



# the AVIATOR

## telling the Soldiers' story

August, 2015



**CAB goes to Warfighter**

**Air assault at Camp Roberts**

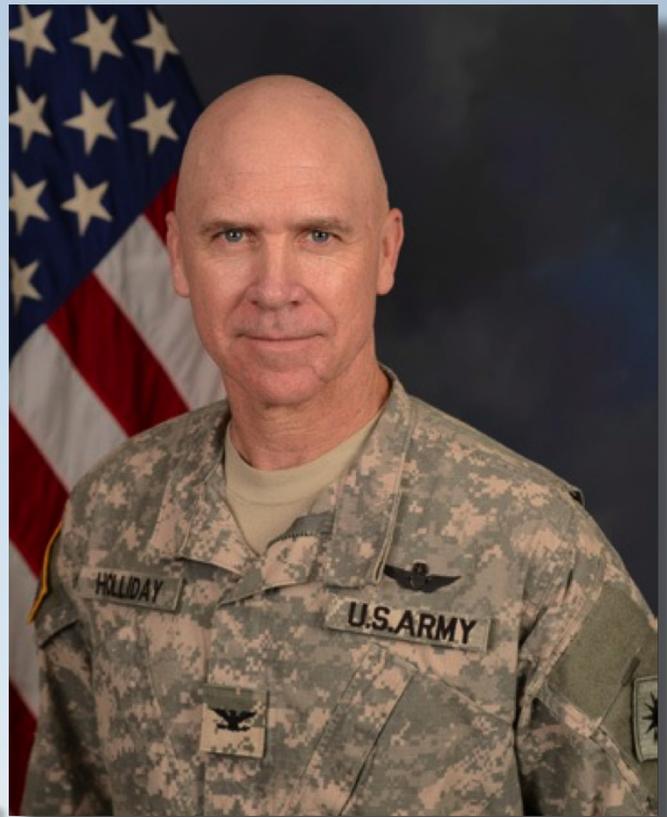
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Soldiers from the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade staff and supporting elements tear down their tactical operations center during Warfighter 15-05 at Fort Hood, Texas, June 12.

## 40th CAB goes to Warfighter at Fort Hood

Story by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer

Most Soldiers are taught from the very first day of boot camp to “train like you fight.” For most troops, that mantra seems pretty straight-forward. Infantrymen practice foot patrols and room-clearing exercises. Drivers and gunners practice convoy operations.

But how does a command team train? How do the Soldiers in a tactical operations center (TOC) practice the command and control of an entire brigade during a combat mission? How can these staff members safely learn how to manage dozens of flights, artillery strikes, medevac missions and fuel supply convoys on a real-life battlefield?

The Army’s answer to these questions is the Mission Command Training Program (MCTP). Every year the MCTP networks Army units from around the world in massive combat simulations. These exercises allow the unit commanders and their staff members to navigate

the most hazardous scenarios their Soldiers might ever face from the safety of a computer simulation.

144 men and women from the California Army National Guard’s 40th Combat Aviation Brigade attended the Warfighter Exercise (WFX) 15-05 at Fort Hood, Texas, June 3-12. This training is a crucial stepping-stone in the CAB’s preparation for a scheduled deployment to Kuwait later this year.

The brigade command team, Col. Jeffrey Holliday and Command Sgt. Maj. Troy Eck, led 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment on the brigade’s deployment to Iraq in 2010-2011. More than three quarters of the CAB Soldiers have deployed before – now they all must learn their new roles in the new mission.

“This is an opportunity for us to improve our skillsets,” said Pleasant Hill, California, resident Spc. Kristen Kaminski, an aviation operations specialist

from 3rd Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, 40th CAB. “We have to take these exercises seriously, it could save someone’s life out there.

Every Soldier in the TOC, regardless of rank or status, is responsible for being aware of what is going on in the battlefield, and able to take additional responsibilities if needed. Kaminski, who deployed with her battalion to Kosovo in 2012, emphasized the importance of learning as much as possible about her own job and the jobs of the Soldiers in the TOC with her.

“You should know your job, the job of the person under you, and the person over you,” Kaminski said. “You have to be able to step into a job when someone steps out.”

During the WFX the CAB served as the primary aviation asset for the Texas Army National Guard’s 36th Infantry Division. Active-duty Soldiers from the 101st Division Artillery were also present.

“WFX is all about integrating a joint force of reservists and the active component,” said Lt. Col. Rick Debowski, the MCTP operations officer. “Train like you fight.”

The CAB Soldiers got hands-on experience with the tools they will be using during their mission in Kuwait. For example Command Post of the Future (CPOF), the Army’s primary mission-command software since 2006, allows the TOC staff and the subordinate battalions to track data ranging from unit locations to significant events, such as medevacs and convoys. While CPOF is capable of being used to simulate engagements with enemy forces, WFX required something



Col. Jeffrey Holliday, commander of the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, conducts a press conference during Warfighter 15-05 at Fort Hood, Texas, June 10. Senior leaders of the participating brigades were expected to be able to interact with the news media as a part of the Army's mission to keep the public informed. The 40th CAB participated in the Warfighter exercise in preparation for their scheduled deployment to Kuwait later this year.

far more sophisticated: WARSIM.

WARSIM is not just a video game – it is an in-depth simulation tool that calculates the full logistical consequences of any troop movement or attack. WARSIM calculates the food, ammunition, fuel and other supplies consumed by Soldiers and equipment throughout the mission, providing real-world training for every section in the TOC.

Unlike most commercial war gaming software, WARSIM has human role-players for every subordinate unit involved, even enemies. Informally referred to as “pucksters,” battalion commands not physically present at WFX and enemy units were simulated by Soldiers and civilian contractors in a separate training area from higher TOCs. Every subordinate unit is represented by a real person at a WARSIM station.

“We actually have a thinking opponent that’s moving around enemy units,” said Maj. Daniel Goldsmith, the officer in charge of the brigade’s response cell.

WFX tested the CAB’s ability to provide air support operations against a “near-peer” opponent; an enemy military with training, technology and equipment equal or almost equal to that of the United States. This is an experience completely different from the counter-insurgency operations that the CAB conducted during their deployment to Iraq.

“[In the War on Terror], AH-64 Apache helicopters have deployed in two-aircraft teams – aerial weapons teams – but doctrinally we would be sending them in platoon, company or even battalion-sized elements,” said Champaign, Illinois, native 1st Lt. Ryan Close, a platoon commander

from 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment, 40th CAB, based out of West Jordan, Utah. “In Afghanistan and Iraq we haven’t done that in a long time, but with the wars winding down, we’re getting back to that doctrinal training.”

Close worked as an attack planner in the TOC, an expert in the capabilities of his battalion’s attack helicopters. Staff officers like Close are responsible for keeping the brigade commander informed of his units’ capabilities and limitations during a mission.

“We’re very useful to the brigade and the state if employed properly,” Close said.

But even the staff sections with a routine job stateside become vital during a combat mission. The S-1 personnel section is responsible for keeping accountability of every person under the command, and ensuring their administrative needs are taken care of. The S-1 is also responsible for notifying next of kin when a Soldier is killed or wounded.

“We let the commander know what the Soldiers’ limits are, and we make sure the Soldiers have what they need to stay in the fight,” said 1st Lt. Allison Henderson, the personnel officer in charge.

WFX taught the Soldiers of the CAB a lot, but there is still a lot of work and training to be done before they deploy to Kuwait later this year.

“There are whole battalions who aren’t here, we need to take what we learned and pollenate the rest of the brigade,” said Chief Warrant Officer Jeffrey Crandall, the



A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, lifts off from a landing zone at Fort Hunter Liggett, July 17. The battalion was practicing aerial gunnery at Liggett for their scheduled deployment.

# Death from above!

Story by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer

The California National Guard's 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, conducted aerial gunnery training with their UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters at Fort Hunter Liggett, California, July 17-19.

The battalion is scheduled to deploy to Kuwait later this year. The 1-140th is part of the Cal Guard's 40th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), which plans to deploy more to Kuwait this fall. They will be joined by 1st Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment from Utah, who will provide AH-64 Apache support.

The Soldiers need to know their job well," said Staff Sgt. Evelina Gamboa, a petroleum specialist with the battalion.

The 40th CAB deployed to Iraq in 2011, when it flew more than 19,000 missions and logged more than 121,000 flight-hours. More than 75 percent of the CAB soldiers slated to deploy this year are veterans of previous deployments.

"I am pleasantly surprised and thrilled from what I have seen [at the gunnery event] so far," said First Army Command Sgt. Major J.T. Hall.

The 43,000-acre Camp Roberts in San Luis Obispo

and Monterey counties is the premier training facility in California for National Guard and Reserve military forces.

Elements of the 40th CAB will also conduct pre-mobilization training at Camp Roberts in August. This event certified helicopter crews to safely and precisely engage threats on the ground.

"Keep up the good fight, and learn everything you can about your job and the jobs of your fellow Soldiers. Put out 100%, and we will have a story we can be proud of," said Col. Jeffrey Holliday, commander of the 40th CAB.

# A day in the life of a CAB Soldier

**Camp Roberts-** TOP LEFT: Spc. Jhoana Mendez, a human resources specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th CAB, climbs out of a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle (LMTV) during a driver's certification course Aug. 17. TOP RIGHT: Soldiers from HHC escort a simulated detainee during a casualty rescue exercise Aug. 20. MIDDLE RIGHT: Cpt. Algernon Clay, a plans officer with the brigade staff of the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, fires off a round at a pistol range Aug. 14. BOTTOM LEFT: Soldiers from HHC, 40th CAB, fire the MK-19 Grenade Launcher Aug. 18. BOTTOM RIGHT: 40th CAB Soldiers take a well-earned break on the night of Aug. 18 for a barbecue outside the barracks.



Above photo by Spc. Ilithya Medley. Below photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer



Photo by Spc. Krystle Gaytan

Above photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer. Below photo by 1st Lt. Greg Montanio





## CLOSE-UPS ON THE RANGE

Our staff photographer 1st Lt. Greg Montanio went out with his fellow CAB soldiers to the ranges of Camp Roberts to fire the 40mm M320 Grenade Launcher Module on Aug. 18. A safer and more reliable replacement for the older M203 Grenade Launcher, the M320 was first fielded by the Army in 2009. In an Army infantry squad, the M320 is carried by the grenadier, and can fire a variety of different rounds, such as high explosive and smoke. High explosive rounds are useful for hitting threats behind cover that the other weapons in the squad can't penetrate, or for launching smoke rounds used for signaling or for obscuring the enemy's view of friendly troops.

# WORD ON THE STREET

What are you looking forward to in our upcoming deployment?



This will be great for the Soldiers to live with each other for a year. You remember your deployment friends forever -Sgt. 1st Class Eugene Marshall



I'm looking forward to taking care of and mentoring Soldiers -Sgt. 1st Class David Kimbrell



I am looking forward to getting to know everyone. We are a military family and camaraderie is what's going to keep us pushing forward!  
-Sgt. Desiree Harvey



GET BACK GET BACK! Staff Sgt. Christopher Monk, a paralegal with the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, leads the way out of a building during a casualty evacuation lane at Camp Roberts on Aug. 20. The 40th CAB is scheduled to deploy to the Kuwait later this year. Photo by Spc. Ilithya Medley