



Serving our
country from the
bottom to the top
- PAGE 3



Maine's Black Bears
Medevac Company
saves lives in Iraq
- PAGE 6



First In Flight



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TF49 hands over command to TF449

By CPT. KATHERINE O. ZYLA
Task Force 449 PAO

Task Force 449 (TF Hurricane) took the reins of the Multi-National Division- Center (MND-C) Combat Aviation Brigade from Task Force 49 in a transfer of authority ceremony at Baghdad International Airport November 29.

Task Force 449 (TF Hurricane) is charged with conducting full spectrum combat aviation operations throughout the MND-C area of operations. The unit will support 10th Mountain Division in Joint, Interagency and Multi-National Operations and mission emphasis will be placed on the following operations: reconnaissance and security, air assault and air movement, attack and combat service support.

"As I look ahead to our mission, I have no doubt TF 449 will execute it with the utmost professionalism, discipline and determination," said Col. Paul D. Barbee, Commander, TF 449, "We stand ready to witness and help shape history during our watch as the Iraqi people return to the polls in local, regional and national elections and exercise their freedom, extend their justice and bring mercy and hope to their fellow Iraqis."

The unit took over for Task Force 49, The Talons, which will return home to Fort Wainwright,



Col. Paul D. Barbee, Task Force 449 Commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Neal L. Purvis, TF 449 Command Sergeant Major, uncasing their brigade colors to signify taking over command of the Multi-National Division-Center Combat Aviation Brigade during a ceremony at Baghdad International Airport November 29. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall)

Alaska. "I am confident we will continue the successes of our fellow Soldiers in TF 49," said Barbee, a Salisbury, N.C. native, "Just as TF 49 met challenges of a tour in a combat zone head on and proved themselves more than capable; I have no doubt TF Hurricane will show the same professionalism, discipline and determination."

During the past 13 months, the Soldiers of TF 49 safely flew more than 80,000 hours, evacuated 4,250 patients, transported 23 million pounds of cargo, and moved 256,000 passengers in and around the battlefield of Iraq. "Since the day TF 49 arrived, they have been tasked to do incredible things, done a tremendous job and performed heroic against our enemy," said Maj. Gen. Michael L. Oates, Commanding General of MND-C. The General recommended other units take a look at and emulate TF 49's command climate and ability to empower its leaders at all levels.

"The men and women of TF 449 stand ready to face any challenge, overcome any obstacle and win any fight to honor both nations and to do our duty for ourselves, our nation and the future of Iraq," said Barbee.

Task Force 449 Commander
Col. Paul D. Barbee

Task Force 449 Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Neal L. Purvis

Task Force 449 Public Affairs Officer
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Hurricane 6 sends . . . Season's Greetings

We are entering one of the most important holiday seasons for many of us. As we prepare to spend the holidays in a combat zone and as our thoughts increase about our family, and friends back home, I want to wish you a Happy Holiday, a Peaceful start to the New Year, and also call your attention to some blessings of the season that are around us even here.

As you go about your daily work this holiday season, whether in the air, on the ground, or in an office, take the occasional moment to look at the people around you. In many ways we brought some of the best of our country with us, and we are joined by the best of many allied nations as well. We serve in an all volunteer military, our ranks are filled with the finest America has to offer.

Take a moment to wish those around you a happy holiday and thank them for serving beside you.

I certainly want to thank all of you for your efforts in Task Force 449.

In our work we are assisted by civilian workers, also here on their own accord, who are experiencing the same family separation, dangers, and hardships side by side with those of us in uniform. I also want to thank them for all their hard work and determination, and encourage everyone to do the same. We are one team, with one very important mission.

As you call, write, and e-mail



home, be positive in your messages. Remember your family and friends are feeling the separation too. It is often said the toughest job in the military is a "spouse," I would change that to "family." Keep in touch with family and friends on the home front, make sure all is well there and let them know all is well here. As you contact them, please pass on my sincere thanks to them for supporting you, my warm-

est regards, and my heartfelt wishes for a wonderful holiday season.

The one common thread shared by all who serve in uniform, and those they leave behind, seems to be separation. Just as Washington's troops were all volunteers who agreed to leave home, so have all true service members down through the rich history of our country. Technology has lessened the gap, and eased the separation, but it is still there.

Although we are separated from one family; we serve here with a second family, a family that stands by their country. Whether uniformed or civilian, American or allied, I thank you all for your sacrifice, your service, and your comradeship. We are a family of Brothers and Sisters that no one who has not served will ever understand. As you write and call home, as you dream of being home for the holidays, don't forget the Brothers and Sisters you see every day. Keep an eye on one another and help them through this period of time. Never leave a Soldier behind; take the moment to check on one another and ask how they are doing.

Stay mission focused, be safe, be joyous in what you have here around you, and thank you for the fine work you are doing to help shape history.

Hurricane Out,
Col. Paul D. Barbee
Commander, Task Force 449

Hurricane 7 sends . . . Happy Holidays

I want to thank each family member and friend of the Soldiers of Task Force 449 for supporting us during this time. If it were not for you, our deployment would be even more difficult to endure. I truly believe you are the ones who make it possible for us to carry out our mission. Your Soldiers are doing a phenomenal job and make this command a success. I appreciate their dedicated efforts and accomplishments, which are making history.

As I was reflecting on our unit, the past month here and upcoming holidays, I received a poem from my Aunt. The writing, "A Different Christmas Poem," by Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Giles, moves me and represents the spirit of our Soldiers and reasons why we serve.

Of course the holidays are tough. We miss our families and friends; however, we all are answering a call to duty, a call bigger than ourselves. Know your Soldier is being taken care of and will have a memorable Christmas, sharing it with fellow Brothers and Sisters in Arms, who pride themselves in taking care of one another.

I know many of us are already looking forward to next year's Christmas, where we will be home and able to reflect on our time here in Iraq, share our experiences and be grateful for our service.

I have included a few sections of the poem that struck me and encourage you to read it and tell your loved ones thank you.



*To the window that danced with a warm fire's light
Then he sighed and he said 'Its really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night.'
'It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
That separates you from the darkest of times.*

*No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.
My Gramps died at ' Pearl on a day in December,'
Then he sighed, 'That's a Christmas 'Gram always
remembers.'*

*My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam',
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.*

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Hurricane Out,
CSM Neal L. Purvis
Command Sergeant Major
Task Force 449

Got a story tip or photo you'd like to see in
First In Flight? Send it to us at:

jasmine.walthall@iraq.centcom.mil, or call 485-0642

Serving the country from the bottom to the top

NYC Fire Department Battalion Chief doubles as private in Army National Guard



Pfc. Steven P. Fitzgerald pictured here with his friends and family at his promotion ceremony to Battalion Fire Chief in the NYC Fire Department. Fitzgerald, a resident of Floral Park, Long Island, is an intelligence analyst in the N.Y. Army National Guard. (Photo submitted by Pfc. Steven P. Fitzgerald)

By Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall

Pfc. Steven P. Fitzgerald, a resident of Floral Park, Long Island, brings a unique twist to the average private in the Army. This is because when Fitzgerald is not in Iraq serving as an intelligence analyst, he is a city-wide Battalion Chief for the New York City Fire Department.

Fitzgerald is a member of the 3-142 Assault Helicopter Battalion (AHB), a N.Y. National Guard unit in Ronkonkoma, Long Island.

Fitzgerald had previously held off joining the military because he was unaware of the age waiver for the National Guard. When his fiancée, Spc. Viviana B. Molina, who is also in his unit, informed him of the new age waiver, he jumped at the chance to join.

At 41 years old, Fitzgerald

joined the National Guard in July of 2007, an action he states was long overdue.

"There were so many people I knew personally who passed during 9/11 and all I did was pay my taxes and practice my golf swing," said Fitzgerald. "My goal was to do my part by coming to Iraq and serving my country."

This sudden decision to start a career in the Army, when his civilian career was nearing retirement, came as quite a shock to Fitzgerald's family and friends.

"Everyone thought I was crazy, or going through a mid-life crisis," said Fitzgerald. "I wasn't looking to prove anything or get attention, I just wanted to do my part, and it was worth it."

While Basic Combat Training (BCT) and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) came relatively easy for Fitzgerald both physically and mentally, there

were a few challenges Fitzgerald had to come to terms with.

"My biggest challenge was working with young adults who could be my children," said Fitzgerald. "However, I was in awe that there were Soldiers here doing more at 21 years old than I ever thought of doing," said the born and raised native of Garden City, Long Island.

"I also had to deal with being a lower enlisted and having to take orders where I was previously in a position to give orders to 400-500 firefighters," finished Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald has been in the NYC Fire Department since 1990, a decision he credits to his father who is a retired fireman. While serving in the fire department, Fitzgerald attended several schools in his field including the National Fire Academy as well as obtaining a bachelor's degree

Continued on next page

Serving our country (cont.)

in Criminal Justice from St. Johns University in NY.

He plans to continue to work on his master’s degree while considering Warrant Officer School when his term is up in 2010.

Major Fred J. Evans, the Intelligence Officer for the 3-142 AHB, commends Soldiers like Fitzgerald.

“I can’t say that I would have done the same thing if I was in his position, but I am proud that he did,” says Evans.

“He is very accountable, and because of his civilian job, I tend to give him more tasks and responsibilities than the average Pfc.”

“To be able to say in June of 2009 that I am a veteran in the U.S. Army, is a big deal,” said Fitzgerald. “I am proud to say that I am serving my country and have done my part, and would definitely do it again.”



Pfc. Steven P. Fitzgerald, and fiancée, Spc. Viviana B. Molina, review intelligence reports prior to a briefing. Fitzgerald is a member of the 3-142 Assault Helicopter Battalion out of Ronkonkama, Long Island. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall)

The Love Dare



The Love Dare is a book featured in the movie “Fireproof.” In the film, when a couple’s marriage starts to strain and the husband considers divorce, he seeks out his father for advice. His father gives him a book, the “Love Dare”, and convinces him to follow its instructions, and see where the marriage is in 40 days. The book gives a simple task, or dare, each day that helps to rejuvenate, or strengthen any marriage. The staff of First In Flight has taken the dares and extended them to one dare a week so that they will extend throughout our deployment. In each issue, you will find your dares for the next 4 weeks, with slight variations to fit a deployment setting. Each issue will also include side notes from spouses in various stages of marriage. Feel free to forward the information to your spouse and you can both take the love dare!

This month’s Commentator: Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall. I figure it is only natural I would start off the column...

Marriage Profile: The Newlywed

Length: About 8 months

Week 1:
Love is patient.
Dare: “The first part of this dare is fairly simple. Although love is communicated in a number of ways, our words often reflect the condition of our heart. For the next week, resolve to demonstrate patience and say nothing negative to your spouse at all. If the temptation arises, choose not to say anything. It’s better to hold your tongue than to say something you regret.”

Comment: This is most certainly an important part of a deployment relationship, a very wise CSM told me that there is no point in you starting arguments thousands of miles away, because for whatever reason your call or internet connection can be disconnected, and you have left on a bad note. Also there is no need to add something that is probably not that serious to the stress of being apart and worrying about you and you just being ever so slightly miserable in the wonderful vacation resort we call Iraq.

Week 2:
Love is kind.
Dare: “In addition to saying nothing negative to your spouse again this week, do at least one unexpected

gesture in an act of kindness.”

Comment: I know this seems like you need to be home to do it, but it can be as simple as a postcard that lets them know you are thinking of them, or a homemade photo album with pictures of you throughout the day, so they do not feel like they are missing out so much on your day to day activities. Or you can send something that will arrive the next day with 1-800flowers.com, besides flowers, they also send cookies, candies, etc.

Week 3:
Love is not selfish.
Dare: “Whatever you put your time, energy, and money into will become more important to you. It is hard to care for something you are not investing in. Along with restraining from negative comments, buy your spouse something that says, ‘I was thinking of you today.’”

Comment: It does not have to be anything expensive or outlandish, because deployments should be a time to save money. Just think of how excited you are to get any little gift in the mail. And your spouse at home will not be expecting anything from you, so it makes it an even bigger treat! For example, I sent my husband, who is a big Madden gamer and Steelers fan, a wireless Pittsburgh Steelers Play Station 2 controller, for no reason at all, and in lieu of the fact that I hate all things Madden. It was just a game controller, but it is the little things that make your spouses feel closer to you while you are gone.

Week 4:
Love is thoughtful.

Dare: “Contact your spouse sometime during the week. Have no agenda other than asking how they are and how their day is going.”

Comments: I am a little new at this deployment thing, but I have realized that more times than not, my spouse does not talk too much about his day and what is going on with him, because he seems to feel like I am deployed so I should be the one venting and sharing details of my day. But at least once this week, just say, “Let us not talk about me, tell me about your day.” And granted you may not think whatever little details of their day are extravagantly important, but I bet they will feel good to vent about the dog scratching up the hardwood floor to you. Venting about even the little stuff can help a lot too.

And that is all for this issue! I hope that some of my newlywed side notes along with the weeks dares have assisted you and your loved one in some way, shape, form or fashion. We look forward to next month’s dares from the “Love Dare”.

If you are interested in being a commentator for the Love Dare, please e-mail Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall at jasmine.walthall@iraq.centcom.mil. Please include your length of marriage and number of deployments while married.

The Palace Tour

By Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall

Be forewarned, if you have not been on the tour and plan to go, the following story contains spoilers that may ruin it for you.

The tour of the Abu Ghurayb Presidential Grounds on Camp Slayer is most definitely a tour to be remembered. It is filled with stories and details that take you into the world of Saddam Hussein, if only for three hours.

The first thing you notice on the tour is the massive amount of water everywhere. In the form of lakes, pools, etc., Saddam Hussein used water as much as possible, because in Iraq, water means power. Hussein caused his country to fall into a drought by taking 9 out of 10 water pumps from the citizens of Baghdad in order to continue his water supply.

The tour began at the house of Uday, Saddam's son. Here we learned of what is said to be one of Saddam's most ruthless sons. When his father grew tired of his son's arrogant ways and his growing power in the country, he ordered his men to attack Uday. The order however was very specific; it was not intended to kill his son, but merely to wound him. Anyone who killed his son would suffer not only his own death, but his family's as well. The order was carried out and Uday was crippled. As a result of Uday's disability, several buildings and homes on the grounds are equipped with elevators.

The tour then continued to the Victory over America (VOA) palace. On the way, we noted homes in the middle of the lake. One of the smaller homes was the house of Saddam Hussein's mother-in-law. There was also a house for family who came to



Victory Over America Palace (US Army photo by PfcJasmine N. Walthall)

visit, and a brothel, where Hussein kept his high-school-aged harems. There were also brothels on the water and houseboats that took both Hussein and members of the Ba'ath party to the brothels. This was done because in Islam, "There is no sin on water."

Hussein named his palaces after "victories" over other nations. Hussein defined a victory as a battle in which he remained in power after its end. The VOA Palace is named after his continuous reign after Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield. The VOA Palace is the largest palace to date and is twice the size of the Al-Faw Palace, another one of Hussein's 76 palaces. The VOA has 75 bedrooms and bathrooms.

Hanging above the VOI's door, you see an arch made of helmets with initials beside them. The initials are those of Hussein's and the helmets are those of Iran soldiers. At least three of them

have been identified as belonging to a captain, a sergeant, and a private.

The tour concluded with the Ba'ath Party Convention Center. This building is said to be the first strike of the war on Iraq. President George W. Bush gave Hussein 48 hours to surrender and ordered that the U.S. strike Iraq in 24 hours. Hussein did not surrender and the U.S. took action. U.S. intelligence said that there were approximately 200 members of the Ba'ath party meeting in the conference room. The conference room was actually a movie room, where intelligence gathered that the members of the Ba'ath party were viewing the film, *Pretty Woman*.

The tour brought a more realistic light to information found in the news and in magazines. It was surreal to think you were walking along the same hallways as Saddam Hussein and seeing with your own eyes very

personal details of his life.

For some attendees, the tour really opened their eyes as to the type of man Saddam Hussein was. "During the tour I would often reflect and think what a life to have...but then again, not really," said Maj. Michele P. Harper, a Charlotte N.C. native. "Unfortunately the beauty is easily erased with all the neglect and harm inflicted on the people of Iraq. I was very surprised to see how unrestrained and recklessly wasteful Saddam was with construction of the palatial grounds, even though only a few select would ever see it."

For others who attended the palace tour, the tour confirmed the need for the U.S. in Iraq.

"The tour really opened my eyes," said Pfc. Lisa M. Nixon. "I could not believe that so much history could be gathered in such a small area."

"It really hurt to hear how the nationals in this country are still oblivious to the amount of water behind the walls that keep them out of Camp Slayer," said Nixon, the Charlotte, N.C. native. "Seeing in person the things that I had previously only read about made our work and impression here all the more real and necessary."

Despite the feelings attendees took from the tour of Camp Slayer, one thing was consistent. It brought a whole new perspective to each person as to the world we live in today. If you have not yet attended the tour, you are missing out on a piece of Iraq's history.

HHT 4/3 ACR changes command in ceremony



Cpt. Jeremy P. Springall relinquished command of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment to Cpt. Chad P. Corrigan in a ceremony December 7 at the South Hangar at Baghdad International Airport. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall)

Maine’s Black Bears Medevac Company saves lives in Iraq



Soldiers of Charlie Company 1-126th, Black Bears, pride themselves in being an air ambulance unit, where they rescue those injured located anywhere from Kuwait to Baghdad. The Maine National Guard Medevac Company recently completed their nine-month deployment and will return home, after flying more than 3000 hours and evacuating over 670 patients. (Courtesy Photo from C/1-126)

By Cpt. Katherine O. Zyla

A Maine National Guard Medevac Company recently completed their nine-month deployment and will return home, after flying more than 3000 hours and evacuating over 670 patients.

Soldiers of Charlie Company 1-126th, Black Bears, pride themselves in being an air ambulance unit, where every mission is critical and the expectation and commitment of the crew is they are going to rescue those injured.

“Depending on how you look at it, each mission is a success, we go out every day and move patients,” said Maj. Brian J. Veneziano, Commander, C/1-126, “Think about how many people’s lives we influence, not only the ones we are saving, but also those who care for the injured personnel.”

Veneziano states their mission is not easy, especially when a patient has passed away. “Losing someone is extremely emotional and painful for everyone, but to see my Soldiers remain calm and do their job, shows the caliber of medics we have in C/1-126,” said the Herman, Maine native and 18-year Guardsmen. “Every medic can tell you a story from this deployment that will make hair on the back of your neck stand up.”

Pilots and crew chiefs also play a critical role in medevac missions. Not only do they fly, sometimes in severe weather, but they also render aid as appropriate. All pilots and crew chiefs have rudimentary medical training and are combat life savers.

“To see an aircraft mechanic calmly help administer oxygen to a severely injured patient is eye opening,” said Veneziano.

The Black Bears had one particularly memorable mission, when a team on the ground came under hostile fire, one Soldier died and two were severely injured. The air crew flew in limited visibility weather, successfully evacuated the injured soldiers and helped save their lives. The crew members were awarded U.S. Army Air Medals.

The C/1-126 Medevac crews, comprised of five soldiers- two pilots, two crew chiefs and a medic, flew Black Hawks, set up similar to an ambulance with medical equipment, stretchers, oxygen masks, medicine, etc. The Soldiers never knew what kind of day or night they were going to have until the call came in; however, they were ready.

“I am most proud of the fact that we never knew what we were going to get, but we never failed to get there,” said Veneziano, “We had zero dropped missions (accomplished all missions), and were always within the Golden Hour (first hour after an accident, where chances of survival are greatly increased).”

The Black Bears not only worked together to save lives but also

successfully set up their fourth medevac site from scratch, extending their reach and making operations even more effective. The C/1-126 Soldiers were responsible for developing the site, to include all logistical, communication, maintenance and life support efforts.

“One of the greatest things about a medevac unit, whether you’re transporting patients, maintaining aircraft, facilitating logistics, etc., is we work as a team and put our mission first,” said 1st Lt. Brian F. McClellan, Operations Officer, C/1-126, “Medevac is based on speed and it is critical our sites are fully operational at all times, so we can respond to those on the ground.”

The Soldiers used their civilian job skills- carpentry, electrical and communication and contracting to make the new site’s work and living areas as comfortable as possible, which is essential when crew rest plays such a vital role. Some of the Soldiers argued it was the best place on camp.

“We have a lot of moving parts, guys on the ground calling in the grid coordinate, maintainers ensuring aircraft are fully operational and crew members ready to fly, everyone is vital to our mission and timing is everything, lives are at risk and we have to be ready at all times,” said McClellan, an Eliot Maine native.

The C/1-126 team, consisting of flight crews, medical staff, maintainers, supply and admin personnel, is self sufficient and structured similarly to an aviation battalion. Everything from aircraft maintenance to awards paperwork is done in-house.

“I am very proud to have all the different job functions that make us a stand-alone company,” said Veneziano. He went on to say his Soldiers work together and are mission focused. “We have enjoyed a very good operational readiness rate and the mission success we share helps keep morale high, it is contagious.”

McClellan added that everyone in the unit has specific roles; however, regardless of job, the Soldiers are a team and the Non-Commissioned Officers’ lead the way with their knowledge, training and mentoring junior Soldiers, so they fully understand the mission and how their individual roles support it.

The C/1-126 Black Bears, named after University of Maine, transitioned from a legacy medevac company, a stand-alone company, to a transformed medevac company, a company that deploys with an aviation battalion in October 2006. The company was alerted in 2007 to conduct a legacy mission, meaning the team had to be rebuilt and would serve similar functions as an aviation battalion but on a smaller scale.

“My personal key to success was being able to pick my team,” said Veneziano. “I would put the company’s leadership against any aviation battalion in theater to staff problems, develop courses of action and execute missions.”

I heard the bells on Christmas Day

Most of us are probably familiar with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s hymn, “I Heard the Bell’s On Christmas Day”. What many do not realize is the background to what was originally a poem written on Christmas Day in 1963, during the height of the Civil War.

*I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.
In some American Christmas carols, we encounter an optimistic spirit of freedom and democracy, ironically contrasted with the painful facts of his-tory which surround the origins of the song.
I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.
Longfellow knew of tragedy. Following the death of his wife due to severe burns in 1861 and after learning that his son, Charles, had been severely wounded in battle, a state of melancholy overtook the poet for the next few years.
And in despair I bowed my head
'There is no peace on earth,' I said,
'For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'*



**Chaplain Steven P. King
BDE Chaplain**

It is easy to see the reason behind the words in the third verse. He had suffered greatly and was trying to see hope and the good in the midst of awful tragedy. While contemplating this, he heard the ringing of the church bells in the distance. Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: 'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The wrong shall fail, the right prevail With peace on earth, good will to men.'

His faith in the power of God and man to join and transcend the horrors of war gave birth to this song, inspired by his hearing the ringing out of the Christmas bells. As the bells continue to peal and peal, Longfellow recognizes that God is not dead after all, that right shall prevail, bringing peace and goodwill, as long as there is Christmas and its promise of new life.

We need to hear this message as well today. Though we are separated from our loved ones and life sometimes does not seem fair, Christmas reminds us of hope in the darkness of uncertainty and encouragement in despair. God is not dead, right will prevail! It is my prayer that God’s peace will be yours this Christmas Season, though miles may separate you and your loved ones. God Bless!

Authorized vs. Un-Authorized War Souvenirs

By Task Force 449 JAG

Congratulations if you are in a TF 449 unit preparing to redeploy home. As you are packing your bags and tuff boxes remember that there are certain items that you cannot take home. This article will briefly discuss several items or classes of items that you are prohibited from shipping or taking home.

First, we will discuss war souvenirs. There is an important difference between un-authorized war souvenirs, sometimes called war trophies, and approved individual war souvenirs. Prohibited war souvenirs include any item taken from the dead, POWs, or other detained individuals. Also prohibited are weapons and items that could be of value or service to the Iraqi Army. Weapons include firearms, ammunition, explosives of any type, cartridge casings and switchblade knives. If you attempt to take any of these items home in violation of MNC-I General Order Number 1 you could face prosecution under the UCMJ, adverse administrative action or non-judicial punishment.

You are permitted to take home certain items; however, if you obtained them lawfully, for example, by purchasing them. Authorized war souvenirs include: helmets and head coverings; bayonets and knives (but not switchblades); uniforms and uniform items such as insignia and patches; canteens; compasses, rucksacks, pouches, and load bearing equipment; flags; military training manuals, books and pamphlets; or other items that clearly pose no safety or health risk and are not otherwise prohibited by law or regulation. All of the above-listed items are subject to the souvenir retention process and must be approved by the appropriate reviewing officer. You will need to fill out DD Form 603-1 and have your Commander sign it. You can download the form at the following link: <http://www.dtic>.

mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/eforms/dd0603-1.pdf or obtain a copy at our office.

Remember, firearms, ammunition, shell casings or other military equipment obtained or acquired by any means other than official issue are strictly prohibited.



Task Force 449 JAG consists of BDE Judge Advocate, Maj. Brian L. Blankenship, Trial Counsel, Maj. J. Wriley McKewon, Paralegal NCOIC, Staff Sgt. Kristian S. Hall, and Paralegals, Spc. Leah A. Rowell, Spc. Jackson Longchamp, and Spc. Ryan W. Stack. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N.

Other prohibited items

A simple rule to follow is this: If you were not allowed to possess it in Iraq, you are not allowed to take it home. Prohibited items include: privately owned firearms, alcoholic beverages, pornography, archeological treasures, photographs of enemy casualties, animals, drug paraphernalia, or unexploded ordnance. Furthermore, no sand, rocks, plants or insects can be taken.

What about movies that you may have purchased from local vendors? During customs inspections they will look for numerous copies of a single movie. If you own one copy of each movie you will be allowed to take it home with you.

Finally, as you are certainly aware by now, airlines prohibit certain items on their aircraft. Cigarette lighters are not allowed. You can bring limited amounts of liquids, gels and aerosols. Check the FAA and airline websites for specific information..

And be sure to have your prescription drugs on you in your own bottle with the proper label.

I hope this helps in your preparation to depart Iraq and redeploy home. If you have any questions and/or concerns regarding this or any other matter, please feel free to drop by TF 449 Legal Office located at Camp Striker, Iraq, building SA-14, DSN 485-0211. Good luck in your travels home.

The Soldiers behind the bird

By Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall

When it comes to making sure aircrews and passengers are safe when they fly, these Soldiers have the job covered. The members of the 4th Squadron 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) out of Ft. Hood, Texas, have maintainers of all crafts to include: ground, weapon and aviation maintenance professionals.

The 4/3 ACR is unique in that it has the ability to support itself from an aircraft maintenance perspective. The unit is equipped with Aviation Intermediate Maintenance (AVIM) capability, which includes extensive and time consuming maintenance, and an Aviation Unit Maintenance (AVUM) capability, both allow 4/3 ACR to be self sufficient.

“Having AVIM and AVUM capabilities internal to the unit offers greater flexibility,” said Sgt. 1st Class Zane B. Hansen, with Task Force 449’s Aviation Material Office.

The Belton, Texas native said the maintenance platoon can conduct in-depth inspections and repairs at many levels to include: changing engines and transmissions, fixing electronics and replacing flight controls; tasks completed at the AVIM or AVUM level.

“Being able to perform all these capabilities at our level helps establish fluid movement among our team and aircraft, which increases our overall maintenance efficiency and supports the unit’s mission,” said Hansen.

On any given day, a UH-60A Black Hawk Helicopter or AH-64 Apache Helicopter will come in for routine scheduled maintenance, the most intense being a “phase” or preventative maintenance inspection (PMI).

Soldiers, with the 4/3 Maintenance Platoon, are charged with disassembling the aircraft and inspecting it for cracks, broken parts, etc. Their job does not stop there. Once the Soldiers identify potential maintenance problems, they are responsible for fixing them and reassembling the entire aircraft. The process usually takes 14-15 days to complete for a typical phase inspection.

The maintainers, who work in the hangar, are primarily Apache Helicopter and Black Hawk Helicopter Repairers. They work 12-14 hrs a day making sure their aircraft are in excellent flying condition. The Apache and Black Hawk Repairers work closely with specialists in avionics, weapons, engines, flight controls and hydraulics as well as airframe repairmen. Everyone in the maintenance platoon has a vital role in ensuring aircraft are mission ready.

Staff Sgt. Ben A. Chacon, a platoon section chief, is responsible for coordinating maintenance and work orders. His platoon completes one PMI phase a month, where the Soldiers conduct a thorough aircraft inspection and then disassemble, service and repair, and reassemble the helicopter. Teams of six to eight Soldiers conduct this type of maintenance on the Black Hawk and Apache Helicopters, which can take 12-14 days. The maintainers also conduct unscheduled and routine aircraft maintenance.

For the maintainers in 4/3 ACR, the feeling that they get after completing an inspection and solving any problems is well worth the hours they put in.

“Our work pays off, knowing the helicopter now has 500 more flight hours on it, makes our job worth it,” said

Chacon.

With this job also come advancement opportunities. Spc. Donald A. Jackson, a Black Hawk Helicopter Repairer, is happy about receiving on-the- job training to become a crew chief. He eventually would like to be part of a flight company and serve as a crew chief. Jackson currently conducts thorough inspections of the Black Hawk; however, as a crew chief he would be responsible for more than routine aircraft maintenance. Jackson feels working as a maintainer is necessary and will better prepare him to be a more proficient crew chief someday.

“I was lucky to come to a maintenance platoon first, where I can learn about the aircraft I will one day be a crew chief on,” said Jackson. He added working with the section really

teaches him how to deal with a variety of aircraft maintenance situations and that he better understands the Black Hawk’s capabilities and how to help solve potential problems.

The platoon not only has maintainers, who work inside the hangar, but also Soldiers who fix aircraft on the flight line.

Spc. Thomas Spurgeon works with aircraft daily on the flight line; administering routine maintenance to help ensure aircraft are fully operational.

“The best thing about my job is that I know the work I am doing and the inspections I conduct on a day-to-day basis help ensure we all come back safely,” said Spurgeon.

After speaking with the 4/3 maintainers, it is apparent these Soldiers believe in what they are doing and find comfort

in knowing they play an integral part in making flights safer for all aircraft crewmembers and passengers.

“Our mission here is simple,” said Sgt. Ched W. Mclean, an Apache Helicopter Repairer with 4/3 ACR, “We do whatever it takes to help the pilots complete their mission.”



Spc. Donald A. Jackson, a Black Hawk Helicopter Repairer, inspects the main transmission oil filter on a UH-60A Black Hawk at the flight line. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall)



Spc. Thomas Spurgeon inspects the engine of an AH-64 Apache Helicopter. Spurgeon, a member of the 4th Squadron 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, inspects for and removes dirt and dust from the aircraft that may hide cracks or broken parts of the airframe. This routine maintenance is critical and helps ensure aircraft are fully operational. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall)

Sexual Assault, what you need to know

Right after you read this intro, I want you to put this newsletter down, take note of the first person you see, and ask yourself if they want to be sexually assaulted. Chances are they do not, and neither do you. Yet, it is a constant issue throughout all branches of the Armed Forces and it is getting worse.

In reaction to the growing numbers, DoD recently had their sexual assault summit in Washington, D.C. and realized the seriousness of sexual assaults. One of the ways they are combating the issue is by raising the awareness level and launched the “I A.M. Strong” prevention campaign at www.sexualassault.army.mil.

The acronym “I A.M.” stands for Intervene, Act, and Motivate, with these three simple words being tied to the Army Values. The website itself is packed with valuable information to include training on sexual assault and harassment, tips on what you should do if sexually assaulted and guidelines for commanders if they have a Soldier who is sexually assaulted. Besides introducing some information found on the website, I also want to highlight a few key points.

Sexual assault victims have two reporting preferences: unrestricted and restricted. An unrestricted report will involve a full CID investigation, while a restricted report will not trigger an investigation and will remain closed to CID and the chain of command. If a Soldier files restricted, he or she may still receive medical treatment, counseling and chaplain



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TF449 Equal Opportunity Rep
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services. Now here is the most important part; when filing a restricted report, a Soldier must only report the incident to the unit’s victim advocate, sexual assault response coordinator, healthcare provider, or chaplain. If a Soldier reports to anyone else, the case will automatically become unrestricted. It is essential Soldiers know who their unit’s victim advocate is so they will have the reporting preference option!

Did you notice how I mentioned CID in the above paragraph? That is because sexual assault is a crime and punishable under the UCMJ. I am not talking an Article 15 with a few days of extra duty. I am talking confinement and hard labor should you sexually assault someone. The key phrase to remember is “No, means no!” It is that simple. If someone does not or cannot give you consent to have sex with them then do not have sex with them. This goes for someone who is unconscious, incapacitated, asleep, or when some sort of force or threat of force is used. Sexual assault is not just about rape, but any type of intentional sexual contact or act.

In closing, I can only hope that my small column in this newsletter gave you some insight on sexual assault prevention. Overall, it is really about respecting one another and doing the right thing. I encourage everyone who reads this to remember we are all professional Soldiers in the world’s greatest Army, a band of brothers and sisters defending our freedom and the freedom of others. Let us treat each other that way.

Over 250 years of Warrant Officer service...



Pictured here in front of the brigade headquarters, the Warrant Officers of Task Force 449 collectively represent over 250 years of service to the military. The Warrant Officers length in service range from 12 years to more than 30 years. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall)

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...



Soldiers of the 3-142 and 4/3 ACR helped decorate a 7 ft. tall tree (also shown below) constructed by CWO Erin K. Joy. The tree is decorated with ornaments, ammunition, and anything else the Soldiers could find to make it festive. (US Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine N. Walthall)

Soldiers in the S1 shop at Task Force 449 were the lucky recipients of a live Christmas tree courtesy of the Trees for Troops program from a school in Ohio. The program donates several live trees to units overseas each year. (US Army photo submitted by Maj. Michele P. Harper)



All I want for Christmas...



*"...is to go home on leave... and come back of course."
-Sgt. James M. Huelle
3-142 Assault Helicopter Battalion
Lathan, NY*



*"...is a one-way ticket to Minnesota."
-Cpt. Karen S. Craig
834 Forward Logistics Element
Minneapolis, MN*



*"... is for my children to be safe and happy."
-Pfc. Melanie D. Metzler
4th Squadron 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment
Gallup, New Mexico*



The ponderances of Staff Sgt. Hall

Well, Thanksgiving has come and gone and Christmas is right around the corner and we have barely reached a full month in Iraq. With Christmas quickly approaching, I wanted to take a moment to talk about the “spirit” of the Soldiers of TF 449.

I have only been in the Army for twelve years, plus a few months, some active duty time, most National Guard M-Day time. However, I have been around many other Soldiers and with my MOS being a 27D (Paralegal Specialist), I have seen my share of “unprofessional” Soldiers as well. I have only been assigned to four different commands in my military career, this being the fourth and I have to say, my fellow Soldiers on this deployment thus far have the best “spirit” about them than I have ever seen.

I am not just talking about the upcoming holiday spirit, but the spirit of camaraderie, the spirit of unity, and the spirit of companionship. Since our first initial mobilization orders, I have witnessed outstanding attitudes in the Soldiers of TF 449. From our chain of command down, Soldiers have completed missions, tasks, duties, and other responsibilities with minimal, if no complaints and with great attitudes. It all really started the moment we became a mobilized unit; the opportunity to go home and have weekends with family, then at Fort Bragg, being able to stay at the Academy and have passes to be with family, then in Kuwait, only being there for a short period of time.

I believe this motivation from our chain of command to take care of the Soldiers has helped create a great atmosphere for us to truly have “good spirits” about this deployment and our mission. That has continued to be

displayed here at Camp Striker, Iraq. With some of our responsibilities being more difficult than others and shifts being at different hours, I have still witnessed Soldiers doing the right thing, taking care of one another and genuinely enjoying their part in this “big picture” mission.

The holidays are always a difficult time to endure when away from loved ones, family and friends. We were barely here and it seemed that Thanksgiving was thrust upon us and now Christmas is only two weeks away. The holiday “spirit” is now coming out in the Soldiers of TF 449. I’ve seen, heard and possibly, smelled the holiday season among our work areas and in our CHUs. One particular Soldier (who will remain nameless) has made it near impossible to NOT have the holiday spirit and ensured that the TF 449 Legal Office would have holiday decorations. This display of cheer has made it possible, maybe even uplifting, to be away from home during the holidays.

The holiday spirit and the encouragement of fellow Soldiers’ attitudes thus far has made this deployment very pleasing (if that is possible) for this particular Soldier. I cannot say enough about my fellow Hurricanes and supporting units. It may have been different if we were to have arrived here in Iraq in the middle of the summer with no holidays to prepare for. We may have been still full of unity and companionship, but lacking the “spirit” I have seen. Here’s hoping that this wonderful display of camaraderie continues until we are safe and secure back home with our loved ones. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all of the TF 449 Soldiers.



Staff Sgt. Kristian S. Hall
Paralegal NCOIC



Happy Birthday National Guard!



Members of Task Force 449 pose for a picture after running 3.72 miles in celebration of the 372nd National Guard Birthday. Sgt. Michael T. Conner, an Aberdeen, M.D. native, finished the race in approximately 24 minutes and was the first Task Force 449 member to cross the finish line. Way to go Sgt. Conner!

