



KEYSTONE Aviation

The Longest Day

Push-crew duty with
Illinois' 1/106th Aviation



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Staff Sgt. Michael Maass, a door gunner from Hillsboro, Ill., prepares a Black Hawk for an early morning flight while on push-crew duty. The crew members of Co. A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, typically spend two days on push-crew duty for every four days of flying. (Photo by Sgt. Neil Gussman)

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The Longest Day

Story and Photos by Sgt. Neil Gussman

For door gunners and crew chiefs in Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, the longest days are the ones when they don't fly. This Illinois-based Army National Guard unit uses a push crew to make sure every mission takes off on time and each aircraft gets back to mission-ready status as soon as possible.

If a mission is set to fly at 6 a.m., the flight crew arrives for a pre-flight briefing at 3 a.m. The push crew begins its work at 2 a.m. "The first thing to do at 0200 is start the coffee," said Cpl. Ricki Jenkins, 40, of Glasford, Ill. "Before going to the airfield, the push crew writes down the crew roster, the tail numbers of the birds, time out, and time back." The push crew normally consists of one crew chief or gunner for each pair of Black Hawks, but sometimes the crew is just one Soldier.

The crew takes a Gator vehicle from the orderly room and drives a half-mile to the maintenance hangars where they switch to a specially equipped Push Gator. Before going to the flight line, the push crew gathers Aviation Life Support Equipment, weapons, water, ice, and the egress kits for ground-mounting the M-240 door guns. The push crew also gathers the crew members' flight bags, helmets, vests and communications gear.

Soon the push crew is on the flight line loading equipment and getting the Black Hawks ready for the mission. "We remove the doors and windows and stack them in the trailer, then pull the ropes [tie-down ropes on the rotor blades], pull the engine plugs and APU [Auxiliary Power Unit] plugs and engine covers. We mount the M-240s on the birds then head back to the maintenance Conex to load the doors and windows in storage racks," Jenkins said.

By 4:30 a.m. the flight crew will be at the aircraft with night vision goggles, rescue radios and other equipment they bring to the aircraft. After this equipment is installed or stowed, the flight crew and the push crew go to breakfast together. When they return the flight crew goes through the pre-flight checks. If everything goes normally, the mission takes off on time and the push crew remains at the airfield for 40 minutes just in case a maintenance issue arises early in the flight.

If the aircraft has a problem before takeoff, the push crew is ready to move the crew and equipment to another aircraft. "Our priority is to make sure the mission goes on time," said



Capt. Jason Henderson, Co. A commander and Normal, Ill., resident. "If there is a mechanical problem, the push crew can bump [the flight crew] to a spare aircraft."

Henderson said the push crew's role in post-flight operations is just as important as getting the mission ready to go. "They make sure aircraft are ready for the next mission," Henderson said. "When the mission is over, the push crew identifies and fixes faults right away."

A half-hour before the mission is scheduled to land, the push crew is back at the airfield loading the doors and windows in the Gator's trailer. As soon as the first Black Hawk lands the push crew and the flight crew work together to get aircraft ready to fly for the next mission. The M-240 door guns are dismounted and set in the Gator. The crew members take off their helmets, vests and other flight gear and load their bags. The push crew re-hangs the doors, installs the windows and ties down the rotor blades. While the equipment is loaded, post-flight maintenance begins. The Gator has a rack above its dashboard loaded with every kind of lubricant a Black Hawk helicopter needs as well as tools for on-the-spot repairs.

"By the time we get the gear stowed and the weapons turned in to the arms room it's a long day," said Staff Sgt. Michael Maass, 27, of Hillsboro Ill. Maass is a door gunner who was with Co. A on its previous deployment to Iraq in 2004 and 2005. Maass is a full-time Army National Guard technician and a wheeled vehicle mechanic who volunteered to be a door gunner for this deployment. "Door gunner is a job that only exists in a war zone," he said. "We [door gunners] all volunteered to deploy."

If a mission takes off at 6 a.m. and returns at 1 p.m., the push crew starts work four hours before take-off and may still be finishing routine maintenance hours after the flight lands. Twelve to fourteen hour days are average for push crews. The standard rotation for a Co. A door gunner or crew chief is four days of flight, two days push duty and one day off.

Chief Warrant Officer Herbert Stevens of Normal, Ill., an Alpha Company Pilot, said the push procedures reflect lessons learned during the unit's last tour. "There's no room for error in aviation. We developed procedures that reduce risk and make sure the flight crew can focus on the mission."



'Stars' Visit Task Force Keystone

Story and Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

Maj. Gen. Randall Marchi, Maj. Gen. Glenn Rieth, Command Sgt. Maj. Jerome Jenkins and Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Todero visited the Soldiers in the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade here recently.

Marchi is the commanding general of the 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard. Todero is the command sergeant major of the 28th ID. Rieth is the adjutant general of the New Jersey National Guard. Jenkins is the state command sergeant major for New Jersey. They arrived Oct. 7 for their three-day visit.

They stopped at Contingency Operating Base Basra to meet with Maj. Gen. Richard Nash, commanding general of Multi-National Division-South. They also paid a visit to Company B, 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment there.

While Rieth visited New Jersey troops at Forward Operating Base Delta, Marchi and Todero visited with Soldiers in various sections of the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade Headquarters, 628th Aviation Support Battalion, and the 2nd Battalion, 104th Aviation Regiment, at COB Adder.

At each stop, Marchi and Todero took the time to tell the troops they were proud of them, and they also fielded questions and concerns.

Marchi recognized that Task Force Keystone, as the 28th CAB is also known as, is made up of Soldiers from several states working collectively. "The Pennsylvania Guard gets the job done, and they know what joint efforts are all about," he said. "It's a team effort."

Marchi said a good team is comprised of strong

individuals. "It is definitely a team effort, but the individual needs to contribute," said Marchi. "And that's exactly what I'm seeing here."

He said he was also impressed by the initiative the Guard members of the CAB took to establish operations at COB Adder after their mission and location was changed from Joint Base Balad shortly before entering Iraq.

"This is what citizen-Soldiers bring to the fight that many of their active-duty brothers may not," said Marchi. "You've got skilled carpenters, electricians and others who took control of the situation and built your city here, and the operations never stopped. It took a lot of energy to get this place to where it is."

Most Soldiers were very receptive to the visit and were very glad to welcome their leaders from back home. Spc. David Budavich, who also deployed with the Pennsylvania National Guard's 2nd Brigade Combat Team in 2005, said visits like this are essential to morale. "There isn't a rank in the Army that is above paying simple visits to check on their troops," said the Pittsburgh resident.

Staff Sgt. Jason Zahurak, who was presented a surprise award for being an outstanding noncommissioned officer (NCO) by Todero, said a sergeant major checking on his sergeants is just as important as a sergeant checking on their junior enlisted Soldiers. "It's important for all NCOs to recognize the hard work of their subordinate NCOs and Soldiers," he said. "I look after my troops, and by paying us a visit that is what CSM Todero is doing too."

The 28th CAB is expected to begin demobilizing near the end of 2009 and Marchi said he and Todero will gladly be there to greet everyone when they return.

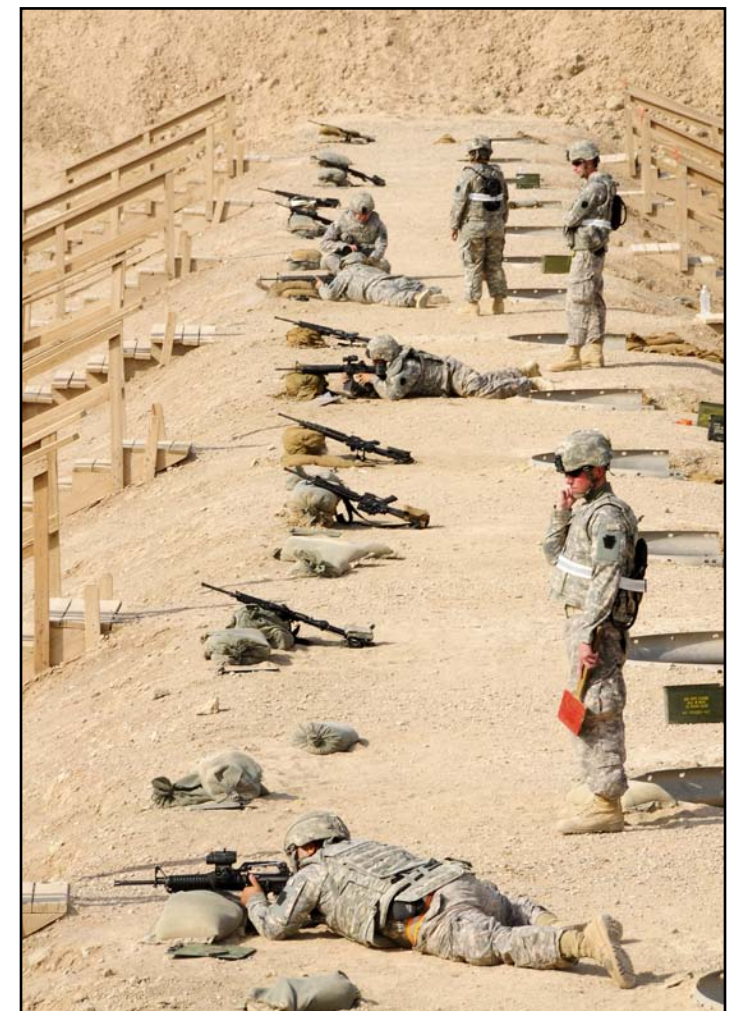
Addressing the Soldiers in the 628th, he said, "You guys continue getting the job done. I'll see you all on the flight line at McGuire."

Maj. Gen. Randall Marchi (left), commanding general of the 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard, talks to Sgt. Matthew Bircher and 1st Lt. Benjamin Miller of the 628th Aviation Support Battalion at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq, Oct. 8. Marchi visited his troops in Iraq with Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Todero, Maj. Gen. Glenn Rieth and Command Sgt. Maj. Jerome Jenkins.



ON THE RANGE

Photo Essay by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones



KEYSTONE VIGNETTES



Capt. Matthew Horning of Sterling Heights, Mo., graduated from Saline High School in 1999. He earned a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering at Missouri University in 2003 and a master's degree in business administration in 2008 at Phoenix University.

During his college years, Horning visited a recruiter to learn about college benefits. He enlisted in the National Guard and attended Basic Training at Fort Leonardwood, Mo., in 2000. He attended Airborne school at Fort Benning, Ga., and Flight School at Fort Rucker, Ala., in 2004.

"Joining the Army gave me a sense of pride. I am following the footsteps of my grandfather and Uncle, two men I admire deeply," said Horning. "I recommend the military to any person who is in a rut. It's healthy to try something new and start over," he said. "The military makes you face responsibility and become selfless. With zero training the military gives you the ability to become trained without costing you a dime or years in college."

Horning said he volunteered to deploy in September of 2008 with the 628th Aviation Support Battalion because he felt a sense of duty and had a desire to experience a combat environment. "I ensure the Black Hawks are safe for other pilots. I take a broken bird that's not safe to fly, I find the issue, fix it, test fly it and then certify it in a timely manner," he said.

He said deployments can build character by placing someone in a challenging environment. "To accomplish a mission under a combat scenario is an experience that many will never have." (Photo by Sgt. James Waltz)



Staff Sgt. Elisa Long, 27, of Selingsgrove, Pa., builds, repairs, and improves offices, workshops, containers, hangars and other structures wherever the 2/104th General Services Aviation Battalion has soldiers and facilities. Long is the sergeant in charge of special projects for the battalion. Anywhere a pile of lumber is becoming a deck or a new CHU (containerized housing Unit) is being fitted with electrical wiring and air conditioning to serve as offices, Long is likely to be there with a hammer, saw and drill.

"Construction is kind of a hobby for me. A few years ago I helped one of my friends renovate a huge old farm house in Beaver Springs," she said. "When I was in junior high, my Mom and I built a deck on our hunting lodge in Potter County."

Long has served for nine years in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, serving first as a wheeled vehicle mechanic. She volunteered to join the 755th Chemical Recon/Decon in 2007 for her first deployment to Iraq. They were assigned to convoy operations with Long serving as the wrecker operator on convoy security missions.

While in Iraq, Long completed four college courses toward her bachelor's degree in biology. She plans to work in a medical field, but has not decided on a specialty yet. (Photo by Sgt. Neil Gussman)



Spc. Wayne Beyer is serving in Iraq, with Company A, 628th Aviation Support Battalion, on loan from his home unit, Detachment 1, 131st Transportation Company. Beyer is serving the 628th ASB as a motor transport operator. Beyer works as a truck driver, assisting the Brigade with the many hauling missions taking place at Contingency Operating Base Adder.

Beyer, a Levittown, Pa., resident, works at home as a filter operator at the Bristol Township Sewer Plant. Being away from home he has come to really appreciate what his family means to him. Beyer said, "Family is what it's all about. It's the most important thing there is. My wife, Daneen, is the real hero in all of this; I couldn't do it without her." He looks forward to spending lots of quality time with his wife and 15-year-old and 19-month-old daughters, when he returns home.

To help pass his free time while deployed, Beyer watches football and participates in a fantasy football league. He also plays Spades and has been taking Army correspondence courses online. (Photo by Sgt. Andy Mehler)

SECTION SPOTLIGHT: SAFETY

By Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Halevy

As of this writing, I've been with you for ten weeks and I am amazed at my observations. In my 36 years in uniform, I have not seen an organization like this Brigade accomplish such a remarkable feat as you have done here in OIF 09-11. Seeing units from eleven states coming together in such a short time, being redirected to where you are, building the infrastructure for your operations and now conducting your mission essential task lists across the entirety of Multi-National Division-South is truly remarkable. I am impressed with such an operation performed by such a great bunch of folks. You are citizens, Soldiers, and patriots for sure.

You have put together and operated this giant machine and now you must take it apart and redeploy. You are transitioning another organization to keep the synergy and momentum you have created working like a Swiss-crafted clock. As you continue your mission the time to go back home to normality is growing nearer. The conversations are now shifting from tactics, techniques and procedures to relief in place,

transfer of authority, family and friends.

You have been bombarded with many acronyms of which I'm still learning. I am, however, very familiar with the ones in my functional area of safety, especially composite risk management (CRM), and this is what I would like to speak of here in this short note. When I think of CRM, I can't help but go back to my youth and remember the words of Elmer, my stern father who was quite a craftsman. "Pay attention to what you're doin' boy and you won't ruin your work [material] or cut yourself," he said, while teaching me how to use the hand saw.

While building our own boats out of Jersey white cedar, he showed me techniques like using the full length of the saw and letting the weight of the saw do the cutting. Using the full length of the saw would prevent the dulling of the blade in the midrange of teeth, adding life to the blade by preventing the need for more frequent sharpening. Craftsmen of years gone by had tried and true ways of building without the need for procedures. Shortcuts were not taken for reasons learned through tradition.

We now have written procedures for everything—even taking showers—so how can we go wrong? We have seen during this deployment where a moment of inattention or shortcuts, like driving our all-terrain vehicles across the runway threshold without clearance or missing a step in the Interactive Electronic Technical Manual, have caused much consternation or damage to equipment.

I didn't want to bore you here with a bunch of statistical analyses, as I know you have seen and heard it all a hundred times. But I will say this about the related statistics, you are entering the most dangerous aspects of your deployment—re-deployment and post deployment—and it's not the 'Twilight Zone' my friends, it is reality. Procedures are in place for you to be safe and to arrive home safe. Following these established procedures and not being distracted from what you are doing plays into everyday safe operations and personal injury prevention.

As your attention is drawn to the thoughts of seeing friends, family and going home, think about what Elmer told his young son many years ago, "Pay attention to what you're doin'," and make safe operations a priority...arrive home safe and may God bless you all.



Keystone MWR events at Camp Adder

Financial Peace University

Financial Peace University is a life-changing program that teaches you how to make the right decisions with your money. You'll be empowered with the practical skill and confidence needed to achieve your financial goals and experience true financial peace!

When: Fridays, 4 Sept 09 @1900 Hrs
(13 weeks)
Where: Post Chapel

Who: Anyone who desires to improve their financial situation with some time proven principles

Cost: Normally this will cost \$100 per person but you are receiving this course ABSOLUTELY FREE!

Guaranteed: To save you money and make you money if you follow these principles!

POC: Chaplain (LTC) Douglas Compton
28 CAB, Brigade Chaplain 833 - 5865

Submit your events to
TFKeystone@gmail.com

South Side Salsa
Organized by SFC JoAnn Tresco
with DJ WO1 Jesse Lonon

Saturdays at bldg. 713,
behind Warriors DFAC

Lessons from 2000-2100
Music starts at 1930



Volleyball with
SFC Dale Shade

Fridays at the
House of Pain
volleyball court

1800-2100

28th CAB Game Nite
Building 713 w/ CPT
Suzanne Williamson

Rummy, Spades,
Pinochle, Dominos,
Chess, Scrabble...

Wed. 2000-2200

Beyond Narnia
with SGT Neil
Gussman

MWR Library
Mondays at 2000

ngussman@gmail.com

Tallil Dead Poets
Society with SGT Neil
Gussman

MWR Library
Tuesdays at 2000

ngussman@gmail.com

Power Yoga by Dave Kocian
Tuesday, Thursday
1800 at The House of Pain

Saturday
0900 at the South Gym

Sunday
1600 at the South Gym

Please bring a mat, blanket or towel
for floor exercises.
POC: david.e.kocian@us.army.mil

Salsa Night
EVERY MONDAY WEDNESDAY FRIDAY
FEATURING 28TH CAB'S
DJ Garcia
DJ Almonte
Pazzi - 2000 - 2345

**Filipino & Okinawan
Martial Arts**
HOUSE OF PAIN FITNESS CENTER
SUN. & TUE. 1900-2000
POC: Glen Valencia
glen.valencia@us.army.mil

Weight Watchers – Momentum Plan
NOW on COB Adder

Mondays - 1900
Warrior Medical Training Site Classroom
Bldg 307, Across from the Post Office

Wednesdays - 1030 and 1900
Bldg 7449D, Rear Door

POC: SFC JoAnn Tresco, DSN 833-5840



Financial Peace University

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Douglas Compton, the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade chaplain, has been holding a 13-week seminar entitled Financial Peace University at Camp Adder.

"Financial Peace University is a life-changing program that teaches you how to make the right decisions with your money," said Compton. "You'll be empowered with the practical skills and confidence needed to achieve your financial goals and experience true financial peace."

Those who have attended the program said they feel it can be beneficial to everyone. Master Sgt. Anthony Carroll of the 28th CAB said young Soldiers would especially benefit from the program.

"I believe that the program should be implemented at basic training level," said Carroll. "Young Soldiers should have the financial knowledge and understanding that the program offers. That could possibly help them to avoid the critical financial mistakes that could

cost them in a long run."

Carroll said he participated so he could gain a better understanding of what it really takes to get out of debt, stay out of debt, and maintain a lifetime of financial independence. "How can I possibly be expected to counsel my Soldiers, understand and provide solutions to their problems, and look after their general well being, if I do not continually seek the answers before they are asked?"

Although the program is based on taped videos, several Soldiers, including 1st Lt. Yesenia Cotto of the 628th Aviation Support Battalion, said it was more interesting than they anticipated.

"It's awesome, because it's a concise program that gives you the tools you need to build financial success," said Cotto. "It's also not dry and boring like you might expect. It's entertaining, very informative, and it holds your attention," she said.

Master Sgt. Harold Miller of the 28th CAB was particularly pleased. "Dave Ramsey, the founder of FPU, is a great motivational speaker," he said. "I was very tired at the last session but he kept me wide awake (on DVD) with his humor and easily understood message."

The program offered at Adder, however, is slightly different from the standard FPU format.

"I didn't realize at first, but the book we are using is the Military Edition which provides insights for military families. Also, with FPU on-line resources, you get the most current information available. Kudos to the Chaplains Office for bringing this valuable program to the soldiers."

Keystone MWR Events at FOB Delta

Submit your events to
TFKeystone@gmail.com

Sgt. Victor Hernandez

Salsa Lessons
9-11 p.m. Weds. nights

Latin Night DJ
8-11 p.m. Fri. nights

At The Theater

Classes and Tutoring with
Sgt Geneshan Harichandran
at the Education Center
Math classes, preparation for
the JAST and ACT
and more

P 90X Exercise Class
by CW3 Tim Lelie

Every day!
6 a.m.
2 p.m.
8 p.m.