

EAGLE

February 2009

Talon

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION



'Iron Eagle' Brigade partners with IAF for missions over Baghdad skies

Lonestar Dustoff Co. sets the standard for MEDEVAC crews in Iraq

SPECIAL PHOTO REPORT: 'Clydesdales' slingload the big guns

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION-BAGHDAD

- 4 NEWS BRIEFS**
News about the Iron Eagle Brigade at Camp Taji, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom
- 5 LEADERS FORUM**
Expert advice and opinions from a selection of the Iron Eagle Brigade's veteran leadership

6 Partners in Security

CAB partners with Iraqi Air Force for several missions over Baghdad skies

10 Air Assault with the Big Guns

'Clydesdales' slingload an M777 Howitzer during air assault training on Camp Taji

12 Setting the MEDEVAC standard

CAB's 'Lonestar Dustoff' Company leads the way for MEDEVAC operations in Iraq

14 Milestones

'Iron Eagle' transportation platoon completes 500th mission in support of OIF 08-10

- 16 School opens despite past violence**
Iraqi Security Forces, CAB, 4th Inf. Div., and 2-25 SBCT provide security for historic event

- 18 News Briefs**
More news about the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division

ON THE COVER: A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, flies side-by-side with a UH-1 Huey from the Iraqi Air Force's 2nd Squadron during a combined aviation mission over Baghdad Jan. 15.



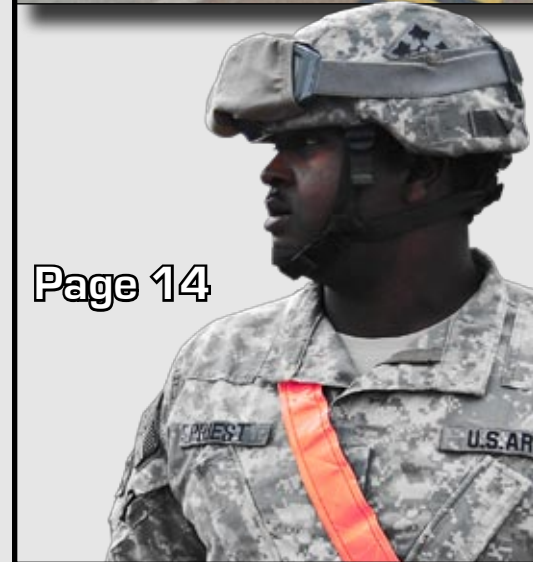
Page 6



Page 10



Page 12



Page 14



COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE IRON EAGLES 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION

COPIES IN CIRCULATION: 1500

The Eagle Talon is published in the interest of the Soldiers, Family members and civilians of the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, from Camp Taji, Iraq.



BRIGADE COMMANDER

Col. Patrick Tierney

BRIGADE CSM

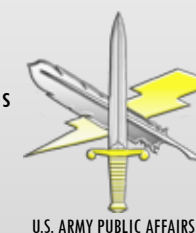
Command Sgt. Maj. Archie Davis

PUBLIC AFFAIRS NCOIC

Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

STAFF WRITER/EDITOR

Sgt. Jason Dangel



U.S. ARMY PUBLIC AFFAIRS



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. Jason Dangel

In accordance with AR 360-1 and the regulations set forth by the U.S. Army PA Center, the Eagle Talon is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of the Eagle Talon are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, or the Department of the Defense, Department of the Army, III Corps or the 4th Infantry Division. The Eagle Talon is published monthly by the Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs Office, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, and is distributed to unit members and affiliates and is posted electronically on Department of the Army and Department of Defense Web sites.

‘Mustang’ medic named top NCO for Multi-National Division - Baghdad

Story by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO

Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s finest Soldiers gathered together at Freedom Rest in Baghdad’s “International Zone” to compete in the Division’s annual Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition.

The competition was the culmination of a busy day for the Soldiers and their leaders; prior to the competition, the contestants bore witness as 40 of their fellow Multi-National Division – Baghdad noncommissioned officers were inducted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club.

To compete in MND-B’s Soldier/NCO of the year competition, each Soldier had earlier claimed top honors during the Soldier/NCO of the Month and Soldier/NCO of the Quarter competitions at the company, battalion and brigade levels.

“The task at hand today is to identify the best of the best,” said Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., the senior enlisted leader of MND-B and the 4th Infantry Division and MND-B, as he welcomed the 16 Soldiers selected to compete.

To get to this level requires rigorous study, discipline and commitment, said Sgt. Thomas El Far, a native of Bruceville, Texas, who serves as a petroleum supply specialist with Company E, 1st Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div.

“This is my first time getting this far,” he said. “It has been an unreal experience and a lot of hard work, dedication and preparation. (While deployed), you have to work your 12-hour shift, find time to eat, go to the gym, take your laundry in and study – it takes constant study.”

As the Soldiers waited patiently outside, studying with their sponsors,



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Staff Sgt. Jamiell Dominguez, medical section noncommissioned officer-in-charge, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Avn. Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, poses for a photograph with her battalion commander, Lt. Col. David Fleckenstein, after being awarded the U.S. Army Commendation Medal for being named the NCO of the year for Multi-National Division - Baghdad during a ceremony at the ‘Clydesdales’ Battalion Headquarters on Camp Taji.

their names were called one by one. They proceeded into the building and reported to Gioia, the president of the board.

After presenting themselves, they were handed off to a single member of the board, who asked a series of questions based on multiple military categories.

As the Soldiers answered the questions, the other six judges graded them based on their responses and their professional composure.

Also taken into consideration were each competitor’s physical fitness training and weapons qualification scores. The Soldier and NCO with the highest overall scores were chosen as Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09.

Spc. Brian Mouton, a medic with

Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., earned honors as the MND-B Soldier of the Year. Sgt. Jamiell Dominguez, who serves as medical section NCOIC with Headquarters Company, 2nd General Aviation Support Battalion, CAB, 4th Inf. Div., earned recognition as the MND-B NCO of the year.

For Dominguez, a Seattle, Wash. native, the pressure of the board is something she is starting to become accustomed to since earning recognition as Soldier of the Year in 2007.

“To be able to represent your unit at any level is an incredible opportunity for personal and professional growth and development,” she said. “It’s given me an opportunity for a self assessment to reflect on where I am as an individual and what I need to improve on.”

For leaders and Soldiers alike, safety is an important factor in the success of any mission. Whether a Soldier is on or off duty, mitigating risk remains relevant in everything he or she does throughout the day. It is easy to disregard safety when daily routines in combat become monotonous, and if this happens its up to leaders to ensure their Soldiers are safe and ready for the mission. This month we asked four of Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division’s company commanders how they mitigate the risks they are faced with daily and what their biggest safety concerns are here in the combat zone. Safety first!

What is your biggest safety concern as part of your company’s responsibility to the mission? How do you mitigate the risks you are faced with daily?



As the commander of a maintenance company, my biggest safety concern is ensuring that my Soldiers follow all of the proper safety procedures as they complete maintenance on the battalion’s aircraft. My Soldiers work hard every day in an unforgiving environment to ensure that the aircraft are maintained and the battalion is able to accomplish all of its assigned missions. However, under such harsh conditions mistakes and accidents

can easily happen. With such a large company working 24/7, I have to rely on my junior NCOs to supervise their Soldiers at the lowest level in order to stop an accident before it occurs.

- Capt. Nick Ryan, commander, Co. D, 2nd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt., 6.5 years of experience, from Espanola, N.M.

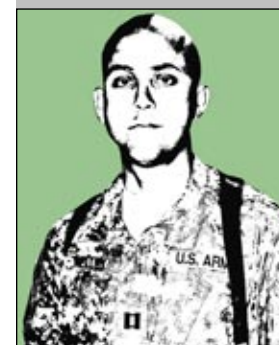


As the commander of an air traffic services company, my biggest safety concern is ensuring that my Soldiers have constant airspace awareness and make air traffic advisory calls early and often. Forgetting a small detail will get an air traffic controller in trouble. My Soldiers are constantly challenged with maintaining a safe yet efficient flow of traffic all while prioritizing CAB aircraft according to their individual missions. Inexperience is another safety concern for my company and with my NCOs. I am always working to achieve an ideal crew mix. Similar to the crew mix in a helicopter, junior air traffic controllers must be balanced with seasoned and experienced controllers. Finally, ensuring the proper amount of crew rest is achieved while in a combat environment is critical. My Soldiers work longer shifts than they would at an installation ATS facility and my company leadership is regularly reviewing the schedule to determine whether individual Soldiers are getting enough rest. **-Capt. Amanda Violette, commander, Co. G, 2nd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt., 8 years of experience, from Nobleboro, Maine**



My biggest safety concern is complacency. By now, we have done our best to mitigate and foresee possible safety risks while continuing to improve safety standards across the board. As planning begins for re-deployment, too often, Soldiers and leaders focus on the end of the race and forget about the hear-and-now. Deployment is a marathon and we must continue to plan for the future while ensuring the leaders and our Soldiers focus on the mission at hand until we set foot on the plane going home. Between two operating

sites, we rotate personnel regularly to mix things up and ensure Soldiers don’t get in a rut. My officers and NCOs ensure we are consistently looking for ways to improve how we do business. I feel we’ve set the bar high and reached it and if we don’t try to push the bar even higher, we’ve already failed. There is always something we and everyone can do to improve as an organization and team. **-Capt. Chris Wingate, detachment commander, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt., 5.5 years of experience, from El Paso, Texas**



As the commander of a supply distribution company responsible for providing world class logistical support to the Iron Eagle Brigade, my biggest safety concern is ensuring that all Sentry Soldiers are following established safety policies, standard operating procedures and incorporating risk management into our daily missions to include the Forward Arming and Refuel Point, Transportation and Distribution Platoon, the Supply Support Activity, and the Headquarters Platoon to include the Ammunition Transfer Holding Point. The Sentry Soldiers are the center of gravity for all logistical support to the brigade and our mission requires a 100% commitment from all Soldiers while conducting 24 hour operations 7 days a week. In order to sustain the highest standards, I expect every leader to be out front checking and ensuring that all missions are conducted with safety at the forefront. “Standards, No Compromise” **Capt. David Kelley, commander, Co. A, 404th ASB, 16 years of experience, from Panama City, Fla.**

PARTNERS IN SECURITY

Story and Photos by Sgt. Jason Dangel

In 1990, the Iraqi air force was the largest air force in the Middle East consisting of more than 40,000 men and 900 aircraft. Thirteen years later, and after the U.S. led Coalition toppled Saddam Hussein's regime, the once impressive air force became virtually non-existent.

Since the 2003 U.S. led invasion of Iraq, a lot has changed, and similar to the success of the Iraqi army's ground forces, the IAF rotary wing forces are also making great strides as they continue to rebuild and train for the responsibility of aviation operations.

In a show of partnership between the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the IAF, pilots from both countries flew multiple personnel transport missions and a leaflet drop over Baghdad Jan. 15.

While sharing the same airspace over Taji every day, and observing one another conduct missions over Baghdad, this was the first time the units conducted aviation support for MND-B together.

As the sun began to rise in the early morning horizon, Iraqi Lt. Col. Shamkky Abbas, a pilot and training officer for the IAF's 2nd Squadron at Camp Taji, led the operation brief as the pilots from the CAB's 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment confirmed mission planning before prepping their aircraft for the combined flight over the Iraqi Capital.

Soon thereafter, an IAF UH-1 Iroquois helicopter, and a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from the CAB's 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, "Comanche," took-off from the airfield at Camp Taji for their first mission together.



A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Avn. Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, flies side-by-side with a UH-1 Huey from the Iraqi Air Force's 2nd Squadron during a mission over Baghdad skies Jan. 15. During the day the two aircraft partnered together for three different personnel transport missions to various destination around the vicinity of the Iraqi capital. The missions were the first conducted between the two units. Planning and preparation for more are already underway as the IAF continues to grow and mold into a legitimate security force all over Iraq.

During the combined aviation mission over the Iraqi capital, the Iroquois, piloted by Abbas, led the way as the two aircraft made stops at various Coalition bases in the greater Baghdad area.

"These aviators have done very

lead a collation flight and execute the mission perfectly."

Palmer and other "Iron Eagle" Brigade leaders described the event as positive for all parties involved and reiterated the importance of interaction between Coalition troops and their ISF counterparts.

"I think this event demonstrates another example of the continuing growth and maturity of the IAF," said Maj. Michael Best,

executive officer, CAB, from St. Petersburg, Fla.

"It is a positive event when we can partner with the IAF," he continued. "Just as it is important for the ground Brigade Combat Teams

"You cannot deny their capabilities when Iraqi aircraft and Iraqi pilots lead a coalition flight and execute the mission perfectly."

Lt. Col. Steven Palmer

commander, 3rd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt. "Comanche"

well in a short period of time," said Las Vegas native and 3rd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt. commander, Lt. Col. Steven Palmer, of the IAF pilots stationed at Taji. "You cannot deny their capabilities when Iraqi aircraft and Iraqi pilots

FLIGHT PATH

to have continuous interaction with their ISF counterparts, the CAB is now being afforded the same opportunity as the IAF re-established itself."

With help from both the Air Force's 721st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, also known as a Coalition Air Force Transition Team, and the CAB, the IAF at Camp Taji is once again beginning to resemble a force capable of providing security and stability for the people of Iraq.

"The significance of this mission

is the speed in which the air force is progressing," said Air Force Lt. Col. Michael McNerney, commander, 721st AEAS, from Grand Gorge, N.Y.

"I think this event demonstrates another example of the continuing growth and maturity of the IAF."

Maj. Michael Best
executive officer, CAB, 4th Inf. Div.

"While the ground forces have received a large amount of resources and attention for over five years, the

air force has received very little until about a year and a half ago," he continued. "The Iraqi rotary wing force has made great strides in the last year and a half and is ready to accept a much larger role in the counter-insurgency efforts."

Obtaining these critical "resources" for the IAFs rotary wing component at Taji is a responsibility that rests solely on the members of the 721st

AEAS.

The 721st AEAS, or CAFTT, is responsible for aiding the develop-

ment of the IAF helicopter forces at Camp Taji in order to create an organization that is a credible and effective contributor to the security of Iraq, McNerney said.

Combined aviation missions with the CAB are an important part of the IAFs growth. Joint aviation operations between the CAB and the IAF are expected to continue as the force continues to grow.

"I look forward to Iraqi led air assaults in the future," Palmer said. "As I see their professionalism grow so does the confidence in the Iraqi Air Force from the people of Iraq."

As the IAF continues to forge new abilities and works to assume full responsibility of aviation operations

in Iraq, the Iraqi people are beginning to take note of the growing force as aircraft marked with the Iraqi National Flag fly overhead.

"Almost anytime they fly over, the Iraqi people come running out of their homes and wave at the aircraft," said Capt. Hank Luke, Chief of Training, 721st AEAS, from Indianapolis, Ind.

"I think the people feel a sense of pride and security in seeing the Iraqi flag on the helicopter's belly over their heads," he continued. "Knowing that the (Government of Iraq) is projecting its security forces throughout the country is absolutely critical to keeping the insurgency at bay, and displaying Iraqi airpower is an important piece of the security plan."



"I think the people feel a sense of pride and security in seeing the Iraqi flag on the helicopter's belly over their heads..."



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. Jason Dangel

AIR ASSAULT WITH THE BIG GUNS

Story by Sgt. Jason Dangel

An aircrew from the 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division and Soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 11th Field Artillery Regt., 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div., successfully sling loaded an M777 Howitzer during an air assault training exercise held on Camp Taji last month.

The 2nd Bn., 11th FA Regt. was the first field artillery regiment in the Army to field and fire the M777 in combat on Jan. 2, 2008 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The unique training event validated both the CAB's air assault versatility and the FA battalion's ability to work with aviation assets to accomplish a wide array of their fire missions in Iraq.

"When we got here we wanted to validate our ability to air assault the howitzers," said Capt. Brian Juntunen, commander, Battery C, 2nd Bn., 11th FA Regt.

"A situation where we could use this is if we have a target that is out of range of our howitzer, such as our western boundary or northern boundary. We could move the howitzers forward with an air assault like this, fire at a target in support of a larger brigade mission or battalion mission," he said.

The helicopter used for the event was the CH-47F Chinook Improved Cargo helicopter. The CH-47F is also new to combat. The CAB is the first aviation unit to bring the new, state-of-the-art aircraft to the war and has proven its worth during the brigade's 7 months in the combat zone.

The aircraft weights approximately 30,000 lbs. with the capability to haul 20,000 more.

The helicopter is an upgraded cargo helicopter which replaces the 20-year old CH-47D model. The digital crew station is redesigned to include a digital map, glass cockpit and enhanced communications and navigation equipment for better situational awareness.

The "Iron Eagle" Brigade uses the aircraft primarily for logistical and personnel transport and occasional air assault missions.



CAB's Lonestar Dustoff leads the way

Co. C, 2nd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt. setting the MEDEVAC standard in Iraq

Story and Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Medical evacuation Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, the “Lonestar” Dustoff company, have one mission – save lives on the battlefield.

During their first six months of the deployment, the Fort Hood, Texas, based Soldiers have achieved a 96 percent operational readiness rate, flown more than 1,227 patients in need of treatment, medically evacuated more than 465 urgent and 312 priority patients.

The company has also consistently exceeded the 15-minute call to launch standard leading the way for Multi-National Corps – Iraq MEDEVAC companies Jan. 10.

“We are the theater MEDEVAC company for MND-B and parts of Multi-National Corps – Iraq,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dennis Fletcher, aeromedical pilot from Sunnyvale, Calif. “We respond to any nine-line MEDEVAC call to us. On average, we respond to a call in nine minutes and that’s from getting the call to wheels up.”

The company performs its duties much like a regular ambulance company in the U.S. Soldiers rotate on shifts, being on call, for 48 hours at a time and then they are off for 24 hours. A MEDEVAC crew consists of two pilots, one crew chief and one flight medic.

The crew starts their day by making sure their aircraft is ready to go at a moment’s notice. As an essential part of their fast-paced lifestyle, maintenance checks are completed, medical supplies are stocked and personal protective gear is always within arm’s reach.

Then once the crew gets the call, “MEDEVAC, MEDEVAC, MEDEVAC...” It’s time to sprint to the waiting helicopter and save a life on the battlefield.

“Today, was my first day on the 48 hours shift,” said Sgt. Donald Jones, flight medic from Lawton, Okla. “For the first mission on this shift, we had a EPW (enemy prisoner of war) with a gunshot wound to the leg which was urgent. We were off the ground and out of here in eight minutes.”

“Everyone in the company has their own piece of the puzzle, and they understand that without the Dustoff team coming together, the mission doesn’t happen.”

Capt. Christopher Wingate
Taji MEDEVAC Commander, CAB, 4th Inf. Div.

The company facilitates the safest and most rapid evacuation of all casualties to include Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, civilians and even prisoners of war.

Some of the their evacuations take them to the most dangerous parts of the battlefield including rescuing casualties from roadside bomb attacks, force against force casualties and suicide bomb attacks.

“What I love most about this job is I’m helping make a



difference in someone’s life when they are injured,” added Jones, who is on his second deployment to Iraq with the MEDEVAC company. “Mentally, you just try blocking all the drama out when someone is injured and do your best when you MEDEVAC someone. That’s when the training kicks in and you are focused on saving their life. This is a difficult job, but it is very rewarding.”

In addition to continuing to get more efficient in their launch times, Soldiers from the company have been rewarded for their hard work and dedication.

On July 18, 2008, with only three days under their belt after assuming the mission from the 12th CAB out of Germany, four Soldiers from the company responded to a rescue mission where four Iraqi National Police Officers were trapped on top of a burning building in eastern Baghdad.

In a daring rescue using the helicopters hoist as a step, the air ambulance crew medically evacuated the trapped policemen and transported them to a combat support hospital for further treatment.

For their heroic actions, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Nall, aeromedical pilot from Lubbock, Texas, Staff Sgt. Christina Martinez, flight medic from Alamogordo, N.M., and Spc. Lakwan Bonsu, crew chief from Bronx, N.Y., were awarded the Air Medal with Valor from Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey at Camp Taji Dec. 22.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 James Frederick, aeromedical pilot from Lubbock, Texas, is scheduled to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroic actions that

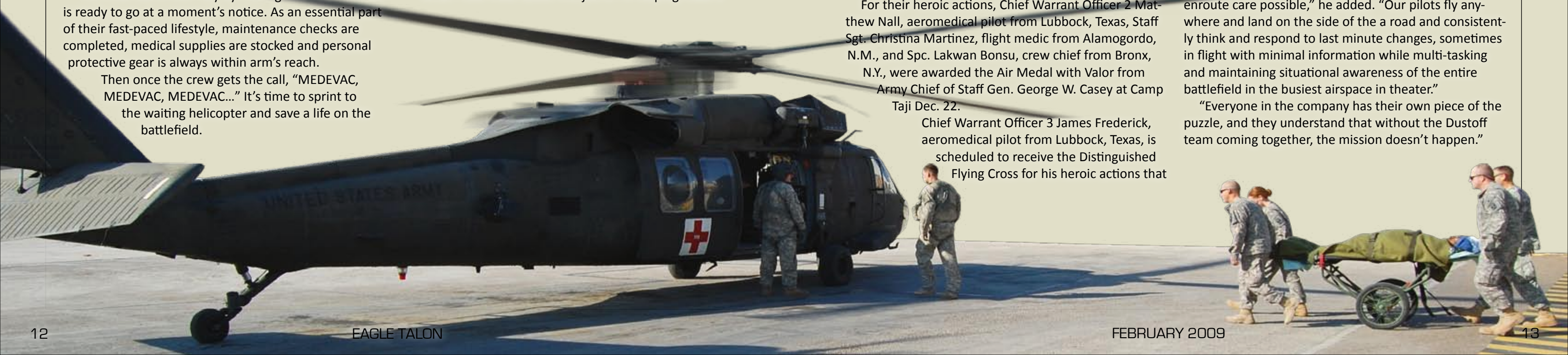
day by the 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B commander, Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond.

“Our foundation for success is our passion and commitment to the Soldiers outside the wire on the streets of Baghdad,” said Capt. Christopher Wingate, executive officer of the company and commander of the Camp Taji operation. The CAB’s MEDEVAC company has Soldiers operating at both Camp Taji and Forward Operational Base Kalsu.

“Our crew chiefs commitment to excellence and attention to detail ensures our aircraft stand out above every other aircraft and are able to launch at any given time,” Wingate said, who hails from El Paso, Texas. “Our operations personnel manage multiple missions while conducting AWT (air weapons team) support when needed and battle track our aircraft from the receipt of the nine-line until the mission is complete.”

“Our medics constantly analyze patient trends in our AO (area of operations) and improve treatment techniques in order to ensure the patient receives the best enroute care possible,” he added. “Our pilots fly anywhere and land on the side of the a road and consistently think and respond to last minute changes, sometimes in flight with minimal information while multi-tasking and maintaining situational awareness of the entire battlefield in the busiest airspace in theater.”

“Everyone in the company has their own piece of the puzzle, and they understand that without the Dustoff team coming together, the mission doesn’t happen.”



CAB transportation platoon completes 500th mission in support of OIF 08-10

Story and Photos by Sgt. Jason Dangel

A fresh winter rain from the previous night has turned Camp Taji into a cesspool of wet, sticky mud Jan. 12.

Comparable to the slippery blizzard conditions experienced in some parts the United States, the slick mud on the large camp causes traffic to become lethargic, and Soldiers can be seen wearing waterproof boots; walking gingerly through the slosh as they make their way to work. Everything slows down.

Sgt. Craig Priest, now on his third deployment to Iraq, knows the "rainy season" better than most, and while most of the operations on Camp Taji become sluggish because of the muddy conditions, it's just another day in the "suck" for Priest and the rest of his transportation platoon from Company A, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad.

As the CAB's only pure transportation asset, the 31-man platoon is responsible for any and all ground transport required by the "Iron Eagle" Brigade, said 2nd Lt. Clayton Eiland, transportation platoon leader, from Whitehouse, Texas.

These operations can be as simple as moving a few tires from one point to another and can be as complicated as moving hundreds of 4,000 pound blast barriers to differ-

ent locations around the brigade area on Camp Taji.

Rain or shine, day or night, Priest's platoon is always on the move.

The seven-year veteran's typical workday starts around 8:30 a.m., and

native explained. "Our first mission is almost always conducted in the morning, the second after lunch, and if a night mission is required, we ensure we have personnel ready to complete the operation."

At any given time, the platoon has five M1088 Tractor Trucks ready to roll. Each of the platoon's trucks are equipped with a large flatbed trailers capable of hauling anywhere from 22 to 34 tons of conventional or containerized cargo within the confines of the camp.

After checking the mission tracker, Priest sends one of his drivers to prepare the truck and ensure the vehicle has no deficiencies, and then personally checks it himself to make sure his Soldier didn't miss anything before they set out for their mission.

Once the wheels are rolling, the rest of the mission simply entails

"I love spending my time outside all day working with the vehicles, working with the Soldiers, because that's just the type of person I am,"

Sgt. Craig Priest

transportation NCO, Co. A, 404th Avn. Spt. Bn.

without delay he checks the platoon's mission tracker to see what's on tap for the day.

The tracker includes basic information such as what type of items they have to move, the quantity, and pick-up and drop-off locations.

"There are days when we have multiple missions," the Georgetown, S.C.,



meeting up with the operator of the cargo loading vehicle, moving to the pick-up location, loading the cargo and then moving it to the drop-off site. But it's not always that easy.

More recently, in accordance with the CAB's force protection initiative to ensure the safety of Iron Eagle Soldiers, the platoon was tasked to transport more than 100 two-ton cement blast barriers to different locations around the brigade's airfield on Camp Taji.

"During the barrier mission, we pretty much ran operations around the clock. We had a day shift and a night shift to ensure the barriers we placed in the correct areas and were the correct size; that went on for about a week."

During that one-week span, Priest's platoon averaged about six missions a day while moving back and forth, picking up and dropping off the 20 feet, 4,000 pound blast walls.

Priest described the mission as the busiest his platoon had been since they arrived last June, and just like any hardcore truck driver, he likes to be busy.

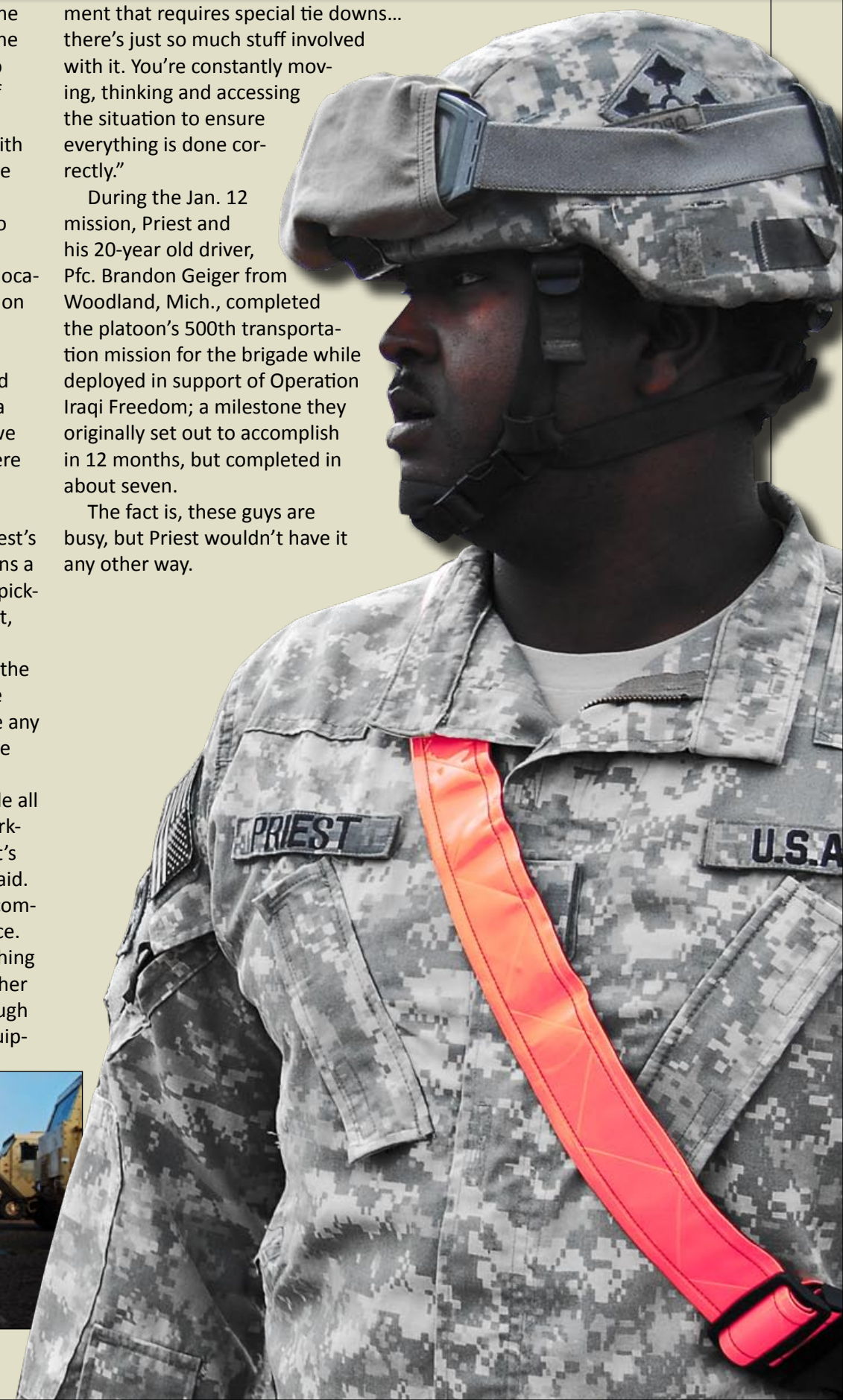
"I love spending my time outside all day working with the vehicles, working with the Soldiers, because that's just the type of person I am," he said.

"I'd rather be physically active compared to spending time in the office. With my job there's always something new, some new experience. Whether it is maneuvering the vehicle through a certain area, loading strange equip-

ment that requires special tie downs... there's just so much stuff involved with it. You're constantly moving, thinking and accessing the situation to ensure everything is done correctly."

During the Jan. 12 mission, Priest and his 20-year old driver, Pfc. Brandon Geiger from Woodland, Mich., completed the platoon's 500th transportation mission for the brigade while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; a milestone they originally set out to accomplish in 12 months, but completed in about seven.

The fact is, these guys are busy, but Priest wouldn't have it any other way.



School opens despite past violence

ISF, 'Iron Eagle' Brigade and 2-25SBCT provide security for historic event

By Sgt. Jason Dangel and Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti

Approximately 300 girls in blue jumpers and white head scarves stood in formation on the school's courtyard as helicopters from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad buzzed overhead.

The chill in the morning air rose in puffs as they chatted, happily anticipating the formal opening of their new school.

"Today is a good day," said Sheik Saeed Jassim Hameed al Mashhadani, a tribal sheik in Tarmiyah. "This day marks a beginning of education for these girls."

The Huda Girls' School in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, officially reopened its doors during a ceremony Jan. 5.

Iraqi Security Forces partnered with Soldiers from the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, and air crews from the 4th CAB provided security for the event which featured speeches, poems and songs performed by the students.

The 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, "Gambler Guns" provided more than 13 flight hours of AH-64 Apache attack helicopter support, while Warrior Soldiers and the IA provided a security cordon around the school's location in the middle of the village.

The school provides education to approximately 950 girls, who attend at various times throughout the day to accommodate the valuable education opportunity.

The school has a long history of learning. Originally built in 1982, the building was used as dormitory but transformed into a school

for agriculture in 1995. Since then, it has transformed again into a primary and high schools specializing in the sciences.

"This is really something big for the people. This is a fort of science," said Muhamad Ibrihim Jassim, administrative supervisor for the Ministry of Education in Tarmiyah about the opening of the school. "This is the largest school in the area."

The school has long been recognized by the Ministry of Education for its excellence in education, but in 2003, that excellence was threatened.

The building was the scene of significant violence, said Dr. Malcom Phelps, a native of Washington, and senior education advisor for the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team attached to the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division.

During major combat operations in 2003, the school slowly ceased to

function as a fort of science and transitioned into a fort for terror.

The school, which lies up the road from a Joint Security Station, was the



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. Jason Dangel

launching point of ambushes, improvised-explosive device attacks and sniper fire against Coalition Forces and the then nascent Iraqi Security Forces.

After a cautious stability was reached in the area in 2006, Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division began projects to rebuild the badly war-damaged school.

During the process, a major terror plan was thwarted. According to a Multi-National Corps – Iraq press release, Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, discovered a command wire leading from the school's outer perimeter to one of the rooms.

Inside the room, the cavalry troops discovered five artillery shell explosives.

The insurgent's planned attack also included two large explosive-filled propane tanks buried underneath the school's floor and numerous projectiles emplaced underneath electrical conduits in front of each classroom.

"This was a major setback," said 1st Lt. Erik Peterson, a native of Centennial, Colo., who is a civil military officer assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, "Golden Dragons," 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. "If they went off, not only would the building have been destroyed, many lives would have been lost."

More damage was caused to structure by removing the explosives, Peterson said. Engineer crews had to deliberately pull up the floor and take down walls brick by brick to ensure there was no longer a threat built into

the structure.

Eventually those individuals involved in the plot were captured or killed by U.S. Forces and ISF.

Approximately \$300,000 dollars of Iraqi and U.S. funds were spent to rebuild and refurbish the school, which contains 18 classrooms, science labs, an administration suite and an auditorium.

Now that the school is open, it faces many of the same issues plaguing the entire education system of Iraq.

More than just new schools, Jassim said more teachers are also needed, but he is confident in the coming years that will be easily alleviated for the Tarmiyah Qada.

"All of the teachers we currently have graduated from this school," he said. "They belong to this area. Some of these girls will do the same thing, and we will continue to prosper like we did before the fighting."

Jassim said he is sure the area is now safe and the fighting done.

During the 4th CAB's deployment

alone, almost 11,000 flight hours of Air Reconnaissance Patrols conducted by the "Gambler Guns" battalion have been committed for aviation support operations over MND-B skies, a majority of which over Tarmiyah and other areas previously known to be hostile.

Apache attack helicopter support is considered to be a great deterrent for enemy attacks and has allowed the 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.'s PRT the freedom to operate and complete many infrastructure build and repair project.

"When we show up the bad guys leave," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jack Hayek, a pilot with the Gambler Guns' Co. A. "Our support enables the safety of the guys on the ground and it allows them to get stuff done," he said.

Tarmiyah, he continued, is a great example of how both air and ground operations work together to improve the overall security and wellbeing of the Iraqi populous.

SECURITY - An AH-64D Apache attack helicopter from the 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment "Gambler Guns", soars over Iraqi skies during a mission north of the Baghdad. The Gambler Guns' war bird was tasked to provide aerial security and reconnaissance for the grand opening of the Tarmiyah Huda Girl's School in Tarmiyah Iraq. The aviation mission included the Apache and two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, one of which provided Iraqi Army officials a bird's eye view of their forces on the ground that were being used for the security for the event.



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. Jason Dangel

CAB assumes more than 240,000 square miles of Iraqi airspace support

Story and Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

The 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, officially took responsibility of the 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Multi-National Division – Central, area of operations for attack helicopter support at a Transfer of Authority Ceremony held at Camp Stryker, Iraq, Jan. 20.

Now that the “Dragons” of 1st Bn. have assumed authority for parts of MND-C, the CAB has now expanded its aviation support for more than 240,000 square miles of Iraqi airspace and two divisions on the ground.

The Apache helicopter battalion will now support the 10th Mountain Div. as it conducts operations south of the Iraqi capital with its Iraqi Security Force partners.

Inherently, the CAB will now have operational responsibility of the entire southeastern portion of the country.

CAB aircraft will now occupy airspace as far north as Balad, which is located about 50 miles north of Baghdad, all the way down to the Iraq - Kuwait border.

“Let me be the first to welcome 1-4 to the 10th Mountain (Div.) Family,” said Col. Paul Barbee, com-



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Lt. Col. Brian Bennett, commander, 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, right, hands Lt. Col. Kenneth Royar, commander, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, a token of his appreciation after a Transfer of Authority Ceremony held at Camp Stryker, Iraq, Jan. 20. The 1st Bn., will now assume attack aviation support responsibilities for a portion of Multi-National Division – Central. “Iron Eagle” Brigade aircraft will now occupy airspace over the entire southeastern portion of the country, and will be responsible for 240,000 square miles of aviation support coverage.

mander of Task Force 449.

“I look forward to continuing to win the peace here. Our work is far from over, and we will continue to support the Iraqi government and protect the Iraqi people. Dragons, you must live up to your motto and keep up your vigilance.”

The Fort Hood, Texas, based 4th Squadron, are scheduled to redeploy back to Central Texas after completing a 15-month tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The “Dragons,”

also from Fort Hood, have been deployed to Iraq since June 2008.

“This is a great unit coming up behind us and not only because we come from the same geographical area at Fort Hood,” said Lt. Col. Kenneth Royar, commander of 4th Squadron.

“I wish 1-4 the same success we have had.”

The battalion’s Co. C has already moved to Al Kut, in south eastern Iraq, where they will use the Apache helicopter to protect troops

on the ground, engage the enemy and escort air ambulance flights.

“This is our second TOA ceremony with the “Long-knives,” said Lt. Col. Brian Bennett, commander of 1st Bn.

“Their attention to detail and hospitality has been fantastic,” he continued

“I wish you a safe trip back to Fort Hood. Col. Barbee, I look forward to working for you. We have the mission.”

Iron Eagle 7 speaks to Soldiers during MLK Jr. celebration

Story and Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Command Sgt. Maj. Archie Davis, senior enlisted aviation Soldier for the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, spoke with Soldiers at Camp Taji about the contributions Dr. Martin Luther King made during his lifetime Jan. 17.

The 10th Sustainment Bde. hosted the event and Davis gave a short speech how King’s contribution to society progressed humanity towards racial equality.

“On Martin Luther King Day, we honor one of America’s greatest for racial equality,” said Davis, who hails from Houston. “Don’t let other people tell you can’t do anything, because all things are possible. Martin Luther King had a dream for a better place.

“No matter what race you are, you are a part of the dream Dr. King had,” he added. “It (MLK Observance) is not a black holiday, it is a people holiday. Martin Luther King was about the progression of humanity.”

King’s contribution to the progression of humanity is honored annually in the United States and in more than 100 nations worldwide.

Despite frequent confrontations with violence and incarceration, King wasn’t deterred from speaking out against social and racial injustices.

During his short life, King accomplished many great things. Most noteworthy included the organization of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the March on Washington. In addition, he was the youngest recipient ever, at 35, to be awarded the Noble Peace Prize.

King though is probably best known throughout the world for his “I have a Dream” speech and how he lobbied for civil rights legislation which resulted in the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



U.S. Army Photo/ Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

FLIGHT LOG

More news and events from the Iron Eagle Brigade

- Every Friday there will be Co-Ed competitive volleyball held at building 621T (Indoor Gym) from 1900-2200.

- The Army Team Soldier certification logo helps Soldiers identify off-the-shelf items that have been Army tested and approved by program executive office Soldier. For more information visit www.army.mil.

- There will be a 4 on 4 basketball tournament starting on Feb. 2 at building 621T (Indoor Gym). The tournament is for battalion and brigade level teams only. To volunteer to be a referee contact Capt. Rene Martinez at rene.martinez@iraq.centcom.mil.

ATC Soldiers become certified by FAA at Camp Taji airfield

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Three Multi-National Division – Baghdad air traffic controllers have become officially rated for the first time in their careers by the Federal Aviation Administration at Camp Taji.

Spc. Radha Bhrndat from New York City, Pfc. Jose Cordova from Phoenix, and Pfc. Scott Vongpradith from Fort Worth, Texas, assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, reached the milestone six months into the “Iron Eagle” brigade’s deployment to Iraq.

To become rated by the FAA, the Soldiers had to qualify at the two-position air traffic control tower at the airfield on Camp Taji. The qualification included 154 days of on the job training at the flight data and local/ground controller stations.

“Being rated means you are proficient at your job,” said Bhrndat who is serving on her first deployment to the region.

“This facility is very busy and the hardest part is keeping everything safe and having to multi-task. Learning how to deal with multiple aircraft simultaneously is tough.”

Bhrndat works in a company of more than 40 air traffic controllers who are responsible for safely orchestrating arrivals and departures of various types of fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

Flights depart and land both day and night at the airfield north of Baghdad, and the air traffic controllers coordinate their movements so accidents do not occur.

