot of new staff. We have a new public affairs officer and we have a new judge advocate general,” Lee said. “I’m the old guy as far as special staff goes.”

Lee said, for him, the best part of the Prop Blast ceremony was the camaraderie of being paratroopers.

“We all have our cubicles, computers and jobs, but we actually got out and did what soldiers do for a day,” Lee said. “That was the first time I jumped out of a Black Hawk. That was pretty cool. I will say that jumping from a Black Hawk is nothing like what they tell you in pre jump. You do not have room to reach down and push yourself up and out of the helicopter. You really fall out of the darn thing.”

After the jump onto Geronimo Drop Zone, the Spartan senior leaders marched in snow shoes for 12 miles, completing individual and group tasks along the way. It was followed by a formal ceremony held at the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion’s (Airborne) motor pool.

This is the first time the brigade has jumped onto Geronimo Drop Zone since redeploying from Afghanistan supporting OEF 2011-2012.



U.S. Army Maj. Zach Katzenberger (left), with the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, leads a group of senior leaders with the Spartan Brigade as they march off the Geronimo Drop Zone as part of the airborne community’s ceremonial “Prop Blast” Mar. 20, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Conducted since World War II, the Prop Blast served as a team-building event, which celebrates the proud paratrooper heritage and welcomes new members into the airborne community. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith)



Field grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division jump onto Geronimo Drop Zone on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, March 20, 2014 as part of the airborne community's ceremonial "Prop Blast." The origins of the Prop Blast began in the very early days of the Airborne's formation shortly before World War II and evolved into a lengthy and elaborate multi-stage team-building event, rich in symbolism and replete with sacred objects and special lore. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Epperson)



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class William Gokey, a Jumpmaster assigned to 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, takes a final look at the drop-zone before he boards a UH-60 Black Hawk on Geronimo Drop Zone in the Chugach Mountains on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska during the brigade's recent "Prop Blast" March 20, 2014. Conducted since World War II, the Prop Blast served as a team-building event, which celebrates the proud paratrooper heritage and welcomes new members into the airborne community. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith)



A senior leader assigned to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, prepares to land on Geronimo Drop Zone in the Chugach Mountains on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska during the brigade's recent "Prop Blast" March 20, 2014. Conducted since World War II, the Prop Blast served as a team-building event, which celebrates the proud paratrooper heritage and welcomes new members into the airborne community. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith)



U.S. Army Maj. Dale Terrill, current operations officer for 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, pulls an Ahkio sled with other members of his team, March 20, 2014, en route to their next checkpoint during the brigade's recent "Prop Blast" at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Conducted since World War II, the Prop Blast served as a team-building event, which celebrates the proud paratrooper heritage and welcomes new members into the airborne community. (Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Adam Hallmark)

Spartans hone Arctic warrior skills during winter FTX

Story by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, along with various units and enablers from across Alaska worked together to demonstrate their unique ability to carry out combat, as well as safety and security operations while operating in an Arctic environment during their winter field training exercise Jan. 28 through Feb. 5, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

More than 3,000 service members participated in the event. It all started with a forced entry, airborne insertion on Jan. 28.

Situational Training Exercises (STX), to include mounted and dismounted live fire action and gunneries, along with Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) surveillance of the battlefield, 105mm howitzer artillery crew certifications and firings, air assaults, and mounted and dismounted security patrols were some of the skills paratroopers executed during the event.

Due to regular deployment rotations in support of the Global War on Terrorism, the winter FTX was a first for the Spartan Brigade since its inception in 2008.

The Spartan paratroopers received invaluable training while planning and executing missions, further validating the unit's abilities to

respond to contingencies and humanitarian relief efforts in the Asia-Pacific Theater. In addition, the FTX helps ready the Spartan Brigade as they prepare for their upcoming rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La.

Battalion commanders were pleased with their units' accomplishments and with the support of the outside enabling units that contributed to the training's success.

"I am real proud of how we, as a squadron, as a troop, all the way down to the platoon, at the section, and squad level have performed up to this point," said Lt. Col. Richard Scott, commander of the 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment. "The guys on the ground performed the way that I expected recon scouts to perform; dismounted recon scouts. I think there is a level of discipline that you need to come into an environment like this, and to this point we have had no issues."

The commander of the 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, Lt. Col. Patrick Altenburg, said, "This is the first big Arctic FTX the brigade has ever done since it stood up, and dealing with the Arctic cold, and how to operate.

"I think it is going really well. I think the key is the planning and rehearsing, and when they plan and rehearse, it all comes together, so, each day they are getting better."



Working together internally and externally with outside enablers was a key piece of the training.

"This is great training. The best part of the training for us though, is the enabler support that we've had, both from our brothers up at Fort Wainwright, and 6-17 Cav. We had the 'Sugar Bear' element ... and then today from the Alaska National Guard providing support with the UH-60s, and then our own brigade enabler support with the 'Shadows,' MPs, and human contact teams," said Lt. Col. Tobin Magsig, commander of the 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment.

Flexibility is essential for military units as they conduct operations in today's world, said Magsig.

"We're focusing on how the battalion is able to seamlessly transition and react and operate in a permissive, semi-permissive and non-permissive environment," said Magsig.

“Our ability to rapidly transition between those three operating environments is really what we are getting after during the last week and a half and into the end of this week.”

Lt. Col. Christopher Ward, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, said his artillerymen benefited from the tough Arctic conditions.

“We’ve trained pretty hard in all of the core artillery proficiency tasks that we have, here last summer and the fall, but now we are doing those same skill sets in an Arctic environment. It just increases the level of difficulty,” said Ward. “Obviously, colder weather, having more gear on, the mobility is not the same. So just being able to maintain that level of proficiency that we had several months ago in a different environment is always a challenge, and our guys are doing a great job of getting after it!”

Combat support and combat service support elements of the brigade played essential key roles during the FTX.

Lt. Col. Peter Crandall, the commander of the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, said, “I believe this is an outstanding event. It’s the first time the brigade as a BCT has come to the field. So, as a support battalion, with co-locating all of the FSCs (forward support companies) here with us, and integrating them into synching logistics for the brigade, we’ve never done this before, so I think going forward, for any exercise, be it Fort Polk, or we deploy to any other country in the PACOM AOR (Pacific Command Area of Responsibility) will greatly enhance the TTPs (tactics, techniques, and

procedures) that we have.”

In all, the FTX was a success and integrated systems not often seen and experienced, such as the incorporation of battlefield surveillance provided by one of the brigade’s newest assets, the RQ7 “Shadow” Unmanned Aircraft System.

The paratroopers gained proficiency and knowledge while operating in the Arctic conditions, and they will carry that experience forward as they continue to train and execute orders handed down to them.

“When push comes to shove, what we’re doing, they’re (Spartan paratroopers) really excited to do, and it’s a challenge,” said Lt. Col. Kevin Perera, the commander of the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion. “They have distinct pride in the fact that nobody else in the Army comes and hangs out in the field and does combat training like this, in, you know, seven degrees!”

In addition to the upcoming rotation to JRTC, the Spartan Brigade continues to train and conduct missions across the Pacific region with recent operations in Australia for

(Left, As seen on the cover) A paratrooper with the 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, leaps out of a Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Battalion “Sugar Bears” CH-47 Chinook helicopter as it flies over the drop zone Jan. 29, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The paratroopers exited the aircraft and descended onto Malemute Drop Zone for their follow-on missions in support of the Spartan Brigade’s nine-day field training exercise focusing on rapid deployment, forced entry, and follow-on lodgment expansion. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

(Below) Paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, exit from two Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft during an airborne operation on the first day of a nine-day field training exercise Jan. 28, 2014, at the Malemute Drop Zone at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The operation further validates the Spartan Brigade’s constant state of readiness as the Army’s only active airborne force for the Asia-Pacific region. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

the Talisman Saber 2013 mission and the upcoming mission to the Kingdom of Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold 2014.



'1-Geronimo' snipers shoot from Black Hawk platform

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - U.S. Army infantrymen with Hatchet Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division carried out a weeklong, arctic field training exercise designed to hone skills in mountaineering, arctic survival, sling load and air assault operations, and sniper precision fire from high angle and aerial platforms March 3-6, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The purpose of the training was to provide immediate, safe, accurate, and lethal sniper fire in support of ground commanders. Infantrymen sharpened individual and collective skills while planning and executing missions with enabling partners from the Alaska Army National Guard allowed for improved interoperability.

Hatchet Company's scout platoon leader, 1st Lt. Matthew Mitchell, said the training will help his platoon provide sniper support capabilities at the battalion's upcoming Joint Forcible Entry Exercise at Fort Greely, while also improving their arctic operational abilities.

"At the end of this training, we will be better at basic skills, such as PCCs and PCIs [pre-combat checks

and pre-combat inspections], and planning and preparation for a mission, and also following through with growing capabilities," said Mitchell.

Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters with the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, sling loaded a small unit support vehicle (SUSV) and a completely gutted 1989 Chevrolet Camaro to the scouts' mountain-side location.

Spc. Kyle Lupenski, an infantryman who was on the mountain to receive the equipment, said, "We are training in arctic proficiency, and this is a good experience for us to get out and shoot. We will be climbing these mountains with a lot of weight, and shooting down at the Camaro."

The Camaro spent the week on the mountainside as a target for high-angle fire. On Friday, it was airlifted to JBER's Malemute Drop Zone for use as a target for the aerial firing range.

The training mutually benefitted both Army components. The Alaska National Guard pilots got invaluable flight time, and the infantrymen received the unique aerial platform precision fire training.

Alaska Army National Guard Capt. Brendon Holbrook, a pilot with the 1-207th said, "We don't get to do this every day. It was really good to be able to support the ground element, and do some great training."

Other key training events during the week included operating the SUSV in a mountainous, arctic environment, and conducting long distance and night fire ranges.

A U.S. Army paratrooper with Hatchet Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fires an M110 Semi-Automatic Sniper System from an aerial platform March 7, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard used its UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopters to airlift the "One-Geronimo" paratroopers for the training. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)





A 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopter sling loads a stripped down 1989 Chevrolet Camaro to its target location where paratroopers with the 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division used it for follow-on aerial platform targeting March 7, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)



U.S. Army Sgt. Charles Riegel, assigned to Hatchet Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, prepares an M107 sniper rifle for an aerial platform firing range March 7, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

Spartan Brigade conducts its first-ever airborne operation north of the Arctic Circle

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Epperson

DEADHORSE, Alaska - Paratroopers with Chaos Troop, 1st Squadron (Airborne), 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, conducted an airborne operation to simulate a search-and-rescue mission for downed aircraft in Deadhorse, Alaska, Feb. 25.

“Operation Spartan Pegasus was a combined training mission between USARAK, 4-25th, the Air National Guard (144th Airlift Squadron), and the Alaska National Guard to train and validate the unit’s ability to conduct a search and rescue of a downed aircraft in Deadhorse, [which] is located only three kilometers from the Beaufort Sea,” said the 1-40th Cavalry Regiment Commander, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Richard Scott.

Scott said the paratroopers have been working hard to ensure mission success.

“In the last several weeks, Chaos Troop, commanded by U.S. Capt. Nelson D’Antonio, has been focused on training his soldiers to execute this type of mission profile, [such as] responding to a downed aircraft,” Scott said. “Their training consisted of skiing, skijoring, and training in an arctic environment at the individual and platoon level.”

Scott said that the mission was important because it validated the Spartan Brigade’s ability to respond

to any contingency mission in support of Alaskan Command and the United States Army Alaska. With 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment’s recent jump into Thailand, the Spartan Brigade demonstrated it can conduct a forcible entry mission anywhere in support of U.S. Pacific Command.

“There is no other airborne unit in the U.S. Army that can do what they did today and it takes a specially trained paratrooper to endure this type of environment,” Scott said. “It also says a lot about the soldiers and their dedication to mission accomplishment.”

U.S. Army Col. Matthew W. McFarlane, commander of the Spartan Brigade, said this mission demonstrates another example of the brigade’s capabilities and the reach it gives to U.S. Army Alaska and the U.S. Army Pacific commander.

“As a brigade, it’s the first time we have jumped north of the Arctic Circle,” said McFarlane. [What] makes it even more significant, in my eyes, is that a week and a half ago we jumped into the jungles of Thailand at 90 degrees and 85 percent humidity, which highlights that this brigade [can] go anywhere, anytime, to do anything that our Nation asks.”

McFarlane acknowledged the mission’s success required the integration of the joint team.

“Our National Guard partners that participated with us - the 176 Air Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, and the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaskan Army National Guard who provided support for the operation - were critical components of the mission as we trained a defense support [to] civil authorities mission profile,” McFarlane said.

McFarlane said the mission was to parachute in, move to the crash site, establish support, [rescue] any survivors, and evacuate the injured.

“The biggest threat was the bitter cold, once the force hit the ground,” McFarlane said. “The winds across the drop-zone did provide some risk, but based on thorough preparation and mission rehearsals, we significantly reduced the risk on the jump and during operations in the Arctic conditions.”

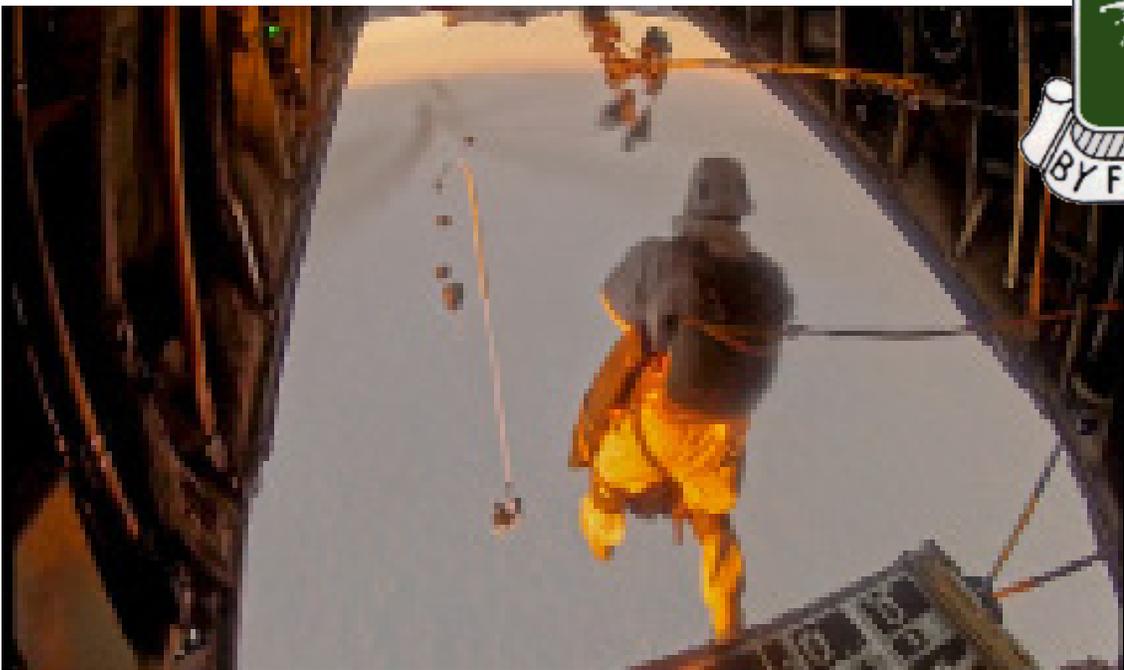
“Despite the extreme temperatures, the soldiers had a can-do attitude and pressed forward to ensure we got the jump in and moved all of the mission personnel and equipment to the departure airfield effectively,” McFarlane said. “I think it highlighted the tremendous leadership of C Troop. Despite the extreme environment, they ensured their soldiers were safe and able to complete the mission.”

PV2 Anderson Springer, a native from Austin, Texas, and a paratrooper assigned to C Troop, 1-40th Cavalry Regiment, said he thought the mission went well.

“I like how [our] unit expects us to do a little bit more,” Springer said. “The first sergeant is always emphasizing how [important the troop is]. I think we did our part. Charlie Troop did it, and no one got hurt.”



Paratroopers with Chaos Troop, 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, move to their assembly area after parachuting into Deadhorse, Alaska, Feb. 25, 2014, as part of the Spartan Brigade's training for rapid insertion into any environment in the Pacific. This is the first time the Spartan Brigade has conducted operations north of the Arctic Circle. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Eric-James Estrada)



Paratroopers with 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, jumped into Deadhorse, Alaska, Feb. 25, 2014, as part of the Spartan Brigade's training for rapid insertion into any environment in the Pacific. This is the first time the Spartan Brigade has conducted operations north of the Arctic Circle. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Epperson)

Spartan Brigade launches unmanned aircraft system on JBER

Story by Staff Sgt. Mark Shrewsbury

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - The paratroopers of the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division launched an unmanned aircraft system, or UAS, on Forward Operating Base Sparta for the first time since 2008 on Friday, Nov. 15.

The Spartan Brigade was recently given FAA clearance to fly UAS on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

The “Shadow” UAS is a small aircraft operated remotely from the ground by paratroopers assigned to the 425th BSTB. It is approximately 14 feet in length and width but only three feet in height. The aircraft weighs nearly 375 pounds. The “Shadow” is launched from a trailer-mounted pneumatic catapult. Once launched, the UAS propels from zero to 81 miles per hour after only 30 feet. It provides real time video relay via a line-of-sight data link to the ground control station. The UAS is then recovered with the aid of arresting gear similar to the same gear used to stop jets on an aircraft carrier once its mission is complete.

“The launch was actually a test,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Nicholas Jones, the Spartan Brigade’s UAS Operations Officer and native of Bloomington, Ind. “It was conducted to ensure the validity of the new authorization to fly in the airspace belonging to JBER. While my unit’s intent was to be as safe as possible, and not interfere with business being conducted by the various entities around JBER utilizing the airspace, it was necessary to test the process of launching the UAS from FOB Sparta.”

Jones said that his unit did a COMEX, or rehearsal of communications, on Nov. 14. The process required paratroopers operating the UAS to call all of the different agencies that they would have to notify if they were actually launching. For the COMEX, however, they began the notification by clearly stating that they were conducting an exercise.

“All aspects of the exercise went well,” Jones said.

He also said the 425th BSTB works with the same UAS as every other unit in the Army despite the extreme winter temperatures.

“The Warrior battalion has one distinct advantage. The paratroopers who control and guide the UAS for the Spartan Brigade are the best at what they do,” Jones said.

The UAS will not likely be flown again on JBER this calendar year due to the extreme temperatures in Alaska during the winter.

When flights are conducted, the UAS will stay over JBER and mostly in restricted airspace. A NOTAM, or notice to airmen, will additionally be published prior to any flights to alert pilots of the presence of UAS in the air.



A U.S. Army paratrooper assigned to the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, pushes an unmanned aircraft system, or UAS, into position before its launch from Forward Operating Base Sparta on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson on Friday, Nov. 15. Before the launch, UAS had not been flown over JBER since 2008. (Courtesy Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Nicholas Jones / Released)



U.S. Army paratroopers assigned to the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, conduct a final inspection of an unmanned aircraft system, or UAS, before its launch from Forward Operating Base Sparta on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson on Friday, Nov. 15. Before the launch, UAS had not been flown over JBER since 2008. (Courtesy Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Nicholas Jones / Released)

Spartan Brigade demonstrates quick response, airborne ability at Cobra Gold 2014

Story by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Spartan paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, demonstrated their unique ability to rapidly deploy and conduct a forced entry airborne assault during Exercise Cobra Gold 2014 at the Khok Kathiam Royal Thai Air Force Base in Lopburi, Thailand Feb. 15, 2014.

Hosted by the Kingdom of Thailand, Exercise Cobra Gold, now in its 33rd iteration, brings together militaries from eight different nations to improve interoperability among nations that share common interests in peace, security, and economic stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Participating countries in CG14 include the United States, Kingdom of Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia. China, participating in Cobra Gold for the first time, was also included in the exercise as an observer nation.

Exercise Cobra Gold 2014 incorporated all military branches from the U.S. and the Kingdom of Thailand.

For its part in CG14's fictional scenario, the 4-25's mission was to conduct an airfield seizure to allow for follow-on air transport of much needed vaccines and supplies to an urban area riddled by an outbreak of a deadly influenza virus and civil unrest. In addition to civil prob-

lems, the relatively small indigenous defense force at the airfield was overmatched by a violent, heavily armed group of combative militia that had its own malicious intent for the airfield.

During the very early morning hours and in the darkness of the arctic Alaskan air, approximately 400 Spartan paratroopers, joined by several service members with the Marines and Air Force, along with 20 of their airborne brethren with the Royal Thai Armed Forces boarded five Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft.

They embarked from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson on a 17-hour, non-stop flight, complete with two aerial refueling missions, and an inflight rig.

Atmospheric conditions at the assault site were strikingly different than in Alaska. When the Spartans jumped out over Khok Kathiam in the late morning hours, ground temperatures were at 90 degrees Fahrenheit with 80 percent humidity.

Many Spartans reported feeling a sudden rush of moist heat inside the aircraft the moment the exit doors opened. The drop zone, coarsely turned crop fields adjacent to Khok Kathiam's runway, lied ahead.

Despite the high temperatures and humidity, the mission commenced.

It was a safe airborne operation resulting in no serious injuries. The C-17's made several passes to unload the paratroopers and heavy equipment drops. Open canopies filled the sky as they drifted downward.

Paratroopers' movements on the assault site were faced with challenging terrain, weather, and heavy combat loads, but with a little additional time, the unit was able to clear their objectives and complete the key components of the mission.

Col. Matthew McFarlane, the 4-25's commanding officer, said he was proud of his unit's accomplishments at CG14, as they built relationships and improved interoperability with armed forces from partnering nations.

"We are ready any place, any time, to do anything, and those three things are uncertain, but what is certain is we are going to do it with somebody else, and that's our close allies," said McFarlane. "So that's what our Soldiers are learning about during this exercise."

Maj. Surachart Ruanwong, a leader with the Royal Thai Army, and one of the 20 Thai service members who jumped into CG14, said he enjoyed his time training alongside American paratroopers. He was also thankful for his group's recent trip to JBER where they visited the Spartan Brigade and jumped with



Approximately 400 paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division and 20 Royal Thai Armed Forces liaisons parachute into Lop Buri, Kingdom of Thailand after travelling from Alaska on Feb. 14 as part of exercise Cobra Gold 2014. CG 14 provides both the U.S. and Kingdom of Thailand an opportunity to refine both countries' abilities to respond to crises and provide Humanitarian and Civic Assistance. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)



A paratrooper with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, looks at his Thai Army Parachute Jump Wings for jumping into the Kingdom of Thailand, after traveling from Alaska with approximately 400 paratroopers and 20 Royal Thai Armed Forces liaisons at a ceremony on Feb. 16 as part of Exercise Cobra Gold 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)



(Below) Paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, don the T-11 Parachute System onboard a C-17 Globemaster as they prepare to jump into the Kingdom of Thailand, after traveling from Alaska with approximately 400 paratroopers and 20 Royal Thai Armed Forces liaisons on Feb. 14 as part of Exercise Cobra Gold 2014. CG 14 provides both the U.S. and Kingdom of Thailand an opportunity to refine both countries' abilities to respond to crises and provide Humanitarian and Civic Assistance. (Courtesy photo)



(Left) A U.S. Marine assigned to the Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company scans the horizon from his position on the drop zone at the Khok Kathiam airfield in Lop Buri, Kingdom of Thailand Feb. 15. Approximately paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, along with 20 servicemembers with the Royal Thai Armed Forces and several U.S. Airmen and Marines jumped into Kingdom of Thailand in support of exercise Cobra Gold 2014, a multinational exercise designed to better interoperability among partner nations that share common interests in peace and security in the Asia Pacific region. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/ Released)

its paratroopers onto the Malemute Drop Zone.

“I learned many things, new techniques and new doctrine,” said Ruanwong.

1st Lt. Richard Payne with the 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, and member of the 4-25’s advanced echelon said working together with the Royal Thai Armed Forces has been a great experience. He said he has learned a lot about working with U.S. allies to accomplish missions.

“It’s the first time I’ve ever done something like this, and getting to see the backside role of how something like this actually happens. There’s a lot that goes into it.”

Capt. William Longwell, a future operations officer with the 4-25, said the Spartan Brigade benefits from the multinational exercise by providing paratroopers with operational experience in a full-scale airborne assault and airfield seizure.

“For 4-25, all the way down to the lowest level, it helps us with the partnership with fellow countries, getting used to working with different nations, getting used to working with their military, and how they do things, and introducing them to how we do things. It helps all Soldiers on all different levels, all the way from our brigade commander, all the way down to the lowest level private.”

Spartan paratroopers wrapped up their training at Khok Kathiam the morning of February 16. The whole event culminated with a

traditional airborne wing exchange ceremony at the Royal Thai Armed Forces Special Warfare School in Lopburi. Paratroopers from each nation pinned their home country’s airborne wings on their allies’ chest as a symbol of their airborne brotherhood.

The Spartans’ final stop in the Kingdom of Thailand was at the U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield where they boarded U.S. Air Force C-17s and departed for their home in Alaska.

Upon arrival in Alaska, paratroopers jumped out and landed on JBER’s Malemute Drop Zone. Cobra Gold 2014 further validates the Spartan Brigade’s constant state of readiness and its capability to

quickly amass combat power in response to crisis contingencies in the Asia-Pacific region.

Spartan training will continue as the brigade maintains readiness by prepping for an arctic airborne operation north of the Arctic Circle and an upcoming Joint Readiness Training Center rotation at Fort Polk, La.



A paratrooper with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, prepares to conduct a parachute-landing fall into Lop Buri, Kingdom of Thailand after travelling from Alaska with approximately 400 paratroopers and 20 Royal Thai Armed Forces liaisons on Feb. 14 as part of Exercise Cobra Gold 2014. CG 14 provides both the U.S. and Kingdom of Thailand an opportunity to refine both countries’ abilities to respond to crises and provide Humanitarian and Civic Assistance. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

World War II vets share memories with Spartan troops

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Epperson

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Two World War II veterans, one of whom served in the 377th Field Artillery Regiment and the other as an artillery soldier, visited the Spartan Brigade on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Dec. 18, 2013.

Retired Col. Jack P. Ancker and Father Norman Elliott joined with paratroopers from the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division on Malamute Drop Zone as PFAAR's men fired 105 mm Howitzer artillery guns shortly after sunrise. The purpose of this training event was to further validate the brigade's fires-support capabilities and to honor soldiers who served our country valiantly during World War II.

Elliott, who is nearly 94, pulled a lanyard that was hooked to one of the howitzers and fired off a round.

The two veterans said they enjoyed visiting the troops, watching the live-fire exercise and sharing stories about World War II and their time in the Army.

Elliott joined the National Guard and then the Army in 1942.

"I didn't go to Europe until the spring of '45," Elliott said. "The 89th Infantry Division was a regular division and then it became converted into what was called a light division, which was copied after a German light division. We were sent on maneuvers to collect data on what we could do, comparing what the German light division could or could not do. So because of that, we were delayed from being sent overseas. As soon as that experiment ended, we were reconverted back into a regular division and that's when we went overseas: landing in France and then up through Luxemburg and then Germany."

Elliott and his unit sat near the Czech border about a week, unable to fire and told not to fire unless they were sure they were firing at German soldiers and not Russians.

"Every part of Germany I was in became East Germany. As we moved out towards Frankfurt, 24-hours later



World War II Army artillery officers, retired Col. Jack Ancker (left), and Anchorage-area Archdeacon Father Norman Elliott, stand beside the chaplain with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, chaplain (Capt.) Robert W. Davis Jr. as they prepare to watch the 2-377th fire 105mm Howitzers Dec. 18, 2013 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

the Russians came and occupied it.”

After the war ended, the Army offered Elliott a rare opportunity.

“After Germany, I was one of the fortunate ones and sent to the American Army University in Shrivenham, England, as a student. The American Army had set up a university at the former British officers training place called Shrivenham and had brought top ranking professors over from the states to teach a three months course. I was the fortunate one from my battalion they sent. I spent three months as a student.”

After the course, Elliott transferred to a guard company there and stayed another three months. After the university closed, he came back to the states on a troop ship in April 1946.

Elliott moved to Anchorage in 1951, after completing seminary, and eventually became the arch deacon of the South Central Alaska Episcopal Diocese.

Elliott stayed in the reserves until 1953 when his bishop requested that he drop out of the reserves.

On Good Friday, March 27, 1964 Elliott also was delivering a sermon to his congregation when the Great

Alaskan Earthquake began.

“During the season of lent we used to have a service every Friday beginning at 5:15 p.m., so people could come from their employment to be at the church,” Elliott said.

“We were talking about Jesus dying on the cross. Well, in the gospels Matthew says ‘That’s when the earth quaked’ and that is exactly when it did quake.”

Elliott described the earthquake.

“The building rocked. It was not a shaker,” he said. “The earthquake of ’64 was a roller. The building began to roll with the chandeliers hitting the ceiling in rhythm. The walls came forward and back and this went on for about two or three minutes. Afterward we didn’t have a broken window, pipe or wire. The building was not damaged at all which was amazing, but it had laminated beams that had withstood it.”



Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fire off shots from a 105mm Howitzer Dec. 18, 2013 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

He remained in Alaska to spend the next 50 years traveling and ministering for the Episcopal church throughout the state. Father Elliott retired in 1990 but remains active in the community. He was recently appointed to Anchorage's military and veterans advisory commission.

Col. (retired) Jack P. Ancker was born in Cedar Falls, Iowa, June 1, 1921. He enlisted when he was at Purdue University in 1942.

"I was in the advanced ROTC program there," Ancker said. "I didn't have a draft card and I was 21. A recruiting team came through and I enlisted because I didn't have any way to identify myself in a saloon" he laughed.

"We were already in World War II, so I knew I was going to be in the Army anyway," Ancker mused.

"After Pearl Harbor happened the president of the university assembled the male students and he said there would be no further extended vacations," recalled Ancker. "There would be one week of between terms to allow the professors time for the grading, so we graduated in 3 and a half years instead of four. As ROTC students, we didn't get to go to summer camp, so we were sent to Fort Sill to go through [officer candidate school] because our entire program was field artillery."

Ancker said at that time there were three different divisions we could go to.

"They had a couple called airborne and I didn't know what that was except it sounded like you flew around in airplanes or something," he said. "So, I volunteered to go airborne. I thought this would be interesting. "

"It was a lot more interesting when I got there. One, we didn't ride in any airplanes for a long time. Two, we didn't ride in anything. When we were going someplace, we had to run. The only time you walked was when you slowed down to salute someone that outranked you and you better damn well do it."

Ancker was assigned to the 17th Airborne Division that was officially activated April 1943.

"We had about a year and a half preparation time," he said. "In that time we learned how to load gliders as well as learning all the skills of the branch.

Ancker said his division commander was one of the original parachute troops.

"[Maj. Gen. William M. "Bud" Miley] went to Washington to ask permission to set up a special jump school for people in our division," Ancker said. "He came back and announced that if anybody that was not a qualified parachutist could take the program. I decided if they were going to take me out and kill me by riding in a glider, I would like to be paid for this, so I'd jump out of the airplane and get the money. It worked out. I qualified though, but to be honest, I wasn't physically qualified. I was too skinny and I couldn't see well enough, but I convinced a doctor to let me do it anyway."

Ancker's unit left in the fall of 1944 in a repaired cruise ship that served as a troop transporter. After landing in England, his unit trained and prepared for war on an old British military post. On Christmas Eve 1944, they landed in France and ended up in Luxemburg.

His unit never made it to Germany. The whole division was pulled back to France for Operation Varsity to support Montgomery's crossing of the Rheine.

"Patton was already across the Rheine River at this point," Ancker explained.

Ancker volunteered to go to Japan in 1947 after World War II, and stayed there for two years and then came back to the states with the 11th Airborne Division where he was sent to Alaska in the summer of 1949 to go to the Arctic Warfare School.

"I got married, then went to the advanced course at Fort Sill where I got sick," Ancker said. "It turned out I had tuberculosis. I had it for three years and they didn't discover it until I got a hole in the lung. So I spent a year in the hospital and then they retired me on a temporary disability. I was retired two years roughly.

Ancker eventually became healthy and with a doctors

approval, was able to join active duty again. He taught classes at Fort Sill and Fort Knox for two years before going to Command General Staff College. He went to Korea for his last assignment as a field artilleryman where he commanded two battalions. After Korea, Ancker came back to the states again to work at the Pentagon, where he gained the second MOS of Logistics. Ancker served as commander of the Inventory Command Center in Vietnam from April 1971 until April 1972. After Vietnam, he returned to the states to take over as professor of Military Science at New Mexico State University before retiring the second time in 1975.

“I actually was retired twice. Once temporarily, and then finally they told me to go away because I was old and over age, grade and all the other stuff they tell you to get rid of you,” Ancker laughed.

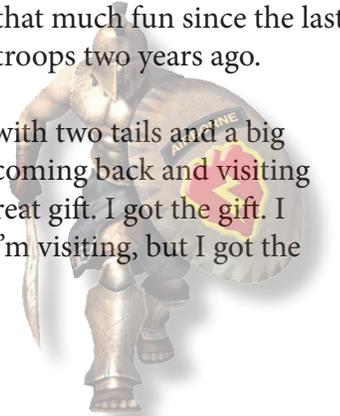
Retired Army Col. Jack Ancker (second from left) and Anchorage area Archdeacon, Father Norman Elliott, both World War II veterans, look over a 105mm Howitzer as paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division prepare to fire Dec. 18, 2013 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Also pictured is the 2-377th's commander Lt. Col. Christopher Ward (left) and the battalion's chaplain, Chaplain (Capt.) Robert W. Davis Jr. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released

Ancker said the Army is so different today from his days of service.

“The terminology is the same, but what they’re using is in a different world.”

Ancker said he enjoyed his time with the Spartan artillerymen and he hadn’t had that much fun since the last time he visited the Spartan troops two years ago.

“I was as happy as a puppy with two tails and a big meal,” he grinned. “It’s like coming back and visiting family and I think that’s a great gift. I got the gift. I don’t know about the guys I’m visiting, but I got the gift.”



Centurions combat multiplied

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - The 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division increased its combat power by formally adding two additional companies to its ranks during a patch ceremony March 17, 2014 at the National Guard Headquarters Building at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The two newest units in the Spartan Brigade are the 4th Quartermaster Detachment and the 716th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company. The Centurion Battalion's numbers increased by a couple hundred paratroopers recently, both with these two new units, and the recently-acquired 8th Forward Surgical Team, which is currently deployed to Afghanistan on a nine-month rotation.

The new Centurions moved over from the 2nd Engineer Brigade, U.S. Army Alaska as part of ongoing, Army-wide force restructuring. Under the changes, USARAK is scheduled to decrease the amount of Soldiers stationed at JBER, while increasing the amount at Fort Wainwright.

The patch ceremony, featuring new paratroopers donning the 4-25 IBCT (ABN) shoulder sleeve insignia and maroon berets, formally welcomes the units into the brigade while significant logistic operations occur behind the scenes. Service Members, Department of the Army civilians and contractors are responsible for transferring, turning in, and accounting for large amounts of unit property as the realignment efforts take place.

The Spartan Brigade and Centurion Battalion's Family Readiness Groups will grow as well, welcoming new Families to the units.

The new Centurion paratroopers are happy to be united with the large airborne community of the 4-25.



Paratroopers with the 716th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company don their new 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division shoulder-sleeve insignias and maroon berets during a patch ceremony March 17, 2014, at the Alaska National Guard Headquarters building at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The 716th EOD Company and the 4th Quartermaster Detachment joined the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, bringing explosive ordnance disposal specialists and parachute riggers to the Centurion Battalion's ranks. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

The 4th QM Det. commander, Capt. Sloane Mauldin, who hails from Fredericksburg, Va., said, "I originally was with the 4-25, and I came over to the 2nd Engineer Brigade specifically to command this company, so I'm excited to go back home, and be in an airborne brigade again."

"My troopers are absolutely excited to be part of a unit with such great airborne lineage and history as the 4-25," said Mauldin.

The 716th EOD Company's Executive Officer, 1st Lt. Josiah Hennig, who hails from Stratford, Conn., said, "The 4-25 has been very welcoming, and we are excited to work with them and be a part of the team."

The 4-25's Commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane, said, "This ceremony is a great way to punctuate that the 716th EOD and the 4th Quartermaster are now part of the Spartan family."

"There are many aspects that go into this," said McFarlane, "from mission command responsibilities of equipping and sustainment to family care. We are ensuring we guide our leaders and all of our soldiers in leader development, and interacting with post agencies to make sure we can take care of the entire formation and their families."

Units across Alaska are meeting the challenges presented by the Army's force restructuring, according to Maj. Gen. Michael H. Shields, USARAK commanding general. He said the patch ceremony is the right way to welcome new units as they transition throughout his command.

"This is a progression of several moves within USARAK, and this is a great way to recognize these units and soldiers for their service and of course, the great history and tradition of the 4th of the 25th," said

Shields.

Shields said USARAK has plans to restructure many units in the future, to include some aviation units, as the command continues to realign its force structure both at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and at Fort Wainwright.



The commanding officer of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Col. Matthew McFarlane (second from left), stands with Command Sgt. Maj. Mitchell Rucker, the senior enlisted adviser for the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment (left), as they welcome the command team of the 716th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company to the Spartan Brigade during a patch ceremony March 17, 2014, at the Alaska National Guard Headquarters building at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The 716th EOD Company and the 4th Quartermaster Detachment joined the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, bringing explosive ordnance disposal specialists and parachute riggers to the Centurion Battalion's ranks. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)



Vet remembers Alaska's great quake of '64

Story by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith

Friday evening at the post officers' club was a great way for Army officers to shake off pressure from a full week of training, but on the evening of March 27, 1964, the earth did a little pressure shaking of its own.

The magnitude of the earthquake was 9.2, the second largest quake ever recorded by a seismograph. The tremors shook the Anchorage community literally to its core, destroying man made works and forever changing parts of its landscape.

The unstable ground and string of volcanoes throughout the Pacific serve as a reminder of Alaska's position in the "Ring of Fire" region. The quake, which occurred on the Christian holiday of Good Friday, is known as the Great Alaska Earthquake and the Good Friday Earthquake. For many Alaskans, the events of that day will be forever remembered.

The same is true for a retired Army officer who was shooting pool at the Fort Richardson Officers' Club that night.

Retired Army Lt. Col. David Vozka, then assigned as the executive officer of C Company (Airborne), 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, recounted the events.

"In those days it was traditional that at the end of Friday you would

go to the classic 'Happy Hour,'" said Vozka. "So we're playing pool, and the earthquake started. Now we were familiar with earthquakes. We had been through other earthquakes before, and at the onset of this one, we didn't think it was going to be any big deal."

At the beginning of the quake, the tremors were not that strong, so Vozka, along with two others, continued to play their game.

"I'm lined up on the cue ball," said Vozka, "and all this time the earthquake is gaining in intensity, but it's not that evident, it's just a gradual increase. Well, what got our attention was, all the pool balls slid to one side of the table. So, we all looked at each other, and I clearly remember what I said. I said, 'I don't know about you guys, but I'm getting the F out of here!'"

One officer crawled under the pool table, while Vozka and the other officer ran out of the room. Vozka went right, ran up the stairs, and out of the building. The other officer went left and was stopped by a mass of officers who were crowded near the bar area named "The Nugget Room."

Vozka joined a small group just outside the entrance to the officer's club, which is now the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division's headquarters building, Building 56, located on 4th Street.



"This is where you really experienced the movement of the ground, and you can't replicate it, because it is like you are on a toadstool or something with those shockwaves coming through, and you're riding the waves! You're just going up and down!"

According to Vozka, the wave crests outside the officer's club were approximately 18 to 24 inches high and spaced about 10 feet apart.

Vozka's senses were on full alert because of the moving ground under his feet, his visual of the landscape, and the sound created by subterranean rock being crushed and moved.

"The sound of this earthquake, I don't know how you could ever replicate it. It was really, really intense, because this is the sound of the bedrock being fractured and torn."

He said a way to imagine what it

may have sounded like is to submerge your self under water in a swimming pool and rub rough-surfaced rocks together.

He said the sounds made from the quake came from far off distances.

“The sounds were not occurring under your feet. This was occurring miles, and miles, and miles away, but the sound is there for you to hear.”

Vozka attained his commission through Eastern Michigan University’s Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program. While there he took several geology courses, and has a degree in physical geography, so he was familiar with the science of seismic activity, but he said he didn’t fully understand it until he experienced it for himself.

“It was loud. It was very deep, and it was quite, I guess ‘penetrating’ is a good word. It is indelibly inscribed in my mind,” said Vozka.

Vozka was an outstanding young officer, who was selected after a competitive selection process during his initial infantry training to become a leader in the first airborne company in Alaska, a unit which was partially made up of men who had WWII combat jump stars on their jump wings. He also bravely served two tours in Vietnam during his career, but the events of that day still influence him.

“There are some lasting effects after something like this. To this day I refuse to sit under the balcony of a theater. I just won’t do it.”

Aftershocks occurred for some time after the big quake. One aftershock in the middle of the night immediately placed him into reaction mode. He said before he knew it, he was out of bed and holding onto the bedroom door.

“I have no clue how I got there, it was just automatic response,” Vozka said.

During another aftershock, which registered around a magnitude scale of seven, Vozka remembered looking out his office window at the 562nd Engineer Company.

“I kid you not, I watched people from that 562nd Engineer Company coming out of that building to include opening up the second-story windows and jumping to get out!”

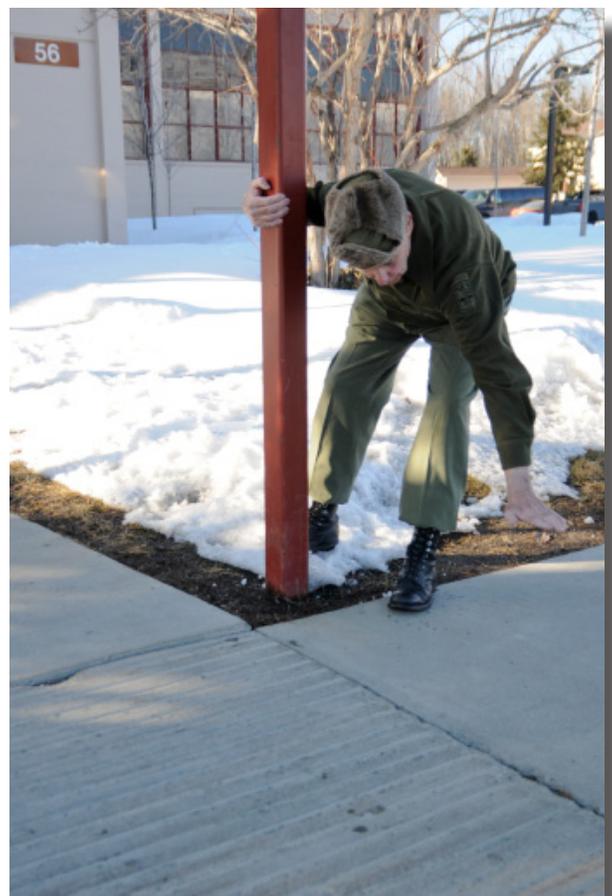
On Sunday, two days after the big quake, Vozka and another Soldier acquired an M37A1 Jeep to go see the damage.

“We went down to the Turnagain Arm area,” said Vozka. “I don’t know what excuse we fabricated in order for us to get this jeep and get down there!”

“We just went down, prowled around to see what we could find out, then we reported to the company commander, ‘This is what we saw, this is what we found.’”

(Left) A photo taken March 27, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson shows a picture of retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. David Vozka, an original member of Fort Richardson’s inaugural airborne unit, who was at the time of the original photo a student at the U.S. Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga. in 1962. Vozka was shooting pool in Fort Richardson’s Officers Club, which is now the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division’s headquarters, 50 years ago when the Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964 hit Fort Richardson. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

(Below) Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. David Vozka holds onto a pole while showing how high the earth moved in wave-like motions during the Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964 outside the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division’s headquarters building March 27, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The current pole is in the same location as the one he held onto 50 years ago when the earthquake hit Fort Richardson. The building used to be the Fort Richardson Officers’ Club. At the time Vozka was playing pool with a comrade in the building’s basement when the trembles began. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)



They saw a lot of destruction in and around the Anchorage Borough to include the newly-constructed J.C. Penney department store, which had to be torn down because it was totally ruined by the earthquake. He said some of the exterior walls fell down, exposing the merchandise inside.

“You could stand there across the street, and look up there, and say ‘Oh yeah, there’s the shoe racks, women’s dresses,’ and some of those facings came down and crushed at least one car, and killed one person.”

He saw a newly constructed automobile dealership building located adjacent to the Merrill Field airport decimated. Another brand-new apartment building downtown awaiting its grand opening, which was scheduled for Monday of the following week, was completely destroyed as well.

The landscape at what is now Earthquake Park, and areas of the Turnagain Arm at the Cook Inlet, were forever changed by the quake.

According to Vozka, the underlying soil in the area, called Bootlegger Cove Clay, which is high in water content, turns into a gelatinous form when shaken.

“We watched people trying to pick up the remains of their houses that just cascaded down that hillside.”

He talked about sections of the Old Seward Highway that were partially covered in seawater from the downward-shifted land. He said fisher-

men who wanted to fish salmon on the Russian River had to time their trips in conjunction with the tide so they could get back home during low tide.

Vozka and his wife, Kay, who were married in 2006, make their home in Anchorage. Kay is also a military veteran, having served 14 years in the U.S. Navy. She withstands the harsh winters in Alaska with memories of her extensive arctic experience. Part of her military career was spent as the deputy dispersing officer with Naval Support Services, Antarctica, where she visited the Earth’s South Pole.

She said at the time of the Great Alaskan Earthquake, she was living in California. She always dreamed about fishing with her older brother in Alaska, so she moved to Alaska after she got out of the Navy.

“I thought that after my time down in Antarctica, that if I could stand that then I could stand Alaska, so I came up here.”

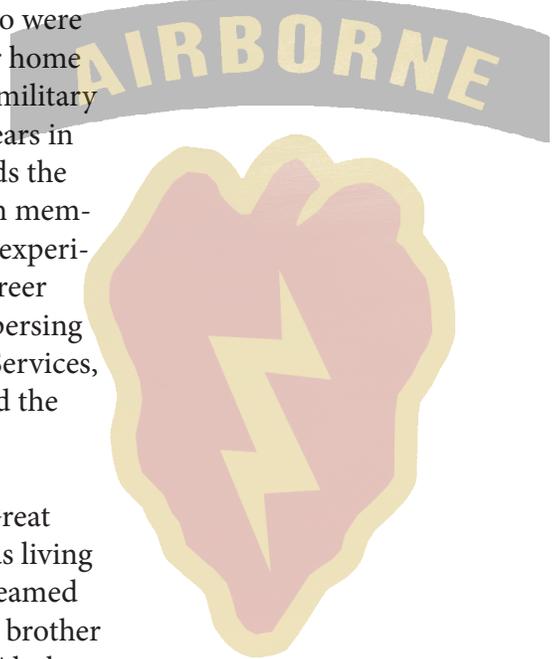
Kay said she is thankful her husband was not injured during the earthquake.

“I’m just glad he survived through it, you know, and didn’t go down in

a big, deep crack.”

Vozka closed with some simple earthquake advice.

“Stay calm, and be prepared.”



Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. David Vozka, an original member of Fort Richardson’s inaugural airborne unit, reads from his jump log March 27, 2014 at the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division’s headquarters building at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Vozka paid a visit in order to reminisce about the events that took place 50 years ago during the Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)



What a day for a Knight jump!

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - They took to the sky together for the last time on the first day of spring. A beautiful sun splashed sky lay ahead as the father and son ascended several thousand feet into the air, taking in the vast beauty of the untouched wilderness and mountainous terrain of Alaska. They could see Mount McKinley to the north as they made their way to the storied Geronimo Drop Zone nestled high above in the undulating terrain of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

They pushed off their side-seated perch on the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter they rode in on, their canopies opened, and they took in for the last time together the sweet silence of descent.

Their equipment was top-notch. The Army's MC-6 Maneuverable Troop Parachute System with the SF-10A main canopy allowed the pair to steer themselves onto the tiny drop-zone.

They landed without injury, quickly recovered their equipment, donned snowshoes, and met back up in the assembly area.

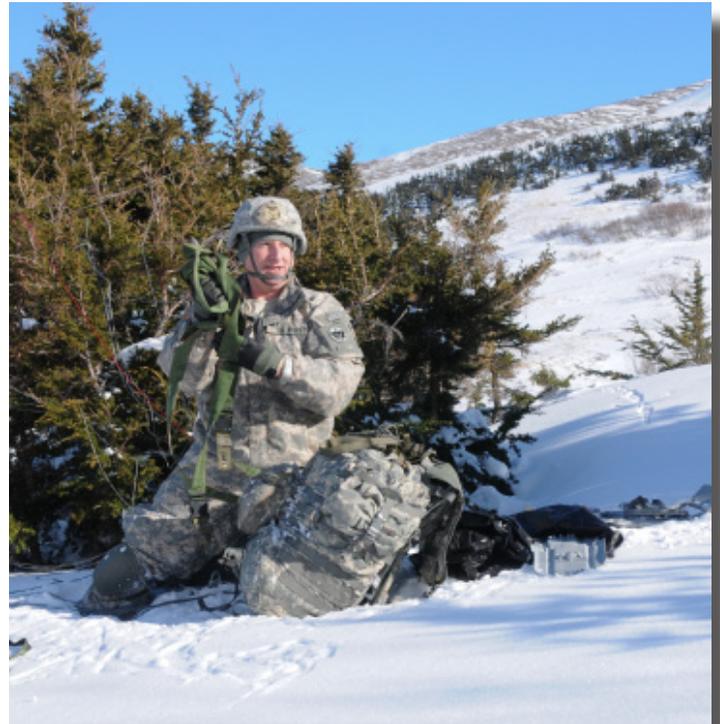
They say timing is everything in the Army, and this time, March 20, 2014, was the last time they would jump together as Army paratroopers.

The jump marked a coming of full

circle for the senior enlisted adviser of U.S. Army Alaska, Command Sgt. Maj. Bernie Knight, and his son, Sgt. Charles Knight, a squad leader with Apache Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division.

Beginning their parachuting history together, Command Sgt. Major Knight attended his son's first jump at Fort Benning during airborne school in 2009. At the time, Knight was the operations group command sergeant major for the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. He was invited down to be guest speaker at his son's basic training and infantry graduation ceremony. From there, he stayed to participate in his son's first jump.

Sgt. Knight said the jump onto the Geronimo Drop Zone was significant because it brought back some



Command Sgt. Maj. Bernie Knight, the senior enlisted adviser for U.S. Army Alaska, recovers his MC-6 Maneuverable Troop Parachute System after jumping onto Geronimo Drop Zone at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, March 20, 2014. For Knight, this was his last jump as he prepares to retire after 31 years of active military service. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith//Released)

good memories.

"This kind of brings me back to when he jumped with me on my first going back a little over five years when I joined the Army, and him ending his career with this," said Knight. "It means a lot to me. I know it means a lot to him, too. I'm glad I got to do his last jump with him."

Knight's dad gave him courage and motivation to join the airborne



Command Sgt. Maj. Bernie Knight (left), the senior enlisted adviser for U.S. Army Alaska, enjoys a father-son moment with his son, Sgt. Charles Knight, an infantryman with Apache Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, after jumping the MC-6, Maneuverable Troop Parachute System onto Geronimo Drop Zone at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, March 20, 2014. The father-son jump represented the two coming full circle as the elder Knight jumped with his son on his first jump and the younger Knight jumping with his father for his last jump. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/Released)

ranks and jump out for the first time.

“I was nervous; I’m not going to lie. Airborne wasn’t something I wanted to sign up for, but because he did, I felt I had some shoes to fill. So definitely, having him there helped me have the courage to go up in the bird and jump out.”

For the sergeant major, his 109th and final jump was significant because of his son, but also because of the 501st.

“I got to do it with the 501st. The first parachute infantry regiment in the Army,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Knight. “They tested the parachute. I was a sergeant major of that unit,

my son is in that unit. I’m doing Geronimo Drop Zone with the Geronimos. I mean, how could you go wrong with that?”

Command Sgt. Maj. Knight has been an influential figure in his son’s life, helping guide his way through the Army, mentoring him, and setting an example to emulate. He said the Army and the airborne have been a great way to bond with his son.

“It’s awesome! This is a great way to do it. Heck, I tried to talk him out of doing this kind of stuff, because, you know, I said, ‘Hey, I did this for the family, I got it.’ But, he wanted to serve, so what better way, and he wanted to be airborne, so I thought

that was cool.”

Sgt. Knight worked as a civilian videographer at the National Training Center, and he was inspired by soldiers and wanted to do what they did, so he talked to his dad about joining.

“It was during the war, and I had just come back from a pretty serious Iraq deployment. You know, we lost 53 soldiers in this brigade (4-25), so I was a little bit apprehensive about what my son was going to see,” said Knight. “I kind of tried to talk him out of it, because I didn’t want his mom mad at me forever, and I didn’t want to lose my son.”

“I was like, ‘Well, you know, you might want to get a skill that will help you when you get out of the Army’, and he was like, ‘well, it was good enough for you wasn’t it?’, and that’s when I said ‘OK ... alright.’”

Through his enlistment, Knight’s relationship with his dad has been enhanced.

“We were close before, but definitely, once I joined the Army, we could bond over it. We had something to talk about. We had something in common besides cars, Harleys and other stuff,” said Sgt. Knight. “I definitely use him as a mentor, and he helps me be a better soldier.

“We talk shop a lot. Nothing bad, all good stuff, you know. I tell him my gripes about the Army, and then he tells me, ‘That’s the Army, suck it up.’ I say, ‘roger that.’ He tells me to drive on, and I drive on.”

After graduating jump school, Sgt. Knight was assigned to the 82nd

Airborne Division. He deployed twice with the 82nd, and on his second deployment, he found himself stationed in the same sector of Afghanistan as his dad, who was at the time assigned to the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

“So, he goes to the 82nd, and I go to the 1-25 up north (Fort Wainwright), and we deployed, and he was right across the river from me,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Knight. “We deployed to the same sector of Kandahar, southern Kandahar, one of the worst areas, right there where Mulla Omar, who started 9-11, lived.”

After the deployment, the Knights reunited in the U.S. when Sgt. Knight re-enlisted with orders to Alaska.

“I love what I do. I’m glad I joined. I’m glad I could be closer to my father. That’s why I re-enlisted to come here, so I could be near Family, and do the Army life,” said Sgt. Knight.

According to Sgt. Knight, he and his dad call Alaska home, even though his dad is originally from Kansas City, Kan., and he is originally from Orange County, Calif.

“I would say I grew up here. My dad spent most of his career here, so I definitely grew up in Alaska,” said Sgt. Knight.

Both Knights plan to live in Alaska after their Army service.

“I am going to be a member of this community. I’ll still be a friend of USARAK. I’m still going to try to hang out with them,” said Com-



Command Sgt. Maj. Bernie Knight, the senior enlisted adviser for U.S. Army Alaska, descends onto the Geronimo Drop Zone under the canopy of an MC-6 Maneuverable Troop Parachute System March 20, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. For Knight, this was his last jump as he prepares to retire after a 31-year active federal service career, with four of those years spent in the Marine Corps, and 27 years with the Army. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Smith/ Released)

mand Sgt. Maj. Knight.

Command Sgt. Knight is wrapping up a successful 31-year, active federal service career. He spent four years with the Marine Corps and 27 years with the Army.

He takes with him many memories and experiences. He said the Army is a big family. An example of this was reinforced when he talked

about finishing up his airborne career with Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Hacker, the senior enlisted adviser for the Spartan Brigade.

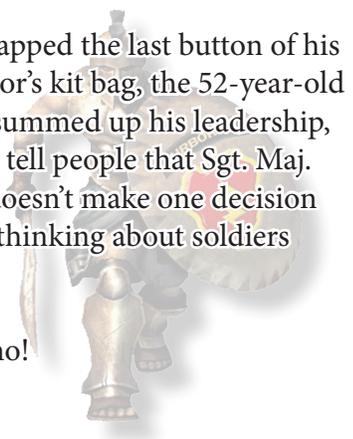
“The Army, although people say it’s big, it’s a small Army, and it’s a huge family, because on this jump right here, the sergeant major of the 4-25 was with me when I first started jumping out of airplanes back in 1990. We were in a LRS (long range surveillance) unit together, and he is on this jump! That’s kind of neat. So you say it’s a big Army, but it’s not. It’s a small Army, but it’s a big family.”

With his recent home purchase in Chugiak, Command Sgt. Maj. Knight is beginning his retirement plans as his son looks forward to tackling upcoming Army challenges. He is going in front of the staff sergeant promotion board this month and plans to attend jumpmaster school, as well as compete for a Sergeant Audie Murphy Club membership. Long term goals include a college degree and a slot at Ranger School.

“I enjoy my job, I love the Army. I love the Army life. They are good to my family, and I appreciate what the Army has done for me and my father,” said Sgt. Knight.

As he snapped the last button of his last aviator’s kit bag, the 52-year-old veteran summed up his leadership, “I would tell people that Sgt. Maj. Knight doesn’t make one decision without thinking about soldiers first.”

Geronimo!



Spartan Brigade proves it's a unit like no other

Story by Maj. Adam Hallmark

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – “Anywhere, anytime.” It’s a slogan that the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division has made its own and lived by for the last year. It started when the Spartan Brigade flew 15 hours non-stop across the Pacific Ocean in July 2013 and parachuted into northern Australia for Exercise Talisman Sabre. Rinse and repeat in mid-February 2014 as the Spartans demonstrated their quick reaction capabilities by flying 16 hours non-stop out of Alaska and parachuting into central Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold.

A follow-on combat equipment jump into Deadhorse, Alaska, in late-February 2014, where temperatures on the ground flirted with -30 degrees Fahrenheit, served as a confirmation and manifestation of the brigade’s “Arctic Tough” mentality.

And, now, the Spartans have validated their ability to deploy rapidly and conduct missions across the globe by completing a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.

“Airborne units are inherently light and agile forces,” explained Col. Matthew W. McFarlane, the Spartan Brigade’s commanding officer. “We can be on our way to virtually anywhere in the world in 18 hours or less to conduct any one of a host of missions and our specific mission set at JRTC additionally required rapid integration of, and synchronization with, multiple enablers – which we’d never worked with before – in order to be successful.”

To be sure, the Spartan Brigade initially worked hand-in-hand with elements of the 5th Special Forces Group, headquartered at Fort Campbell, Ky., to set conditions for mission success at JRTC. Additionally, the Spartan Brigade was augmented by numerous enabler units, which enhanced the brigade’s battlefield effectiveness.



U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Paul C. Warner, a platoon leader with 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, verifies the weight of personnel and baggage before they board a C-130 at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La., April 16, 2014. Soldiers with 4-25 IBCT (A) worked with members of 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 407th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne), 19th Airlift Wing, and role-players representing U.S. government agencies to evacuate noncombatants from a notional country. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Klutts, 20th Public Affairs Detachment)

Among them was an aviation battalion task force from the 3rd Infantry Division at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., a company of Strykers from the 1st Stryker Brigade, 25th Infantry Division at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, and an Army Reserve civil affairs company and psychological operations detachment from Arden Hills, Minn. and Austin, Texas, respectively.

“Every unit in the brigade task force, organic and attached, brought something unique to the fight and we were able to integrate all of our assets quickly in order to ensure that our efforts were synchronized effectively across multiple lines of operations,” said McFarlane.



U.S. Army Capt. Jesse McAdam, commander of C Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, answers questions during a national media interview at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La., April 19, 2014. Role-players provide print and broadcast media coverage set in a notional country during decisive action training environment rotations at JRTC. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Klutts, 20th Public Affairs Detachment)

U.S. Army Soldiers with 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division keep watch from a fighting position at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La., April 18, 2014. The Soldiers were conducting defensive operations as part of a decisive action training environment exercise. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Klutts, 20th Public Affairs Detachment)



The types of missions that the Spartan Brigade has seen itself conducting over the last year have been anything but the typical counter-insurgency fare that the Army has grown accustomed to in Southwest Asia the previous 13 years.

During Talisman Sabre, the brigade executed an airfield seizure in order to allow follow-on Australian forces to conduct operations against a simulated near-peer threat. In Thailand during Cobra Gold, airfield seizure was again the focus, but emphasis was placed on providing follow-on humanitarian aid and less so on combating a threat.

In stark contrast, the jump into Deadhorse, also known as Operation Spartan Pegasus, was centered on support to civil authorities by rescuing the crew of a downed helicopter aircrew in a remote and harsh environment.

At JRTC, the Spartan Brigade experienced elements of Talisman Sabre, Cobra Gold and Spartan Pegasus all rolled into one.

“JRTC really tested our ability to conduct different types of missions simultaneously in conjunction with host nation security forces and civilian organizations,” said Maj. Mark J. Wade, the Spartan Brigade’s operations officer. The rotation at JRTC focused not only on airfield seizure as evacuation of non-combatants and logistical coordination with non-governmental organizations for humanitarian aid distribution played a key factor in the Spartan Brigade’s training. “To top it off, all the while we were

conducting defensive and offensive combat operations alongside host nation security forces against a near-peer military seeking to overthrow the host nation government,” Wade added.

The Spartan Brigade’s ability to deploy rapidly and execute various missions, however, is just one part of a much larger story that concerns itself with the vastness that is the Asia-Pacific Theater.

In a region of the world like the Asia-Pacific Theater, using the word “vast” to describe it might be considered an understatement. According to United States Pacific Command, the Asia-Pacific Theater covers roughly half of the Earth’s total surface area wherein lies roughly half of the world’s total population. It stretches from the American west coast to India’s western border and from Antarctica to the North Pole. All told, the Asia-Pacific Theater encompasses 3,000 different languages, two of the world’s three largest economies and the most populous nation in the world.

The Spartan Brigade isn’t alone in its mission to cover down on such an enormous area as it stands shoulder-to-shoulder with various other combat units from across all of the separate services positioned in the Pacific. How-

ever, it’s the brigade’s uniqueness that sets it apart.

“We’re the only airborne brigade in the Pacific,” said McFarlane. “When time is of the essence and you need someone on the ground in hours, not days, the brigade can be the force of choice.”

As the Spartan Brigade heads into the mild Alaskan summer season, the pace of operations that it has experienced over the past year will not diminish. A slew of planned operations are already on the table, to include bilateral engagements and training exercises with partner nations in the Asia-Pacific Theater such as Japan, Bangladesh and Mongolia.

These exercises and others, coupled with what the Spartans have already participated in, will ensure that any future contingency mission in the Pacific realm can and will be met with swiftness by the Army’s only Pacific airborne unit.





(Above) A U.S. Army Stryker armored personnel carrier with the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, prepares for a night operation during an exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., April 23, 2014. The Arctic Wolves participated in the scenario-based operational exercise to further validate the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division position as a ready and rapidly deployable force that is able to carry out humanitarian and crisis contingency missions in support of the Army's Pacific Command. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada)

(Left) Medical personnel with the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, render follow on medical treatment at the Role II Aid Station during the Spartan Brigade's Joint Readiness Training Center rotation April 21, 2014, at Fort Polk, La. The scenario-based operational exercise further validates the brigade's position as a ready and rapidly deployable force that is able to carry out humanitarian and crisis contingency missions in support of the Army's Pacific Command. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada)



U.S. Army medics render emergency aid to Capt. Christopher Franco (center), the commander for Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, after he sustained a critical injury in a simulated indirect-fire explosion during the Spartan Brigade's Joint Readiness Training Center rotation April 21, 2014 at Fort Polk, La. The scenario-based operational exercise further validates the brigade's position as a ready and rapidly deployable force that is able to carry out humanitarian and crisis contingency missions in support of the Army's Pacific Command. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada)

U.S. Army Capt. Jesse McAdam (left), commander of Comanche Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment and 1st Sgt. Travis Cooke, negotiate a hill on the ski course during the battalion's biathlon competition March 7 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The purpose of the training is to develop each paratrooper's ability to ski over variable terrain and rapidly engage targets at 50 meters with accurate fire in arctic conditions. (Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason E. Epperson/Released)



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