



Volume 1

# First In Flight



October 2008



Specialist Kenneth Flowers demonstrates the proper way to shoot from the standing position during a reflexive fire brief prior to practicing at the range. Reflexive fire is the skill of not only being able to recognize an enemy in a split second and being able to open fire, but also to recognize a friendly and hold fire. Reflexive fire was a skill covered during mobilization training at Ft. Bragg, N.C.

Photo by Pfc. J. N. Walthall

## 449th prepares for deployment



Staff Sgt. Melodie Hunt practices reflexive fire at Ft. Bragg during mobilization training. Photo by Pfc. J.N. Walthall

By Capt. Katherine Zyla

Soldiers with the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade (TAB) are preparing for mobilization through extensive training both at Camp Butner and Ft. Bragg.

The 449th TAB, consisting primarily of aviation and support Soldiers, began their training with individual weapons qualification, map reading and radio communication classes. The instruction

built upon individual skills. Soldiers were grouped together and participated in battle drills, to include reactions to an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), enemy contact, ambush and indirect fire. The exercise also included soldiers completing mounted and dismounted combat training. These exercises proved to be very useful to soldiers preparing for deployment.

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# SOLDIER SPOTLIGHT PRESENTS....

STAFF SGT. DEANNA ABERNATHY



*Photo by Pfc. J.N. Walthall*

By Pfc. J.N. Walthall

Preparing to leave loved ones when deploying is rarely an easy task. For Staff Sgt. Deanna Abernathy, that is more than an understatement. Abernathy, a Kenly native, has been with the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade for the ten years that she has been enlisted.

She is currently the Training Non-Commissioned Officer for the 449th TAB and one of the three Flight Operations section chiefs. Her husband, David Abernathy, is in the Active Guard Reserve and serves in the military intelligence field. He is a member of the 1-30th Aviation Reconnaissance Battalion. The Abernathys have a two-year-old son, Seth, and their newest addition, five-month-

old Reagan.

Abernathy graduated from North Johnston High School and was a member of the band but is quick to remind you that "it was before the band was geeky." She later attended Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and plans to complete her degree while deployed.

While leaving those close to her heart may be a difficult task for Abernathy, the actual deployment is not.

"As crazy as it sounds, I'm really excited about the deployment," said Abernathy. "It's something I've always wanted to do. I'm excited to finally be able to do what we have always been training for."

This will be Abernathy's first deployment and although she

will miss her family, "I'm glad my first deployment is with the 449th"

As for the time prior to the actual deployment, Abernathy's biggest plans are creating as many memories with her family as she can in the time allotted.

"I just want to spend as much time with my family as possible," said Abernathy. "I also want to catch up with old friends and just ask that they keep me in their prayers."



Staff Sgt. Deanna Abernathy participates in the units company exercise training at Ft. Bragg, N.C.

Photo by Capt. Katherine O. Zyla





# THE OFFICER SCOPE PRESENTS...

## 1ST LT. DORIAN J. TURNER



First Lt. Dorian J. Turner reviews warrior skills with fellow soldier prior to completing Improvised Explosive Device training at Ft. Bragg, N.C. Photo by Pfc. Lisa M. Irvin

By Pfc. J.N. Walthall

First Lt. Dorian J. Turner, a native of Columbia, S.C., is the Automation Officer for the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade (TAB) and a self-proclaimed Marine brat and philosopher.

Turner attended Marion Military Institute in Alabama where he commissioned as a 2nd Lt. and joined the North Carolina National Guard in 2003. He was assigned to the 113th Field Artillery Brigade, where he served as a Signal Platoon Leader. He went on to complete his bachelor's degree in Biology at North Carolina Central University in 2007.

While with the 113th FA, Turner spent a month in North Hammond Parish in Baton Rouge, L.A., supporting Hurricane Katrina victims in the state's security office and providing communica-

tions support.

Turner then transferred in May 2008 to the Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh, N.C., where he served as the National Training Center Project Officer for the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team (BCT).

It was there that he heard about the 449th TAB and volunteered to deploy for the first time with them to Iraq in November.

"I saw soldiers in my company coming and going," explains Turner as to why he decided to volunteer to deploy. "I figured that as an officer I should do as my troops did and I could definitely use the experience," said Turner. "What better unit to go with but the 449th?"

Just as unique as it is to find a soldier volunteering for deployments, Turner is also very excited about the experience.

"I keep picturing myself in this 'hooah hooah' battle scene," says Turner. "Even though I know it's unrealistic, I'm still excited to go and take care of my soldiers and make sure everyone is taken care of and comes home safely."

For Turner, who graduated from Dutch Fork High School and participated in track and football, the job as an officer and a soldier is never over.

"I try to bond with my soldiers outside of the military," says Turner. "Anything that affects

them, be it military related or not, is my concern."

This may explain why Turner can frequently be seen throwing around a football with fellow soldiers or being sought out when soldiers 'just need to talk to someone.'

His informal counseling sessions may be where Turner developed his "five course meal relationship" philosophy, which starts with the appetizer, when you are getting to know someone, and end as most meals do, with the dessert, or in lamen terms, marriage.

Some of Turner's hobbies include drawing, writing, both poetry and stories, teaching himself to play the saxophone, and singing, but he swears that his only solos are in the shower.

When asked what songs could be found on his iPod, Turner listed several Christian artists such as The Truth and Lecrae, which would

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First Lt. Dorian J. Turner philosophizes about the "five course meal relationship" to fellow soldiers during a break at I.E.D. training at Ft. Bragg, N.C. Photo by Pfc. Lisa M. Irvin



## Bringing new meaning to the term “battle buddy”

### New Army regulations allow married couples to deploy together

By Pfc. J.N. Walthall

With a new Army comes new rules and regulations. One such regulation is not only shocking former Soldiers, but also adding to the stability of their dual military marriages and in turn slowly whittling away at the astronomical divorce rate for military spouses.

Chief Warrant Officer Richard D. Fortune and Sgt. Audra B. Fortune are one of the couples who get to experience this new policy. Not only do they get to omit the separation process that can be so detrimental to couples, but they also are allowed the possibility of sharing the same living quarters while in country.

Sgt. Fortune, a native of

Bladenboro, N.C. along with her parents Leonard and Deborah Sapp, and CW5 Fortune have been married for three years and credits the National Guard for their union.

The Fortunes are members of the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade (TAB) in Morrisville, N.C. Sgt. Fortune is a flight operations specialist and CW5 Fortune is an Aviation Maintenance Officer as well as an AH-64D Apache Helicopter pilot.

“She was assigned to drive my truck, and I remember thinking how tiny she was to be driving such a big vehicle,” said CW5 Fortune. “So as a harmless joke, I went and got a telephone book and put it in the driver’s seat for her. She took it well though, which attracted me to her, and I somehow ended up

driving her around that day,” finishes CW5 with a chuckle.

While members of the 1-130th Aviation Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB), also in Morrisville, N.C., the Fortunes ended up deploying together to Afghanistan, but not as a couple.

“He still got on my nerves then,” said Sgt. Fortune with a smile. “Yea, but I was growing on her like a fungus,” finishes CW5 Fortune.

Shortly following the deployment Sgt. Fortune got out of the National Guard to get a taste of the civilian world, and her husband moved to the 449th TAB. However, Sgt. Fortune returned to the N.C. National Guard and the 1-30th ARB two years later as Mrs. Fortune.

**SEE FORTUNE PAGE 6**



# Promotions and Awards



*Sergeant Michael T. Conner was promoted from the rank of Specialist to Sergeant September 28. Conner is a native of Aberdeen, M.D. and is pictured with Brigade Commander Col. Paul Barbee.*



*Major Mark E. Almond was promoted from the rank of Captain to Major September 2. Pictured here with his wife and daughter, Almond, is a native of Apex, N.C.*



*Sergeant 1st Class Kenneth A. Colvin was promoted from the rank of Staff Sgt. to Sgt. 1st Class September 3. Colvin is a native of Raleigh, N.C. and is pictured with his family and friends.*



*Specialist Sa'Honey L. Finney was promoted from the rank of Private First Class to Specialist September 3. Finney, who is pictured receiving her rank from 1st Sgt Andy Ford, is a native of Camden, N.C.*

## TURNER, (CONT.)

help to explain his optimistic view on life and his membership in Alpha Iota Omega, a Christian fraternity.

Turner, true to the military brat ways, has wanted to be in the military for as long as he could remember.

"I've always wanted the structure of the military," says Turner. "Every Halloween I dressed up as a Marine, but when I got of age, the Army called me first."

"I feel like I'm a natural leader," explains Turner as to why he chose the officer track in the military. "I wanted to sharpen those skills and ensure others that have confidence in me that I can take care of them."

In case you were wondering about what a philosopher such as Turner has to say about the deployment and the military in general, it is quite simple.

"Stay ready so you won't have to get ready," states Turner.

## DEPLOYMENT, (CONT.)

They integrated scenarios that forced Soldiers to assess situations, react to threats and work as a team. While at Ft. Bragg, the soldiers also learned key warrior tactics such as reflexive fire. Reflexive fire proved to be an essential skill to master because it taught the soldiers the importance of being able to quickly assess a situation and only fire upon threats, while keeping civilians and friendly foreign nationals safe.

The exercises were fairly new to some soldiers and for many soldiers' their first experience with the unit. Lieutenant Col. Michael L. Fields, Deputy Commander, 449th TAB, said the Soldiers' performance was excellent and they immediately came together as a team and worked through all obstacles.

Fields also stressed the importance of aviation units understanding basic infantry tactics.

"Basic survival skills are the same; aviation units have to under-

stand infantry tactics and apply them in all aviation operations," said the N.C. Baptist Hospital employee, "We support ground units and in order for us to be fully effective, we must understand what they do."

Sergeant Jared A. Peyton, a first time deployer, works in Flight Operations, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and has been in the North Carolina National Guard for seven years, said the training has been very beneficial. Peyton said he learned new infantry techniques and enjoyed hearing the unit veterans' experiences.

"The training is exactly what we need before our deployment, and I think my fellow Soldiers feel the same way I do," said Peyton, a Kingston, N.C. Native.

## Lt. Col. Fields relinquishes command in ceremony

By Pfc. J.N. Walthall

Lieutenant Col. Michael L. Fields relinquished command of the 2-130th Aviation Battalion (AVN BN) to Lt. Col. Todd Hunt October 3, during a change of command ceremony at Ft. Bragg, N.C.

The 2-130th AVN BN is comprised of an Aviation Operations



Lieutenant Col. Michael Fields hands off the battalion flag to Col. Paul Barbee, the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade (TAB) commander, during the ceremony. Photo by Pfc. J.N. Walthall

Battalion (AOB) in Fort Bragg, N.C.; UH-60L Blackhawk Helicopter Company in Salisbury, N.C.; a Search and Surveillance detachment in Raleigh, N.C.; and the 638th Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Detachment (AVIM) in Morrisville, N.C.

The battalion's primary mission is to provide full spectrum avia-

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### FORTUNE (CONT.)

It was then that Sgt. Fortune and her husband received orders to deploy to Iraq, but at different times.

"The way our orders were set up, we would not see each other for about two years because she would be coming as soon as I was leaving," said CW5 Fortune.

Fortunately for the Fortunes, a position became available in the 449th TAB that would allow Sgt. Fortune to deploy with her husband.

"We jumped at the chance," said CW5 Fortune. "With both of us being full time, we spend enough time apart as it is. Now we can go together, and leave together, and there's less disruption in the family as a

whole."

Some people against the new-found policy feel couples deploying together will cause a distraction in an area that certainly does not allow for anymore distractions than there already are. However, the Fortunes tend to disagree.

"In our uniforms there is that level of professionalism," says Sgt. Fortune. "I say 'yes sir', and 'no sir', and I salute him as I would any other officer and he treats me as he would any other Non-Commissioned Officer."

"Some people may think she will get favoritism or something because she's married to me," adds CW5 Fortune. "However, that just isn't so. The boundaries are there, and well defined, and we don't cross them."

"If anybody were to walk into our office," says Sgt. Fortune. "But we don't work together," interjects CW5 Fortune. "It's a hypothetical office," Sgt. Fortune explains to her husband. "But I don't even work in an office," offers CW5 Fortune. "The point is, no one would know we were married unless they knew us or asked," finishes Sgt. Fortune in a rush to get her point across before her husband playfully interrupts again.

When the duty day is over however, the Fortunes have a truly remarkable relationship. Their playful jokes and harmless bantering seem to keep the couple young and their relationship strong.

"His sense of humor is what drew me to him, he makes me laugh," says Sgt. Fortune. "And she keeps me straight, so I'm glad I get to spend this experience with my best

## FIELDS, (CONT.)

tion operations to include: air traffic control, airfield operations, flying utility and search and rescue mission and conducting intermediate level aircraft maintenance. These missions are performed in a state and federal capacity.

Fields said, the UH-60L Blackhawk Company is a prime resource for state response efforts and has deployed to Iraq, supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We create relationships with the active duty components as well as the Air Guard," said Fields, who lives in Winston-Salem, N.C. "That way we are ready to respond and we have the resources needed to respond to an array of incidents."

"The 2-130th AVN BN is a highly demanded unit," said Fields, who has been the battalion commander for the past five months. "It is a demanding and challenging job [air traffic control and jobs like it]. It presents a

unique challenge for everyone to stay proficient, stay trained, and to maximize their availability as a resource for the state and federal government."

Fields relinquished command to deploy with the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade (TAB) from Morrisville, N.C.

Fields has taken the position as the



Lieutenant Col. Todd Hunt, a native of Cary, N.C., holds the battalion flag during the change of command ceremony October 3, where he became commander of the 2-130th Aviation Battalion of Salisbury, N.C. Photo by Pfc. J.N. Walthall

Deputy Commander of the 449th TAB..

For soldiers such as Staff Sgt. Melodie Hunt, a former member of the 2-130th AVN BN and current member of the 449th TAB, this is a sign of a good mission.

"It was a pleasure working with him then, because I knew we would get

things done and be efficient," said Hunt. "And for those same reasons it will be a pleasure to work with him downrange."

Fields has been in the North Carolina National Guard since September of 1984, when he enlisted as an AH-1 Cobra Helicopter Mechanic.

He went on to complete Officer Candidates School in 1986, Aviation Officer Basic Training in August 1987, Initial Entry Rotary Wing Training in June 1988, and the AH-64A Qualification course in September 1988. He graduated from North Carolina State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Technical

Education and also holds a Masters Degree in Industrial Technology from East Carolina University. He is a Master Aviator and is qualified to fly in the UH-1, OH-58, AH-64A, and the UH-60L Blackhawk Helicopter. This will be Fields' third deployment; his preceding deployments include the Gulf War and a deployment to Bosnia.

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## FIELDS (CONT.)

Fields feels as though this deployment will be a good one and is glad he gets the chance to deploy with the 449th TAB.

"I am excited to work with the highly skilled staff at the 449th," said Fields. "I feel that we will make a difference in country. However, my primary mission is to make sure everyone gets home safe."

Hunt, who is replacing Fields as battalion commander, was previously the commander for the 1-130th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB) in Morrisville, N.C. He also serves as the State Aviation Officer for North Carolina.

"He will be missed," said Sgt. Audra B. Fortune, a member of the 449th TAB, and former member of the 1-130th ARB, when it was under Hunt's command.

"He was a very fair commander and truly put his soldiers as his number one priority, which I know will carry on into his new unit."

Hunt graduated from East Carolina University with a bachelor's degree in Geology and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1988. He completed the Aviation Officer Basic Course and went on to

complete the Winter Warfare, Maintenance Manger and Aviation Officer Advance Courses. He is a Master Army Aviator and qualified on the UH-1 Huey Helicopter, OH-58 Kiowa Helicopter, and AH64A and D model helicopter. He recently attended the LUH-72 Lakota Helicopter qualification course. Hunt has earned an array of medals for his services to the military, which range from the Air Assault Badge and the Parachutist Badge to the Air medal and

Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

Although the position as commander of the 2-130th will be a challenge, it is a challenge that

Hunt is looking forward to.



Lieutenant Col. Todd Hunt hands off the battalion flag to the acting Command Sgt. Major during the change of command ceremony where he became commander of the 2-130th AVN BN. Photo by J.N. Walthall

"I hope to help this unit gain and maintain strength," said Hunt, a native of Cary, N.C. "I see that this unit has a lot of great potential, and I look forward to working with them."



## A picture is worth a thousand words....

## What do these say?



Captain Veronica E. Beltran, Assistant S-4 Officer and Hope Mills, N.C. Native, and Staff Sgt. Ronald A. Graham, Data Systems Integrator and Goose Creek, S.C. Native, completed a combat scenario at the Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC) and successfully evacuated their patient. Photo by Capt. Katherine O. Zyla



Private 1st Class Eric Hutchins climbs out of the mock humvee during training at the Forward Operating Base Patriot. The Humvee rollover training is a part of the pre-deployment training at Ft. Bragg, N.C. and helps develop soldiers' necessary skills in case of a humvee roll over. Hutchins is a LaGrange, N.C. native. Photo by Pfc. J.N. Walthall



Private 1st Class. Richard W. Benedict returns fire during a simulated ambush during Improvised Explosive Device training at Ft. Bragg, N.C. Benedict is a native of Newton Grove, N.C. Photo by Pfc. J. N. Walthall



Capt. Michael E. Verdi poses for a quick picture while on a ride on the UH-60L Blackhawk Helicopter. Verdi is a native of Highpoint, N.C. Photo by Capt. Katherine O. Zyla

First in Flight is a monthly newsletter produced for the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade by the 449th Public Affairs Office. The Public Affairs Office is staffed by Captain Katherine Zyla and Pfc. Jasmine Walthall. If you would like to add to this publication, please contact Pfc. Jasmine Walthall at: [jasmine.n.jacobs@us.army.mil](mailto:jasmine.n.jacobs@us.army.mil).