



# The Talon Times



Volume 1, Issue 1

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## “Above Valor and Courage”

### From The Top

I am proud to report that we have arrived safe and sound at North Fort Hood, TX. At this point we have established a routine in terms of our day-to-day training and mobilization preparation. Moreover, we have successfully integrated a number of elements from all over the country into one task force: Task Force Talon. This brings me to the two points that I want to focus on in this first issue of *The Talon Times*—remaining focused on the mission and our common purpose as a forward deployed Aviation Task Force.

As we become cemented into our routine here at Fort Hood it is absolutely paramount that we remember that this, while an important stop, is not our final destination. We have an enormous task

that will have wide-reaching impacts on US National Security as well as perceptions of the US Armed Forces abroad. I



Colonel Ronald Beckham  
185th TAB Commander

am absolutely confident as we transition from a training to an operational environment that the members of this Task Force will perform their jobs with the skill, professionalism, and

dedication that the mission demands.

A separate but equally critical component of remaining mission-focused is the support by our families and friends back home. Those that we leave back home in the various states that comprise this Task Force play a vital role in the overall mission by taking care of a wide-range of issues while we are deployed. I strongly encourage the use of the luxuries that modern communications bring to remain in contact with the members of our team who remain behind—our families.

Lastly, I want the members of the Task Force to know that I have observed the incredible speed at which this fusion of different units from

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- Training Highlight
- A Glance Across the Brigade
- The Culminating Event
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### Preparing for the Mission at North Fort Hood

Soldiers from the 185th Combat Aviation Brigade are continuing to complete the unit mobilization validation training at North Fort Hood. Whether its running through the woods, rolling on the ground during hand-to-hand combatives, or firing their rifles these Soldiers motivate each other to go above the beyond the required stan-

dards.

During each phase of training, more experienced Soldiers are more than willing to lend a helping hand to the first time deploying Soldiers. The unit cohesion built during mobilization training will be vital for this years' mission. With time passing quickly at North Fort Hood, the Soldiers

from the 185th Combat Aviation Brigade look to use the training provided to complete the mission and return home.

—Sgt. Michael Needham

185th CAB Public Affairs Specialist





## A Glance Across the Brigade...

### Bravo Co., 1-137 Black Barons



The Black Barons en route to Ft Hood, TX. (Photo Courtesy of the Pale Rider Express.)

**“The crew chiefs have been working from sunrise to after sunset keeping our aircraft [flying]. Pilots and flight instructors are staying focused on all of the big training events coming up for us in order [for us] to be validated. “**

Life here at Ft. Hood is pretty good, minus being away from home. I think it is much better than our summer AT or our October training. There is a small PX (Post Exchange) very close to us and forty minutes away is a PX that is larger than most Walmart stores. We have limited access to the large PX, but scheduled runs will occur twice a week going forward. The dining facility is contracted by civilians and has a pretty good variety of healthy and un-healthy foods. There is a small gym and recreation center as well.

We have teamed up with the other states and things are going well; B co 1-137th AVN, C co 1-137th AVN from Indiana, and C co 171st MEDEVAC from New Mexico and Minnesota are our flight companies. F co 185th Air Traffic Control is from Mississippi and runs our tower and instrument approaches at our airfield. Our evaluators here comment “they can not believe we have never worked to-

### From the Top (Continued from Page 1)

all over the country has coalesced to form a team serving a noble and common purpose. I look forward to working with each of you as we progress on our journey.

—Talon 6

gether before”. Our higher head-quarters or Brigade (like 73rd Troop Command is for us back in Ohio) that we will fall under for the deployment will be here in the next week making things a little more crowded at the chow hall and laundry, but we are looking forward to meeting and establishing our working relationship with them.

Our troops are staying busy. We are flying everyday which requires continued maintenance on the aircraft. The crew chiefs have been working from sunrise to after sunset keeping our aircraft [flying]. Pilots and flight instructors are staying focused on all of the big training events coming up for us in order [for us] to be validated. Some of the big events coming up: Environmental Training (landing in dusty conditions and rough terrain) for a week at Ft. Bliss, TX Door Gunnery as soon as we get back to Ft. Hood, then we move into mission training that is close to what we can expect overseas, followed by

an evaluation.

Our address for Fort Hood is listed. Please feel free to send your Soldiers mail at anytime. No one is asking for anything specific right now, but ask your Soldier direct if he needs anything.

I am extremely proud of our Black Barons and so should you.

Thanks for your support,

—Capt. James O’dell

Black Baron 6



Keep up with us on Facebook at:

[www.facebook.com/185thTheaterAviationBrigade](http://www.facebook.com/185thTheaterAviationBrigade)



## 351st ASB



Farewell by COL James B. Barkley, Commander, 59th Aviation Troop Command

The 351st Aviation Support Battalion placed boots on ground February 16th, 2015 in North Fort Hood, Texas under the 185<sup>th</sup> CAB from Mississippi. The intent was to conduct Post-mobilization training in order to validate the unit for deployment in Support of Operation Spartan Shield. Through exemplary leadership and hard work, the diverse make up of the 351<sup>st</sup> ASB comprised of Soldiers from South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Washington, and Michigan came together seamlessly over a short period of time.

After arrival at Fort Hood, the 351st ASB completed the multitude of training required to be 100% mission capable. Elements of the Headquarters Support Company trained on crew serve weapon systems, unit ground maintenance, and convoy operations.

A Company conducted 24 hour operations in fuel sup-

port for the 185th CAB.

B Company worked in conjunction with 1-137th GSAB performing aircraft maintenance while simultaneously assisting our active duty counterpart on South Fort Hood. C Co demonstrated their signal skill with an outstanding performance in their Culminating Training Event while assisting other units with their communications structures.

In Theater, the 351st ASB will be providing aviation support functions to include sling load, fuel operations, and both ground and aircraft maintenance operations to the 185th CAB.

In just a few weeks the brave and courageous Soldiers of the 351st ASB will hear the roar of the engines and begin their journey. They are trained both physically and mentally. **We are mission ready!**



B Co 351st DART training

**“In just a few weeks the brave and courageous Soldiers of the 351st ASB will hear the roar of the engines and begin their journey.”**

### The Culminating Event: Highlights from the Aviation Training Exercise

The 185<sup>th</sup> Theater Aviation Brigade recently completed the final Culminating Training Event (CTE) on its road to an upcoming deployment to Kuwait and Iraq. Elements from both Active Duty and National Guard, with multiple states represented throughout the nation, participated in the Aviation Training Exercise (ATX).

Colonel Ronald Beckham, brigade commander, said that the training was an opportunity for the brigade to exercise the staffs and build a cohesive team. “The training was tailored for our upcoming

missions to Kuwait and Iraq,” Beckham said.

In an attempt to replicate the operating environment that the 185<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade will experience while deployed, the exercise facilitators at the First Army’s Division West ensured that both the higher headquarters and subordinate commands were participants in the exercise.

Role players from the 75<sup>th</sup> Training Command replicated the unit’s higher headquarters, US Army Central (ARCENT),

while the command and staffs of the Brigade’s subordinate battalions served as the lower commands. Soldiers were brought in from ARCENT actual to act as advisors and answer any questions that the Commander and his staff had regarding their upcoming deployment.

The intent of the exercise was to cement staff processes and develop information management procedures. Yet a major take away was that the exercise served as a mechanism for the Brigade to

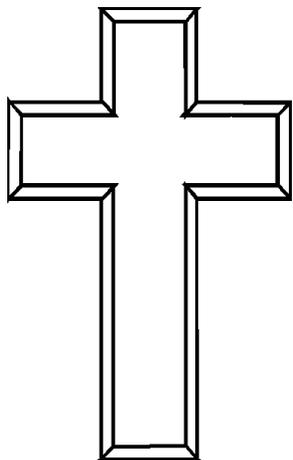
coalesce into a team.

Unlike active duty units, that may have an entire year to train and work with their higher and lower commands, the members of the 185<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade’s task force had a little less than sixty days to form a cohesive team. The ATX was the final opportunity to replicate an information environment similar to what the Brigade, as a whole, will experience on their upcoming deployment.

—Capt. Allen Baxter  
185th CAB Public Affairs Officer



## A Message from the Brigade Chaplain



It would seem that God holds the military in high esteem. The Christian scriptures are replete with examples of Soldiers and God's interest in their lives and affairs. From Joshua in the Old Testament to Cornelius in the Gospels, Soldiers have played a vital role in the work and mission of God in the world. One of the many possible reasons for this is the propensity of uniformed service personnel to exemplify a life of self sacrifice and self denial, both of which reflect aspects of Christ's life on Earth. Regardless of the reason for their prominent place in the annals of Biblical literature, the uniformed Soldier is always spoken of respectfully, and often with extreme admiration.

Those qualities are well represented in the modern iteration of the Soldier, especially among those which wear the American uniform. On countless occasions, across untold fields of conflict and over multiple generations, the American Soldier has distinguished himself with valor, selfless service, and personal sacrifice. So prolific were those qualities and attributes that they were codified into the Army Values as a creed and standard for all service members. In today's world where heroes are often seen as celebrities and sports personalities, the uniformed service member stands as a universal emblem of the absolute best and the noblest of ideals.

themselves as the next representation in a long line of American heroes which have accepted their nation's call, sacrificing home and family for the foreign field of service. Epitomizing the same character that caused Christ to leave the splendor and glory of Heaven to be numbered among us for our benefit, the Soldiers of the 185 TAB leave home and hearth in order to benefit others. Their bravery and resolute purpose can be easily discerned from the intensity of their focus, and the tenderness of their hearts can just as easily be seen in their warmth of their smiles and high morale.

Granted, all that is soaring rhetoric, and could

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The 185CAB finds

### JAG



Fellow members of the 185<sup>th</sup>, as we move closer towards our trip across the ocean, the JAG section wanted to take the opportunity to put out a few thoughts to consider. First and foremost, if you need a will, power of attorney, living will or power of attorney for healthcare decisions please let us know ASAP. While we can do any of these at any-time, it is in your best interest to have these documents created and executed PRIOR TO leaving CONUS. This will also give you time to get them into the hands of necessary family and friends. That said, at any time in the future, we will be available to make changes or generate new documents as needs may arise.

Be mindful of the information you are putting out - not everything is meant for widespread dissemina-

tion. Do not reveal sensitive information about yourself such as schedules and event/movement locations. Before putting something out, ask yourself, "what could the wrong person do with this information? Could it compromise the safety of me, my family or my unit?" Remember that "geotagging" is a feature that reveals your location to other people within your network and you should consider turning off the GPS function of your smartphone. Realize photos and videos can go viral quickly, so closely review them before posting to ensure they don't give away sensitive information which could be dangerous to the Unit if released. Please talk to your family about operations security and be sure they know what can and cannot be posted electronically. Also, look closely at all privacy settings and at a

minimum, set security options to allow visibility to "friends only". Finally, be ever mindful you are now in a Title Ten status. You should avoid making or posting any disparaging comments about the government, military, or US or Foreign policy regardless of your political beliefs.

Remember, if your employer, landlord, or creditors are not cooperating with you during this difficult time, please let us know and we will be glad to assist you.

Please do not forget we are a RESOURCE FOR YOU! We are here to help you by answering questions or giving advice. Whether it be while at Fort Hood or in theater, do not hesitate to contact one of us; we will be glad to talk with you anytime.

— Capt. Rob Mayhue

185th CAB Deputy BJA/Trial Counsel

### 185th TAB JAG Team:

**Maj. Mark Lampton**

**Capt. Rob Mayhue**

**Capt. Andrew Lake**

**Staff Sgt. Adrian Young**



## HHC Commander's Corner

The 185<sup>th</sup> safely arrived at North Fort Hood, TX in mid-February to train up for our upcoming deployment to the Middle East. The days following our arrival were filled with preparation; plans became finalized, training became routine, and bonds formed during those first few days have steadily strengthened as we continue to grow into a cohesive force. As the commander of HHC 185<sup>th</sup>, I am extremely proud of the attitude of every single soldier throughout our pre-Mobilization here at Ft. Hood.

A large portion of the 185<sup>th</sup> CAB has never deployed before; but that does not mean they are not up for the challenge. First-time soldiers can be seen, and/or heard, steadily asking the veterans a multitude of questions in preparation for their first trip outside of the United States. These questions concern, but are not limited to, deployment expectations, quality of life while deployed, off-duty activities, on-duty improvement, efficiency techniques, and many more. The initiative and determination visi-

ble in this young group of Soldiers will be the driving force behind the overall morale of this deployment.

Our training has centered on Basic Soldiering Skills and MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) centric training. Basic Soldiering skills consists of BRM (Basic Rifle marksmanship), weapons familiarization, WFF (War Fighting Function), and generally anything else that a soldier needs to know and be proficient in order to perform his or her basic duty, being a soldier. MOS centric training pertains to the conglomerate of jobs and duties which need to be performed (in unison) in order for the 185<sup>th</sup> CAB to fulfill its assigned duty as a whole. During the first few weeks of our stay here at Ft. Hood, different personnel were spread out all over Ft. Hood in order to complete this training. Not once has a soldier arrived late or ill-prepared. Every day, soldiers show up ready to train. The training is not always fun, nor does it allow for much sleep at times, but the dedication to duty found among the 185<sup>th</sup> soldiers is at a level not found among many Army Units. Every arrow is pointing in the di-

rection of success as we begin to wrap up our time at Ft. Hood.

The reality of the situation is that the dedication and initiative visible from the Commander's viewpoint, is a direct result of a happy soldier, a content soldier. This "content soldier" is made possible through a strong base from which they come. Their loved ones back home are ever present in their thoughts throughout the day, yet they perpetually strive to perform their duties. Write your soldier, make those late night phone calls; these things mean the world to your soldier, and the results are visible in their professional life. Thank you for allowing us to start out this deployment on a strong note. I look forward to continually working with your soldier these next few months as we execute the duty which we have been assigned.

—Capt. Nathan E. Ribelin

CDR, AV, 185<sup>th</sup> HHC

*"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude."*  
 -Thomas Jefferson

## Chaplain (Continued from page 4)

be readily dismissed as an overly optimistic assessment. However, I have personally read the expressions of these men and women. There is something noble lurking behind those bright smiles and eager expressions. I think it is a sense of history, or maybe, just maybe, a modicum of His nature and character. Either way, you can be proud of them. I know I am.

— Chaplain (Capt.) Randy Wilson



B Co 351st DART training



## Editor's Note:

**“For even those who come short in other ways may justly plead the valor with which they have fought for their country; they have blotted out the evil with the good, and have benefited the state more by their public services than they have injured her by their private actions. None of these men were enervated by wealth or hesitated to resign the pleasures of life; none of them put off the evil day in the hope, natural to poverty, that a man, though poor, may one day become rich. But, deeming that the punishment of their enemies was sweeter than any of these things, and that they could fall in no nobler cause, they determined at the hazard of their lives to be honorably avenged, and to leave the rest.” — Pericles**

Perhaps as a direct result of my life experiences, and time served in the US Military over the last decade of conflict in the Middle East, I generally try to stray away from emotively expressing the indelible mark that a deployment can leave on Soldiers and their families. Thus I commit moving forward with this publication in the next few months to allay the tone of future issues. Yet it is difficult to ignore the dedication and sacrifice displayed by each individual member of the brigade and, not at all to a lesser extent, their respective family members.

Just over a decade ago I recall walking down a gravel road near my house when a car pulled up slowly beside me, “Are you PFC Charles Baxter?” the lady asked. I remember thinking, as she pulled a first class envelope from the passenger seat, ‘Yep, I better start packing’. Slightly anxious, and extremely curious, I signed for the envelope and the lady in the car drove away. Before the sound of the engine faded into the distance, the envelope was shredded and scattered on the gravel road. On official letterhead the first words that I noticed were, “Involuntary transfer for mobilization”. I was to be transferred from the 1-185<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion to the 185<sup>th</sup> Aviation Group out of Jack-

son, MS in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Looking back, I suppose that the brunt of the stress of me being deployed to a combat zone was felt by my family. As a young, and not so slightly naïve Soldier fresh out of basic training, I felt that I alone could handle anything the Army could throw at me. After all it was “an Army of One”.

My experience, however, would teach me otherwise. It was the small handwritten letters from my family and friends, the practical jokes played on me by my fellow Soldiers and vice versa, and the example’s set and leadership displayed by my superior noncommissioned and commissioned officers in the task force that got me through the deployment.

Many of the leaders that comprised Task Force 185th during Operation Iraqi Freedom now hold senior leadership positions in the brigade. Having known many of them for just short of half of my life I would like to assure the family members and friends of our Soldiers that they are in good hands.

The Soldiers and their leadership in and across the brigade have been tried and tested. They are the finest that the US Army has to offer. Without a doubt, the members of this Task Force

will perform in the same manner that they have performed to get to this point in the mobilization— with perseverance, unparalleled professionalism, and unwavering commitment to the mission at hand.

—Capt. Allen Baxter  
185th CAB Public Affairs Officer



Then SPC Baxter pictured on the far left in 2004. (LSA Anaconda, Iraq)

