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THE ANVIL INSIDER



A Newsletter from the 28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade



"It's time to go home"

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28th ECAB officially released, completes Mideast mission

The 28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade formally transferred authority of their mission in the Middle East to the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade during a ceremony here this week.

The ceremony included the casing of the 28th ECAB's colors, a rallying flag, symbolizing that their deployed mission is complete and that they are to redeploy, or return, home. The 40th CAB uncased their colors as they began their service here.

The 28th ECAB had been serving in the Middle East since late summer of 2020, to help increase regional security and peace in the region while serving U.S. interests. They supported the fight against Daesh, maintained a U.S. military posture in Southwest Asia and enhanced partnerships with U.S. allies.

Their primary roles were aviation operations using UH-60 Black Hawk, CH-47 Chinook and AH-64 Apache helicopters, as well as some fixed-wing and unmanned aerial assets.

28th ECAB Soldiers served in 13 locations across five different countries, flew over 30,000 flight hours, 19,000 passengers, 2.5 million pounds of cargo and performed 220 medevac missions. They drove over 190,000 miles, handled over \$10 million in fuel and \$13 million in ammunition, completed 28 aircraft phases with 125,000 maintenance man-hours and over 1200 ground work orders.

They also played a key role in enhancing the interoperability capabilities between the U.S. and militaries from allied nations, working closely with aviators from the Italian army's Airmobile Task Group Griffon and the Spanish army's Task Force Toro.

Sgt. Dominic Caccese held the 28th ECAB's colors during the ceremony and watched that final task completed first-hand.

"It felt great to see the colors cased because it's one of the last tasks to complete for us to go home," said Caccese. "I'm looking forward to seeing my family and friends again. I'm also looking forward to finishing my senior year of college."

One of the biggest challenges the brigade faced during the deployment was protecting Soldiers from COVID-19 while also doing their part to prevent the spread of the virus. According to the brigade medical operations officer, Capt. Catherine Green, it went beyond mask mandates.

"There were constant changes to Army, CDC, DOD and theater guidance as well as restrictions of movement, quarantine and COVID-19 testing in response to outbreaks," said Green. "COVID-19 impacted all areas of the Army and we had to assist command teams in more ways than we usually do."



Medical operations personnel worked with medical providers on overall patient tracking and contact tracing to control risk to the force. They also had to coordinate and track COVID-19 vaccinations amid limitations for storage and transport.

"This was a joint, team effort. Not just me," Green added. "I'm useless without my med team."

According to Col. Howard Lloyd, commander of the 28th ECAB, the brigade would not have been so successful were it not for the support and sacrifices of families, friends and employers back home.

"28th ECAB Soldiers demonstrated the passion, desire and motivation required in a multifunctional task force to meet this complex, pandemic operating environment head-on," said Lloyd. "I was blessed to be a part of this combined team and I look forward to a successful redeployment."

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest, the 28th ECAB left their homes and families in July 2020 for training and in-processing at Fort Hood, Texas. Almost 1400 Soldiers came together from nine different states.

When the 28th ECAB arrived in the Middle East, they took over for the 34th ECAB, a unit from Minnesota that had been serving here since late-2019.

AROUND THE MIDDLE EAST

Nonprofit Gives Free Guitars to Deployed Troops

By Spc. Elizabeth Hackbarth



CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait -- Thanks to the generous time, money and talent of the nonprofit organization, Hearts to Heroes, Soldiers at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, are able to learn and play the guitar while on deployment.

Hearts to Heroes is an organization that donates guitars and other stringed instruments to deployed troops.

With the help of a few skilled luthiers, people who make and repair stringed instruments, Hearts to Heroes is able to build and fix donated guitars that then get sent to overseas Soldiers for free.

"If it were not for them, we wouldn't be able to do the guitar program," said Myra Foskey, CEO of Hearts to Heroes. "They help us out so much."

"We've already sent out 269 instruments," said Foskey. "We're in the process of trying to get more guitars in, so the next one that we ship out will be 270."

Chaplain (Maj.) Josh White, deputy command chaplain for U.S. Army Central Forward at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, recently received guitar #263 from the nonprofit.

"I sent them an email requesting a guitar, told them who I was, and what I did," said White. "[They] contacted me back, and that's it. You just ask, and they send. I actually got it much more quickly than I expected."

The acoustic guitar that White received was a Fender guitar with a solid wood top and a truss rod that allows one to make easy adjustments.

"This is a really good mid-range guitar. We're looking at, with shipping, probably \$500 to \$600 that they've sent to me for free."

The gift also came with several accessories.

"[They gave me] a cleaning cloth, two packs of strings, a ton of pics, all the decals, a tuner, a strap, basically everything you would possibly need to play a guitar and keep it right," said White. "Like the string winder and the capo, a lot of people that are new to playing the guitar would have no idea about any of that stuff and wouldn't know what [they need]."

White has been playing the guitar for several decades now, having first learned to play when he was 19. Now, he routinely plays and performs during several chapel services every week.

"This is actually going to become my field guitar," said White. "So when I go do religious services for Soldiers in the field during training, this will be the one I carry with me."

Not all the troops that receive guitars from Hearts to Heroes are as experienced as White.

"We have a lot of troops that say they're beginners, so we're hoping one day to hear a lot of good music coming from these troops," said Foskey with a laugh.

White couldn't speak highly enough of the organization's heart and generosity.

"It's nice to get stuff and be remembered," said White. "But this is unique. I don't know if any other organization does anything like this. There is a lot of care that goes into this. This is something I'll be able to use forever."

"Sending these instruments to our troops just makes us feel good, knowing that we're showing them support and helping their morale while they're away from home," said Foskey.

"They clearly love Soldiers and the military," said White. "They are extremely appreciative of what we do. This is just their way of being able to use their gifts and talents to share back."

White plans to express the same generosity that Hearts to Heroes showed him to a fellow Soldier down the line.

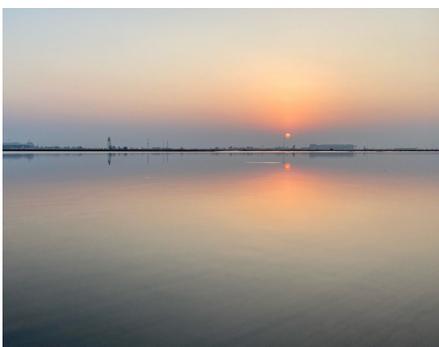
"This [guitar] will have an ongoing effect for the rest of my military career," said White. "And then, one day when I'm done with it, I'll find somebody else and pass it on."

*This month, we will spotlight the Soldiers who were behind the cameras during this deployment and highlight some of the work they did. As **unit public affairs representatives (UPAR)** they told the stories of our Soldiers and kept the public informed about our operations.*



Capt. Nathan Bevans is a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot and served as a UPAR for Alpha Company, 2-104th GSAB while commanding them for the first couple months of the deployment.

(The top three photos submitted by Capt. Bevans)



Spc. Mariliz Serrano is a petroleum supply specialist and UPAR with Echo Company, 2-104th GSAB. As our fuelers were spread across the region, she helped make sure the public could get a glimpse into their lives.

(The top three photos submitted by Spc. Serrano)



Sgt. Jeffrey Rouse served as an information technology specialist and UPAR with HHC, capturing many of the promotions, awards ceremonies and MWR events for Soldiers to share with their families back home.

(The top three photos submitted by Sgt. Rouse)



Spc. Kayla Harley is a water treatment specialist and served as a UPAR for Alpha Company, 628th ASB.

(The top three photos submitted by Spc. Harley)





Spc. Jose Brown is a CH-47 repairer with Delta Company, 2-104th GSAB. He put his photography skills to use to show life "behind the scenes" for our maintenance crews.

(The top three photos submitted by Spc. Brown)



Spc. Rob Donovic is a door gunner with our Chinook company and provided many photos showcasing the life of our "heavy-lift" unit as they performed their duties all over the region.

(The top three photos submitted by Spc. Donovic)



Spc. Tyler Speer is a petroleum supply specialist and UPAR for Echo Company, 2-104th GSAB. As the only UPAR at the remote outpost he served at, he also helped to publicize the photos taken by other Soldiers.



(The top three photos submitted by Spc. Speer)



Spc. Jason Kopp is a signal support systems specialist and UPAR with Charlie Company, 628th ASB. He was able to capture photos like these and also designed some of the pages of the deployment yearbook.

(The top three photos submitted by Spc. Kopp)





Spc. Mikaela Bolker is a signal support systems specialist and served as a UPAR for 1-137th AHB. When she wasn't performing her primary duties or showing off her musical talents (Mikaela Bolker Music), she spotlighted numerous Soldiers, highlighting our different backgrounds and stories.



Sgt. Zach Mateja is a religious affairs specialist and served as a UPAR for the 628th ASB. He helped organize the Roadrunner Review, the weekly battalion newsletter, put together pages in the deployment yearbook and uncovered many of the stories that would go on to be picked up by major news publications and blogs.

(The top three photos submitted by Sgt. Mateja)



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(The top three photos submitted by Sgt. Mateja)



Spc. Zach Wynn is a movement specialist and postal clerk but also served as a UPAR for the 628th ASB. He provided guidance to other UPARs as they designed the pages of the yearbook, and he published the Roadrunner Review, the battalion's weekly newsletter. He has his sights set on Officer Candidate School after deployment and possibly becoming a PAO.

(The top three photos submitted by Spc. Wynn)



Spc. Stanford Toran IV is a D.C. National Guard Soldier who augmented us as the brigade public affairs specialist during the deployment. He captured over 330 photos and videos of our Soldiers, including holiday video greetings, 30-second Thursdays, Soldier spotlights and numerous other products. He has volunteered to take on another overseas assignment after a couple months of rest.

(The top three photos taken by Spc. Toran)



CW2 Joanna Bradshaw is a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot with Alpha Company, 1-137th AHB and served as a UPAR for the battalion. Having served as a public affairs specialist when she was an enlisted Soldier, she provided valuable guidance to AHB UPARs and the brigade public affairs team.



This week's homefront hero is **Drew**, son of Lt. Col. Eric Augustine.

"In addition to things like mowing the lawn, shoveling snow, miscellaneous house projects and all the heavy lifting, Drew commits to spending time and helping with his little sisters. I can always rely on him for babysitting when he is not busy with: school, football, track and field, or his part-time job! He is now getting ready to graduate high school (his dad having been away his entire senior year).

We are so proud of Drew and all of his accomplishments, as he heads off to Bucknell University in the fall where he will be participating in the ROTC program. He has been an incredible big brother and stepson during this tough year as we dealt with deployment on top of a pandemic, and I am so grateful for him!" - Megan Augustine.

Thanks for holding down the homefront, Drew!

Thank you for your support throughout the deployment!

We know that this past year presented families and civilian employers with unique challenges.

We wouldn't have been as successful as we were without your support.

*The Anvil Insider: a publication by the
28th ECAB and Task Force Anvil
public affairs office*

28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade

Commander:
Col. Howard Lloyd

Senior Enlisted Advisor:
Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Livolsi

Public Affairs Officer:
Capt. Travis Mueller

Public Affairs Specialist:
Spc. Stanford Toran IV

