



FALCON FLYER

3RD CAB ARRIVES IN AFGHANISTAN



January 2010

FLIGHT SCHEDULE - JAN 2010

THE ROAD TO AFGHANISTAN

This issue of the Falcon Flyer reviews the deployment process of the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade from its early training at Hunter Army Airfield and Fort Stewart to the transfer of authority ceremony at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

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Photo by Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Sergeant First Class Virgil Green, E Co., TF Brawler takes part in high intensity training as the Soldiers of 3rd CAB train on Fort Stewart and Hunter in preparation for deployment.



Photo by Spc. Monica K. Smith

PAGE 12 - TRAINING ON THE TEXAS-NEW MEXICO BORDER

Soldiers from the 3rd CAB spent eight weeks during the summer cycling through a two-week training exercise called Falcon Focus at Fort Bliss, Texas.



Photo by Spc. Monica K. Smith

PAGE 18 - MOVIN' ON UP

The 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, arrived in Afghanistan and quickly set to the business of letting everyone know who was in town.

FALCON FLYER

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Bagram
Lt. Col. Monica Harwig
Command Sgt. Maj. Regina Rush-Kittle

COVER PHOTO

A MEDEVAC Black Hawk from C Co., Task Force Knighthawk, TF Falcon, flies over the Afghanistan countryside Dec. 2.

Photo by Spc. Grant Marzolf
Full Story on Page 8



Photos by Spc. Monica K. Smith

First Sergeant James Fife, A Co., TF Knighthawk, serves a helping of turkey on Thanksgiving Day at the Marne Cafe with other TF Falcon leadership.

FALCON 6 SENDS...

Col. Don Galli
CAB Commander

Soldiers, Family Members and Friends of Task Force Falcon-
Happy New Year!

As the new year dawns, everywhere I look in Task Force Falcon I am inspired by the dedication, professionalism and selfless service of the Soldiers in the Marne Air Brigade. I am confident based on what I see that we can and will make a difference in this fight for Afghan liberty.

On a daily basis, I see Soldiers planning and flying missions, fixing and fueling helicopters, supporting and serving their fellow Soldiers. You can look back with pride to 2009 and celebrate the Marne Air Brigade's many accomplishments. This coming year will also be trying, but one thing is certain: We will be victorious. We will build on our success as we carve out our piece

of history in Afghanistan.

The year we have just left behind was difficult, yet historic for the Dog Face Soldiers of the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade and the 3rd Infantry Division. We did the hard work necessary to prepare to deploy again – this time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. We are both proud and humbled to be the first combat brigade from the 3rd ID to join the fight to help give the people of Afghanistan hope for a better future.

This time of year is when we begin anew and make resolutions to be a better person, better father, mother, sibling, spouse, Soldier or leader.

As we turn the page to 2010, all of us in Task Force Falcon must resolve to do our part to ensure the freedom of the Afghan people from this insurgency. We must also resolve to do the things that make us the most lethal, most feared and most effective combat aviation brigade in our Army – fly smart, shoot straight and speak the truth.

Marne Air!



Photo by Spc. Monica K. Smith

(From left) Lieutenant Colonel William Cristy, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, deputy commander, TF Viper Commander Lt. Col. Mike Musiol and Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Felicioni, TF Knighthawk Commander Lt. Col. Thomas Smedley and Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Blair, TF Lighthorse Commander Thomas VonEschenbach and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Lemke, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon Commander, Col. Don Galli and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley, TF Brawler Commander Robert Ault and Command Sgt. Maj. Stuart O'Black, TF ODIN-A Commander Lt. Col. John Hinck and Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Sparks, TF Workhorse Commander Lt. Col. Woodard Hopkins and Command Sgt. Maj. James Snyder, TF Dark Knight Commander Col. Monica Harwig and Command Sgt. Maj. Regina Rush-Kittle, pose for a command group photo on the flight line Jan. 2 on Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

FALCON 7 SENDS...

Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley
CAB Command Sergeant Major

Greetings from the deployed headquarters of the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade in Bagram, Afghanistan. The men and women of Task Force Falcon have completed the transfer of authority from Task Force Thunder and have assumed responsibility for all Army aviation operations in support of Combined Joint Task Force 82. I can unequivocally say the Marne Air Brigade has and will continue to provide full spectrum, world class aviation support to all units in Regional-Command East.

As a combined task force we have integrated our sister services, National Guard, Reserve and international partners into a lethal fight-

ing force contributing to the ongoing counterinsurgency operations here in Afghanistan. It says a lot for our division when we see our partners choosing to wear the 3rd ID patch on their right shoulder.

It is no accident that we have once again been called upon to serve at this most critical time, this time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. As the first brigade-sized element to serve in Afghanistan from the 3rd Infantry Division we will uphold the legacy of the most decorated division in our Army's history. As Col. Galli likes to say, "The 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade is famous for starting fights and finishing them." I know we will be successful in providing premiere air-ground integration to CJTF-82.

We are blessed with the best and bravest in our ranks and your support of both our deployed troops and our families at home is a pivotal factor in their success. Don't ever forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of our great country. God bless America. Rock of the Marne – Marne Air!



Photo by Spc. Monica K. Smith

Task Force ODIN Commander, Lt. Col. John Hinck, introduces a few of his Soldiers to Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Ashton B. Carter, Dec. 11 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

YEAR OF THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER 2009

Army NCO - "No one is more professional than I..."



TASK FORCE TALON: Master Sgt. Ramon Almonte, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, has had an average physical fitness score of 300 or above consistently for 15 years. While taking care of himself, Almonte also helps other Soldiers increase their PT score and has said "The more challenging the Soldier, the more motivated and focused I become to ensure that individual is able to get over their difficulties and pass the APFT." In addition, Almonte is as technically proficient as any communications chief I've ever met in my Army career. He has often filled the position of HHC first sergeant when needed and recently received an Army Commendation Medal for properly conducting the Heimlich maneuver on another Soldier, possibly saving that Soldier's life. – CSM Richard Stidley, TF Falcon

TASK FORCE VIPER: Sgt. James Duke, Company D, takes pride in his service to the Army and his country. Duke began the deployment coordinating the movement of equipment with enthusiasm that sparked a sense of mission importance resulting in precise tracking and zero losses. Once in country Duke established his work area becoming an asset not only to aviation units but also to other FOB units. Duke also took an additional duty: Reenlistment representative – meeting more than half of the required mission reenlistments in a 45-day period. In addition, Duke serves as the company wellness advocate utilizing his ability to have his hand on the pulse of the company to resolve Soldier issues. Duke truly is the epitome of today's Army NCO. – 1st Sgt. Eugene Oday, B Co., TF VIPER



TASK FORCE KNIGHTHAWK: Staff Sgt. Matthew Kingsbury, Company B, stands out in a world where the Chinook is the workhorse aircraft for the brigade. He is the go-to NCO to ensure all the nonrated crew members are trained and stay up to speed. He is the NCO that never sleeps and is always out there on the ramp making sure the Soldiers are ready to execute the mission. It is quite feasible that a lot of Soldiers that are spread out in the valleys of RC-East in Afghanistan might not receive their resupply if it were not for NCOs like Staff Sgt. Kingsbury. –CSM Patrick Blair, TF Knighthawk

TASK FORCE LIGHTHORSE: Sgt. 1st Class Derek Brown, Troop E, is a true leader of Soldiers. In addition to competently managing forward arming and refueling points, Brown also engages his Soldiers and their Families with an unmatched, humbling leadership style. He respects his Soldiers, looks after their needs and never coddles them. Brown shows respect and in turn teaches his Soldiers how to respect themselves, each other and their superiors. He knows when and how to use the carrot and stick and his counsel is sought by all ranks. He is the epitome of what NCO's have been, are today and should be in the future. He is what makes our Army strong. – CSM Richard Lemke, TF Lighthorse



In recognition of their commitment to service and willingness to make great sacrifices on behalf of our Nation, the Secretary of the Army established 2009 at the Year of the NCO. Throughout the past year these NCOs set the example within Task Force Falcon in education, fitness, leadership and pride of service.

TASK FORCE BRAWLER: Sgt. Jeremy Brown, Company B, performs beyond any crew chief or flight instructor I have seen. He has a keen sense of situational awareness and his leadership allows the company to sustain an outstanding operational readiness rate and 100% mission accomplishment rate. He trained 15 new door gunners while maintaining training and currency requirement of 22 additional nonrated crew members. He currently leads nonrated crewmembers in combat flight hours and missions flown in support of the war on terror. Brown entered 2009 as a great crew chief and developed into one of Army Aviation's best young leaders before the year's end. – CSM Stuart O'Black, TF BRAWLER

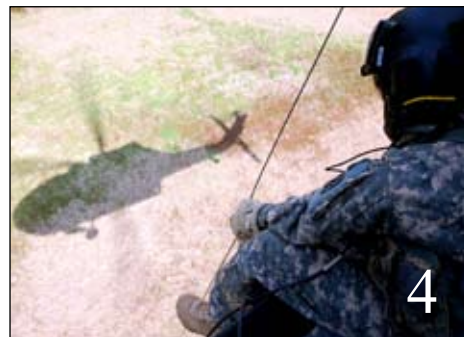


TASK FORCE WORKHORSE: Staff Sgt. Erland Gentillon, Company B, embodies what Soldiers need in an NCO. He is fair, open minded in every situation and to him no Soldier is a lost cause. He sets an example his Soldiers respect and strive to emulate by working regardless of what time it is, making sure his Soldiers are safe and the mission is accomplished. He always looks to improve himself and his Soldiers on a professional and personal level. He never lets his Soldiers accept defeat and always encourages them to get back up regardless of how hard the fall. He never shows weakness in character or position but is the "ace in the hole" his leadership needs when times are tough. The Army benefits exponentially from NCOs like Staff Sgt. Gentillon – CSM James Snyder, TF Workhorse

TASK FORCE ODIN: Sgt. Jonathan Nease is a competent leader that is a subject matter expert at his job and develops his Soldiers. Using his experience, Nease trained Soldiers in the section before deployment. While in theater, Nease established a great working relationship with multiple agencies. During TF Thunder's redeployment, Nease was hand selected to work in the brigade tactical operations center in order to help the brigade with manning. During his time working in the brigade tactical operations center, Nease continued to find ways to better the aerial reconnaissance support team. Nease's advice is requested across the board and is greatly respected. He is a true leader and all Soldiers should aspire to be like him. – Staff Sgt. Christopher Ryan, TF Odin



TASK FORCE DARK KNIGHT: Sgt. 1st Class Jason T. Almond, Company B, not only knows the regulations and doctrine, but knows how to use it to accomplish the mission and take care of his Soldiers. When the 321st Military Intelligence Battalion began getting an influx of personnel from all other MI units in the Army Reserves to prepare for mobilization, Almond worked diligently to ensure all signal intelligence personnel received the most updated training to meet mobilization requirements. If there is a problem a Soldier is having and Almond does not know the answer, he is known to research the problem and find what resources are out there to assist that Soldier. That is a true testament of what today's NCO is all about. - 1st Sgt. Edward Canamar, B Co., TF Dark Knight



HERE WE GO AGAIN

Story and Photos by Spc. Monica K. Smith



1. Soldiers guard their prisoners while waiting for a Black Hawk to land during high intensity training, April 8 at Fort Stewart. 2. Sergeant Patrick Wiley, A Co., TF Workhorse, instructs two Soldiers on how to properly put on mission oriented protective posture gear during chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) training, March 26 at Fort Stewart. 3. Specialist Desiree Bisordi, Headquarters and Support Company, TF Workhorse, goes over how to write a CBRNE report during CBRNE training, March 26 at Fort Stewart. 4. A Black Hawk casts a shadow as Sgt. Matthew Gomes, C Co., MEDEVAC, TF Knighthawk, monitors the higher performance rescue hoist as it lifts a 250-pound block March 19, at Hunter Army Airfield. 5. Private 1st Class Nicholas Long (left) and Spc. Joseph Wadzeck, members of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery, look at targets as Apaches from TF Viper fly overhead, Nov. 24 at the range on Fort Stewart. 6. A Soldier covers a doorway while his teammates, all from E Co., TF Brawler, prepare to enter during their urban terrain (mout) live-fire exercise Aug. 26, at the shoot house at Fort Stewart. 7. Specialist Lavern Smith (left) and Spc. Chris Northington, both Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, TF Lighthorse, work with Mark Schwegler, a DataPath field service representative, on a satellite trailer transportable, April 7 at Hunter Army Airfield. 8. Specialist William Barton, prepares a casualty training aid for MEDEVAC during Warrior Task Training, a battalion-wide lanes training exercise, Feb. 11, at Hunter Army Airfield.

Soon after returning from a 15-month deployment to Iraq, the Soldiers of the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade prepared themselves for another deployment, this time to Afghanistan. Facing new challenges in an unknown theater, leaders in the 3rd CAB, Task Force Falcon, began to prepare their Soldiers for what they would be facing in Afghanistan. Taking advantage of their location at Hunter Army Airfield and the close proximity of Fort Stewart, TF Falcon used their position to effectively and efficiently train their Soldiers in the training areas they had readily available.

As early as December of 2008, just four months after returning, Apache units from 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, Task Force Viper, were training with infantry units at Fort Stewart.

"The focus of the training event was to begin air-ground integration training with the ground brigade combat teams," said Lt. Col. Michael Musiol, commander of TF Viper.

In February 2009 the 603rd Aviation Support Battalion, Task Force Workhorse, conducted battalion-wide warrior training on Hunter Army Airfield where companies were divided into squads and sent through lanes which tested 14 warrior tasks as the squad moved from the base point to the evacuation point.

In March 2009 the MEDEVAC company of 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, TF Knighthawk, took to the Savannah skies as they trained their air crews on hoist operations – a procedure aviators use when they are unable to land their aircraft. Instead they will lower a medic down to the patient and then bring the patient up to the aircraft, said Sgt. Matthew Gomes, crew chief with the MEDEVAC company.

"We use this asset to pick up people but we have to practice our technique and control so we don't injure anyone," said Gomes.

Other training included chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) training and military operation on urban terrain life-fire training which both took place at Fort Stewart. However, the signal company of the aviation brigade set up exercises in their front lawn to train their Soldiers on the brigade's communication systems.

"The purpose is to validate and make sure the new upgrades work," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Albert Chavez, C Co., TF Workhorse.

"They have to track satellites, pass data, pull up the internet, and have everything working."

In addition to training Soldiers on how to perform their duties the various training events also developed unity within the group. As each Soldier learned their role, teams and units became more cohesive said Sgt. William Alford, squad leader in E Co., TF Brawler, during the live-fire training at Fort Stewart.

"This training also serves as a team builder," said Alford. "We do this over and over and over again so they know what they're doing. They are fast learners and there is constant improvement. We are developing our (tactical technical procedures) and the Soldiers are becoming more fluid with each training exercise. Now they move like clockwork."



Soldiers from E Co., TF Brawler, search for opposition forces while a Black Hawk conducts aerial reconnaissance during high intensity training, April 8 at Fort Stewart.

TRAINING IN FLORIDA



Spec. Monica K. Smith



Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Green

CAMP BLANDING, FLORIDA

The morning began with thin clouds descending on the already wet airfield Feb. 2 at Camp Blanding, Fla. It wasn't long till a light rain began to descend with the clouds. A Soldier sighed and said, "If it ain't rainin', we ain't trainin'."

It was the first day of door gunnery training for crew chiefs in Company C, 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, TF Brawler at the crew combat range.

"This is harder than shooting on the ground because we're moving and so is the target," said Pfc. Jacob Oliver, a new crew chief with C Co., TF Brawler. "And you're worried about the wind a lot more."

The crew combat range included a series of tanks in the rear of the range, and a target running a quarter of a mile across. To train, each of the three TF Brawler Black Hawks TF Brawler flies across the range with the crew chiefs shooting from the right side of the aircraft. Each participating crew chief is given 400 rounds to fire from the M-240H machine gun mounted in their door. The first 200 rounds are fired in the first fly-by to give them the opportunity to practice, and another 200 rounds to qualify during the following flight. They then repeat the range again at night using the night vision goggles.

White, who evaluates the gunners in his aircraft, says many new gunners are nervous about shooting but the nervous-

ness goes quickly.

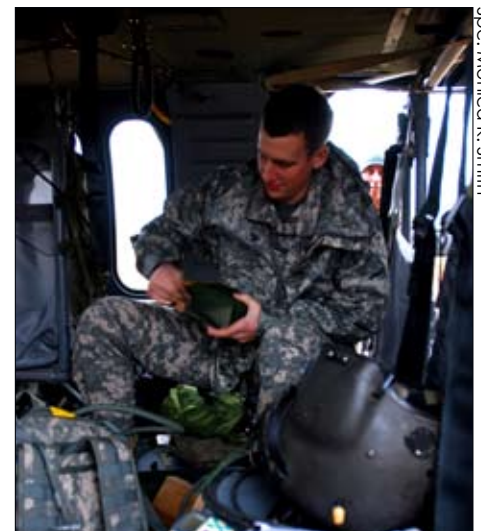
"There are other things to think about while all this is going on," said White. "We're evaluating them on their ability to operate the weapon – loading and clearing, but also their ability to do all this while doing their duties. They have to be able to do everything from start up to shut down and still be able to defend the aircraft."

In addition to training aviators, Camp Blanding provided the Soldiers of TF Falcon an opportunity to experience a complex combat environment through reality-based scenarios. Personnel were required to render tactical combat care while under direct hostile fire.

The action unfolded on the simulated battlefield in a village named Pinner with a 'fallen angel' behind enemy lines. Soldiers' physical and mental stamina was put to the test as they acquired and maintained a warrior's mindset when faced with every conceivable disaster possible.

Senior leaders said they intended for the training to closely resemble the effects and stresses of a real battlefield.

"The training was very realistic," said 1st Sgt. Kenneth E. Clary, B Co., TF Brawler. "Everyone hopes to never apply these skill sets developed but it is essential for the combat crews to have a better than exposed awareness to the challenges associated with a downed aircraft situation."



Spec. Monica K. Smith

(Clockwise from top left) 1. Sergeant. Andrew White, (left) coaches Pfc. Jacob Oliver, both crew chiefs with C Co., TF Brawler as he fires a M-240H from the side of a Black Hawk, Feb. 2, at Camp Blanding, Fla. 2. Soldiers with TF Brawler perform tactical combat care during training, Feb. 21, at Camp Blanding. 3. Private 1st Class Jacob Oliver, crew chief with C Co., TF Brawler, unloads rounds as he prepares to participate in door gunnery training, Feb. 2, at Camp Blanding, Fla.

AND COLORDAO



Courtesy Photos



EAGLE, COLORADO



While Soldiers and aviators trained at Fort Bliss, other flight crews traveled to the Army's High Altitude Aviation Training Site (HAATS) at Eagle, Colo., to experience the combination of cold weather and high altitude. The training, offered by the Colorado Army National Guard, includes high altitude aviation training and requires flight crews to train on maneuvers not used daily when not deployed.

"HAATS gave us the ability to train up in a similar altitude and environment that we would face in Afghanistan," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Michael Balke, safety officer for TF Falcon.

Soldiers trained on power management of their aircraft and performance planning. Because the terrain and altitude at HAATS is similar to that in Afghanistan, air crews learned how their aircraft would react dur-

ing their deployment.

"You went through with no idea how your aircraft is going to react to altitude and wind," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Chris Batt, standardization officer for TF Falcon. "An instructor took you through and you received individuals skill that you didn't have before."

Task Force Falcon deployed three times to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and many of the returning flight crews were only familiar with low altitudes and high temperatures. With the elevation in Savannah being 41 feet above sea level, many flight crew members were not accustomed to the Colorado heights of 6,500 feet to 14,000 feet.

"Not only were most of our experienced pilots accustomed to Iraq, we had new pilots who have only flown in Savannah," said Balke. "HAATS gave us the training we needed to deploy."

(Clockwise from top left)

1. A Chinook crew chief from B Co., TF Knighthawk, guides a Chinook as it performs rear wheel landings March 5 at High Altitude Aviation Training Site at Eagle, Colo. 2. A MEDEVAC Black Hawk with C Co., TF Knighthawk is covered in snow as Soldiers conduct cold weather and high altitude training, March 3 at HAATS. 3. A Chinook conducts a pinnacle landing at HAATS, March 5. 4. Two Black Hawk pilots with TF Knighthawk conduct a preflight check March 3, during high altitude aviation training at HAATS. 5. A Chinook with B Co., TF Knighthawk conducts frontwheel landings as part of training, March 5 at HAATS.

TRAINING ON THE TEXAS-NEW MEXICO BORDER

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC. MONICA K. SMITH

Finding organization in the midst of what seems like chaos was one of the many goals of Falcon Focus, an eight-week training exercise for the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade. Falcon Focus, which began in May of 2009, would bring each of the CAB's four line battalions out to Camp McGregor, Fort Bliss, Texas, for a two-week iteration to train on various mission sets while giving Soldiers an opportunity to experience working at high altitudes.

"The purpose ... was to conduct realistic training focused on challenging aircrews on missions at altitude with mixed airframes incorporating fire and maneuver techniques they will encounter in future deployments," said Lt. Col. Mike Musiol, commander of Task Force Viper. "By using this approach, we were able to standardize procedures and gain a greater understanding of the capabilities and limitations of each aircraft."

This particular training was unique to the CAB. Instead of each battalion or squadron focusing on their aircraft and their primary mission, the aviation brigade divided its resources amongst each of their three flight battalions and one flight squadron creating a CAB of task forces. For example, though traditionally 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment only has Kiowa Warriors, under the new configuration, the new Task Force Lighthorse now has elements of the other battalions. This gives TF Lighthorse the additional resource of Black Hawks, Chinooks, MEDEVAC and Apaches to utilize under their command.

"It's essentially a smaller version of the CAB – a mini-CAB," said Lt. Laura Naigle, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, TF Lighthorse, and TF Lighthorse battle captain. "We're becoming a multifunctional task force where we deal with all the same mission sets and airframes across the board. The goal is to increase our strength because each task force will be fully capable of completing the mission of the CAB from their location."

At Falcon Focus, the task forces practiced conducting aviation tasks such as pinnacle landings, flying at altitude, live hoists and aerial ranges. In addition, ground teams trained on responding to downed aircraft recovery, qualified at M9 and M16 ranges and



also took part in combat lifesaver recertification and mass casualty exercises. In addition the task forces also trained their Soldiers to respond to vehicles hit by improvised explosive devices and conducted CLS situational training exercises.

The final culminating exercise brought all the training together with an air-ground integrated event. The exercise involved two Chinooks, three Black Hawks, an Apache, Kiowa Warrior and MEDEVAC working with Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade, 37th Armor Regiment stationed at Fort Bliss. The exercise evaluated the Soldiers ability to maneuver on the ground and the air crews ability to provide support by scouting, providing security and even medically evacuating patients.

"The most challenging mission we will most likely conduct is an air movement of ground personnel who will be conducting operations for an extended period of time," said Musiol. "The exercises we conducted allowed us to execute the air assault planning process with detailed planning and rehearsals, while integrating all aircraft into the mission, executing mixed aircraft teaming, close combat attacks, medical evacuation operations, responding to a fleeting target, and eventually conducting a removal of the ground element. The integration with an actual ground maneuver commander, conducting command and control of a large volume of aircraft in a confined battle space, and tracking the mission in the (tactical operations center) was the goal."

By the end of the mission many Soldiers said they believed the training went well. For Spc. Sven Bowsher, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Viper, who works in the flight operations office, the multi-aircraft training was educational.

"It's very seldom that we get to do this kind of training," said Bowsher, who has deployed twice in his six years in the Army. "During a regular (field training exercise) we don't really get to see what actually happens. We don't see how long it takes for MEDEVAC to spool up and go, or how long it takes for all the units to work together. This was the closest training to deployment I've ever seen."



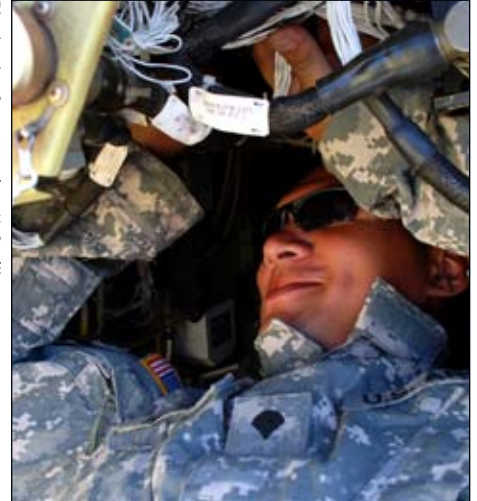
(Top right) Staff Sergeant Donald Dedmon, C Co., MEDEVAC, TF Knighthawk, prepares a Soldier for evacuation May 13 during TF Lighthouse's rotation of Falcon Focus at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Bottom from far left) 1. Soldiers from HHC, 1st Brigade, 37th Armor Regiment, stationed at Fort Bliss carry a Soldier to a MEDEVAC Black Hawk May 28 during Falcon Focus. 2. A Kiowa Warrior with TF Knighthawk flies toward the range, June 11 at Camp McGregor, Fort Bliss, Texas. 3. Sergeant Daniel Schmitt, C Co., TF Knighthawk, stands next to a patient as a MEDEVAC Black Hawk lands, during training May 13 while participating in TF Lighthouse's rotation at Falcon Focus. 4. Major Matthew Ketchum, S3 with TF Lighthouse, gives a mission brief to flight crews May 13 during Falcon Focus. 5. Specialist Scott Tant, HHC, TF Brawler, takes times from his logistics duties to participate in a mass casualty exercise by having moulage placed on his leg by Spc. Lisa Cremeans, medic with TF Brawler as part of TF Brawler's training at Falcon Focus, June 23. 6. Soldiers from TF Brawler participate in a mass casualty exercise June 23 during Falcon Focus. (Background Image) Soldiers from Company A, TF Knighthawk conduct a post flight check on their Black Hawk after a day of high altitude training, May 27 at Camp McGregor, Fort Bliss, Texas.



TRAINING ON THE TEXAS-NEW MEXICO BORDER CONTINUED...



Photos by SPC. Monica K. Smith



Training at Camp McGregor, Fort Bliss, Texas: (Clockwise from left) 1. A Chinook from B Co., TF Knighthawk takes off after performing an insertion of ground forces May 28. 2. Specialist Carlos Widbin, F Troop, TF Light-horse, works on a compartment blower, June 11. 3. A Black Hawk from A Co., TF Knighthawk, practices penicillate landings May 27 during Falcon Focus. 4. Patients are loaded into a Chinook as a MEDEVAC Black Hawk lands during a mass casualty exercise as part of TF Brawler's training event at Falcon Focus, June 23.



Photos by SPC. Monica K. Smith



(Clockwise from top left) 1. A Chinook from B Co., TF Knighthawk, takes off after dropping off Soldiers participating in Falcon Focus, May 27. 2. Soldiers with TF Knighthawk load ammunition on a Kiowa Warrior, June 11. 3. Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade, 37th Armor Regiment, stationed at Fort Bliss exit a Chinook with B Co., TF Knighthawk, May 28 while participating in Falcon Focus. 4. Specialist Matthew Sirard, E Co., TF Viper, pulls guard as a Kiowa Warrior with TF Lighthorse lands on the mountainside near him during Falcon Focus, May 27.



Afghanistan Aviation Training Exercise

Story and photos by Jeremy Wise

While it seemed impossible to train and plan for every scenario Soldiers would encounter in an era of persistent conflict, leaders of the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade gathered to assess their wartime readiness level during their capstone training event. It was the brigade's Afghanistan Aviation Training Exercise held at Fort Rucker's Seneff Aviation Warfighting Simulation Center for a total of two weeks last September.

Over the past 12 years Directorate of Simulation staff has conducted 69 exercises to prepare aviation brigades for combat situations. According to Maj. James Brinson, DOS, deputy operations officer, the CAB's 300 Soldiers were the largest group participating in an ATX there.

Brigade Commander Col. Don Galli said having such a large simulation was essential to the brigade's mission. "It's a tremendous team-building event. We have a lot of staff officers (who) are new to the brigade. What a great way to get experience."

Despite being the Army's most deployed CAB, the unit had not served in Afghanistan before.

Staff Sergeant Jason Mawhorrr, Head-

quarters and Headquarters Company, 2-3 Avn., intelligence analyst, said deploying to Afghanistan would provide a different challenge than deploying to Iraq, something he has done twice.

"Iraq is more level. It's a lot easier to track," he said. He also noted how the simulation prepared him for a mountainous new challenge.

Richard Campbell, DOS training specialist, said an additional 69 personnel provided observations and or aided in the simulation.

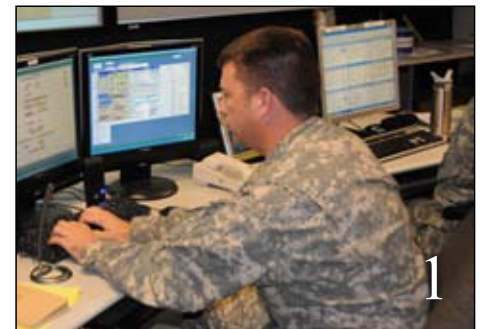
Galli said DOS personnel and subject-matter experts from Afghanistan provided pilots with the very terrain they would see when on the actual battlefield, and staffs guided aircraft through poor weather and other conditions they would expect to encounter.

When applied correctly the virtual environment technology successfully trains individuals, crews, and units to achieve and sustain proficiency in performing their missions. The exercise focused on command and staff elements from company to brigade level and tactical operation centers were simulated at company, battalion and brigade levels.

"This helps me to better understand the capabilities and limitations of our CAB in combat situations," Galli said, noting staff members learned how to communicate effectively to solve problems they encountered.

While only 300 Soldiers represented the 3rd CAB during training nearly 3,000 CAB Soldiers actually deployed.

"The 3rd CAB is the Army's aviation surge force. When the Army has a tough mission, they call the 3rd Infantry Division, and we are the aviation brigade for the 3rd ID," Galli said. "We provide speed, surprise, mobility, intelligence and firepower in support of the ground force commander."



1. Major Matthew Ketchum, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, Task Force Lighthouse, TF Falcon conducts mission planning on Command Post of the Future (CPOF), September 2009. 2. Task Force Viper Commander Michael Musiol (center) conducts an air mission briefing for an air assault operation, September 2009. 3. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joe Wicenczik, A Co., TF Lighthouse, TF Falcon, simulates an AH-64 Apache flying mission in Afghanistan as part of the largest Directorate of Simulation exercise to date at Fort Rucker's Seneff Aviation Warfighting Simulation Center September 2009.

COIN & COVENANT CEREMONY

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Green

Rapid deployments and separation from loved ones has become the norm for countless military couples during this era of persistent conflict. But Chaplain (Maj.) Grace Hollis-Taylor, Task Force Falcon, brigade chaplain, said she is here to tell all that "this too shall pass, all you need is faith."



Nearly 30 married couples from diverse backgrounds and cultural beliefs met at the Hunter Chapel Oct. 27 for a Coin and Covenant Ceremony, all of whom shared a common endeavor - growth in their covenant marriage relationship.

Hollis-Taylor presided over the ceremony and explained to those present that she too is married and knows exactly what they are about to go through. She'd just walked in from seeing her husband off for his deployment to Iraq as she prepares for Afghanistan.

"Chaplains are not exempt, I feel their pain and I know how difficult it is being separated from the ones you love," said the chaplain.

For the past few months, Soldiers of the 3rd CAB have been deployed to the war-torn east region of Afghanistan. But, prior to leaving Hunter Army Airfield and their loved ones behind the soon to be distance was bridged by a coin-sized pendant bro-

ken in two - the Mizpah Coin.

In a recent email Amanda Wills said, "I wear it almost daily." Wills is the spouse of 1st Lt. Walter Thomas, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Talon, executive officer,

Inscribed on the coin is a verse from Genesis 31:49 and it reads, "The Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another."

The program aims to link religious fidelity and marriage fidelity all while encouraging couples to keep a practical but memorable keepsake in each other's absence.

Wills said even though it's her first deployment with her husband of nearly three months she remains close to him.

"I liked the cards we laminated with our commitments on it and I actually keep it in my wallet," explained Wills. "I look at it often to see his handwriting and read those nice words. It's a pleasant reminder. It's his promise to me."



1. Warrant Officer Edwin Reyes, air traffic and air space manager, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Brawler, TF Falcon, reads his commitment to his wife, Limary Ortiz during the Coin and Covenant Ceremony, Oct. 27, at Hunter Chapel. 2. First Sergeant Christopher Wood, HHC, TF Talon, TF Falcon, places half of the Mizpah Coin pendant around the neck of his wife Kimberly. 3. Executive Officer 1st Lt. Thomas, HHC, TF Talon, TF Falcon, and wife Amanda Wills observe their individual half of the Mizpah Coin pendant. 4. Chaplain (Maj.) Grace Hollis-Taylor, TF Falcon, brigade chaplain, commends Sgt. Brian Jones, D Co., TF Knighthawk, and his wife Jessica for sharing their commitment with the group.

MOVIN'

Story and Photos by Spc. Monica K. Smith

As the countdown to Afghanistan came closer to zero, equipment and personnel began to move out of Savannah by air and sea.

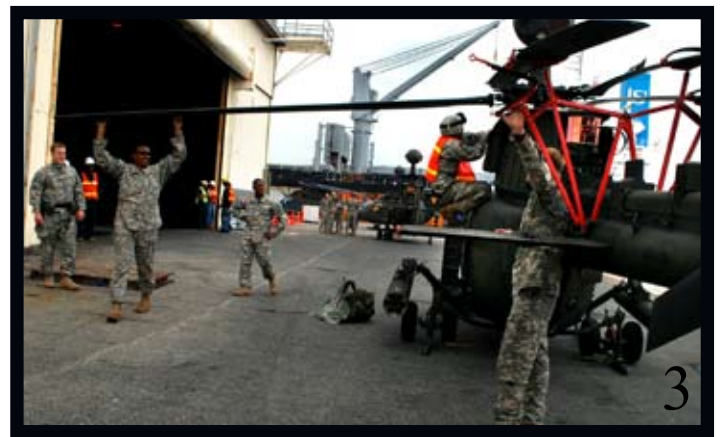
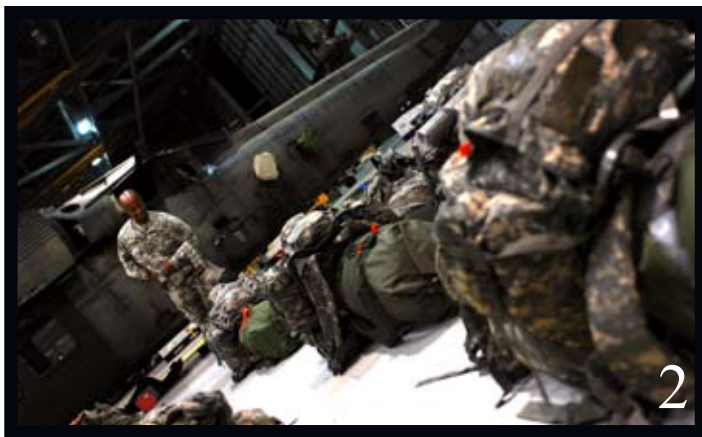
Soldiers packed up their equipment, gear and aircraft as they readied themselves and the brigade for deployment. Gear was issued to Soldiers and equipment was organized and placed into containers. Equipment and gear not immediately needed upon arrival in Afghanistan was packed into containers and shipped months in advance. Aircraft flew from Hunter Army Airfield to the Georgia Port Authority's Ocean Terminal where aircraft were prepared for shipment. It was there the Apache's blades were folded for the first time in the 3rd CAB's history.

"That was the first time the brigade has folded blades instead of taking them

off for transport," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Martin Calkins, TF Falcon maintenance officer. "We had a kit we used, and once we got to (Afghanistan) we handed them over to (159th CAB, 101st Airborne Division) for them to use on their redeployment."

In September Company C MEDEVAC, Task Force Knighthawk, kicked-off the deployment cycle to relieve an outgoing National Guard unit. Their early departure came almost two months before the main body flights of the Marine aviation brigade.

"All National Guard units have a deployment cycle of 12-months long, including their mobilization time, which



1. TF Falcon Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley (left) and commander Col. Don Galli case the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade colors, Dec. 4 at Hunter Army Airfield. 2. A Soldier from C Co., MEDEVAC TF Knighthawk, organizes his gear while waiting to deploy with his company to Afghanistan, Sept. 2 at Hunter Army Airfield. 3. Soldiers from the TF Lighthorse fold the blades of a Kiowa Warrior, Oct. 6 at the Georgia Port Authority's Ocean Terminal in preparation for the brigade's deployment to Afghanistan.

ON UP

results in about nine months (deployed) before having to go home,” said TF Falcon Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley. “Because their cycle is off from the CAB, we sent out our MEDEVAC Company ahead to take on the missions of the outgoing National Guard MEDEVAC company.”

The MEDEVAC company worked up to the moment of their departure. Following their deployment ceremony Soldiers immediately set to work preparing a MEDEVAC aircraft for deployment that evening. The remainder of the aviation brigade began deploying in October with the brigade casing their colors on Nov. 4.

“Today marks a turning point for the 3rd CAB,” said Col. Don Galli, brigade commander, during the casing of the colors ceremony. “After three deployments to Iraq within the last six years, we now embark on our fourth deployment, making us the most deployed aviation brigade in the United States Army and the first combat brigade from the 3rd ID to fight in Afghanistan.”

As the various departure times for main body flights arrived, Soldiers made their way to the brigade hangers to say goodbye to their family and friends. After stops across the globe, the aviation brigade Soldiers landed in Manas Kyrgyzstan before their final flight into Afghanistan.



(Above) Soldiers from C Co., MEDEVAC, TF Knighthawk, quickly prepare a MEDEVAC Black Hawk for transport to Afghanistan after their deployment ceremony, Sept. 1 at Hunter Army Airfield.



(Above) Soldiers from TF Falcon work to fold blades of Apaches deploying with the brigade to Afghanistan, Oct. 6 at the Georgia Port Authority's Ocean Terminal

“After three deployments to Iraq within the last six years, we now embark on our fourth deployment, making us the most deployed aviation brigade in the United States Army and the first combat brigade from the 3rd ID to fight in Afghanistan.”
- Col. Don Galli

THE FALCON HAS LANDED

Story and photos by Spc. Monica K. Smith

The month of November was full of transition as Soldiers left Savannah, Ga., and arrived in Afghanistan.

(Right) Colonel Don Galli, (right) commander of the 3rd CAB, and the 3rd CAB Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley, salute the brigade colors during a transfer of authority ceremony, Nov. 24, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

While the majority of the 3rd Infantry Division returned to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division's Combat Aviation Brigade made history as they uncased their colors in a transfer of authority ceremony, Nov. 24 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

"The 3rd Infantry Division is a world-renowned fighting organization that is known for two things: Starting a fight, and finishing one," said Col. Don Galli, commander of the 3rd CAB. "The Marne Air Brigade is dedicated to that purpose as the first combat brigade from the 3rd Infantry Division to join the fight in Afghanistan."

Soldiers from the 3rd CAB, Task Force Falcon, began arriving in late summer in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Taking over for 159th CAB (Task Force Thunder), 101st Airborne Division, the 3rd CAB fell under the 82nd Airborne Division's operations in and around Regional Command East. As Task Force Falcon took control they paid homage to the outgoing Task Force Thunder.

"(The 159th CAB has) served our nation and the cause of freedom in Afghanistan with honor and you have added to the legend of the 101st Airborne Division,



Air Assault,” said Galli. “Your brigade has set the standard by which all of Army Aviation will be measured. Today, as we transfer authority from Task Force Thunder to Task Force Falcon, the records we seek to break are yours.”

Breaking tradition, the brigade had their TOA ceremony before any of the battalions. Task Force Viper conducted their TOA ceremony on Thanksgiving Day at Forward Operating Base Salerno, followed by TF Workhorse’s TOA ceremony Nov. 29 at Bagram Airfield and TF Brawler and Lighthorse on Dec. 5 and 6 respectively. TF Knighthawk was the last of the task forces to have their TOA ceremony, Dec. 10 at Bagram Airfield. It was only fitting that TF Knighthawk was the last of the task forces to transfer authority because it was the first to send Dog Face Soldiers into this fight with the early deployment of Company C MEDEVAC, TF Knighthawk.

It wasn’t long after the TOA ceremonies of the task forces that Marne Air took to redecorating their new home. Marne patches quickly replaced those of the 101st Airborne Division’s screaming eagle on the side of buildings, walls and even aircraft.

This deployment marks the brigade’s fourth deployment since 2003 in support of an Era of Persistent Conflict. The brigade’s previous deployments were during the initial invasion into Iraq in 2003, OIF III in 2005 and OIF V in 2007.



(Above) Task Force Command Sergeant Major Richard Stidley (left), removes the 101st Airborne Division combat patch from the arm of Col. Don Galli, commander of TF Falcon during a transfer of authority ceremony, Nov. 24 at Bagram Airfield. Galli has worn the Screaming Eagle patch for more than 20 years and has deployed twice with the 101st Airborne Division. As a display of support Galli had his former combat patch removed in order to replace it with the 3rd Infantry Division Marne patch.

(Left) Soldiers from the 3rd CAB present their colors during a transfer of authority ceremony, Nov. 24 at Bagram Airfield.

Task Force Transfers of Authority



Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly Green



1. TF Workhorse Commander Lt. Col. Woodard Hopkins (right) and Command Sgt. Maj. James Snyder take a slice of cake in celebration after their TOA ceremony Nov. 29 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. 2. Lt. Col. Hopkins (right) and Command Sgt. Maj. Snyder uncase their colors during their TOA ceremony Nov. 29 at Bagram Airfield. 3. TF Lighthorse leadership raise a flag after their TOA ceremony Dec. 6 at FOB Jalalabad. 4. TF Lighthorse Commander Lt. Col. Thomas Von Eschenbach salutes the task force command group and colors during their TOA. 5. TF Lighthorse Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Lemke (left) and commander Lt. Col. Von Eschenbach uncase the task force colors during their TOA ceremony.





Spc. Monica K. Smith



Spc. Monica K. Smith



Spc. Monica K. Smith



Sgt. 1st Class Dorian Edwards

(Clockwise from top left) 1. TF Brawler Commander Lt. Col. Robert Ault (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Stuart O'Black, salute the colors during their TOA, Dec. 5 at FOB Shank, Afghanistan. 2. Lt. Col. Ault looks upon his task force colors.

3. The companies of TF Brawler stand in formation during their TOA ceremony. 4. TF Knighthawk Commander Lt. Col. Thomas Smedley speaks during their task force TOA, Dec. 10 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.



Sgt. 1st Class Dorian Edwards

5. TF Knighthawk Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Blair (left) and Lt. Col. Smedley uncase their task force colors during their TOA ceremony. 6. TF Dark Knight Command Sgt. Maj. Regina Rush-Kittle (left) and commander, Col. Monica Harwig, salute their colors during their TOA ceremony, Nov. 16 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.



Sgt. 1st Class Dorian Edwards

7. TF Dark Knight Command Sgt. Maj. Rush-Kittle (left) and commander, Col. Harwig uncase their task force colors during their TOA ceremony. 8. TF Viper commander, Lt. Col. Michael Musiol (facing) and Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Felicioni uncase their task force colors during their TOA ceremony, Nov. 26 at Bagram Airfield.



Master Sgt. Mark Liggett

9. TF Viper commander Lt. Col. Musiol and Command Sgt. Maj. Felicioni salute the colors during their TOA ceremony. 10. Soldiers from TF Viper serve as the color guard for the TF Viper TOA ceremony.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Renny



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Renny



Master Sgt. Mark Liggett

SINCE WE'VE BEEN GONE

As always the 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, hit the ground running showing they were prepared for the fight. However, between maintenance work and flight, Marne Air Soldiers also found time to enjoy Thanksgiving and decorate for Christmas.



Spc. Grant Marzolf

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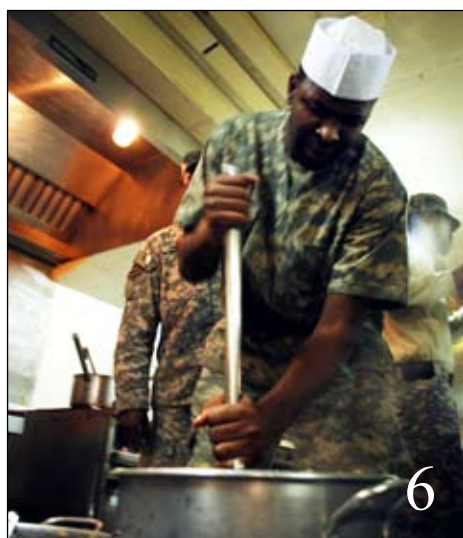
CW2 Robert Renny

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Green

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CW2 Robert Renny

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1. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Marquis Devane, A Co., TF Knighthawk, prepares to fly a Black Hawk Dec. 21 at Bagram Airfield. 2. TF Falcon Soldiers mount the Marne Air logo to the TF Falcon headquarters building, Nov. 24 in Bagram Airfield. 3. MEDEVAC Black Hawks with TF Knighthawk fly over the Afghanistan mountains, Nov. 25 before landing on the flight line on Bagram Airfield. 4. Staff Sgt. Matthew Currey (right), network system operator with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Falcon spends Thanksgiving reenlisting on the roof of the TF Falcon headquarters building, Nov. 26, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Currey, from Columbia S.C., reenlisted indefinitely. 5. Soldiers with TF Falcon work on a Black Hawk Dec. 2 at Bagram Airfield. 6. Sergeant Jerry Frost Headquarters and Support Company, TF Workhorse, stirs a pot while preparing Thanksgiving Day lunch at the Marne Cafe at Bagram Airfield.



CW2 Robert Renny

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Spc. Grant Marzolf

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Spc. Grant Marzolf

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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1. Clouds descend down the mountains as a Black Hawk sits on the flight line Nov. 30 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. 2. Sergeant David Bunty, B Co., TF Knighthawk conducts maintenance on an Apache, Dec. 16 at Bagram Airfield. 3. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Christopher Glasgow conducts a preflight check on a Black Hawk, Dec. 6 at Bagram Airfield. 4. Private first class Ronald Bittings, Troop F and Pfc. Matthew Wilson, D Co., both members of TF Knighthawk install a generator on a Kiowa Warrior, Dec. 16 at Bagram Airfield. 5. Sergeant Robert Volk, D Co., TF Knighthawk, loads a hellfire missile to an Apache, Dec. 16 at Bagram Airfield. 6. Specialist Mark Norwood, B Co., TF Knighthawk, conducts maintenance on an Apache engine, Dec. 16 at Bagram Airfield. 7. Sergeant Joseph Howard, D Co., TF Knighthawk works on a Black Hawk Dec. 6 at Bagram Airfield. 8. Specialist Michael Cunningham and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Andy Brooks, both members of B Co., TF Knighthawk, finishes an engine flush on an Apache, Dec. 16 at Bagram Airfield. 9. Specialist Nikki Harris, HHC TF Falcon, puts up Christmas decorations outside of her office at Bagram Airfield.



CW2 Robert Renny

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

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Spc. Monica K. Smith

3



Sgt. Scott Tant

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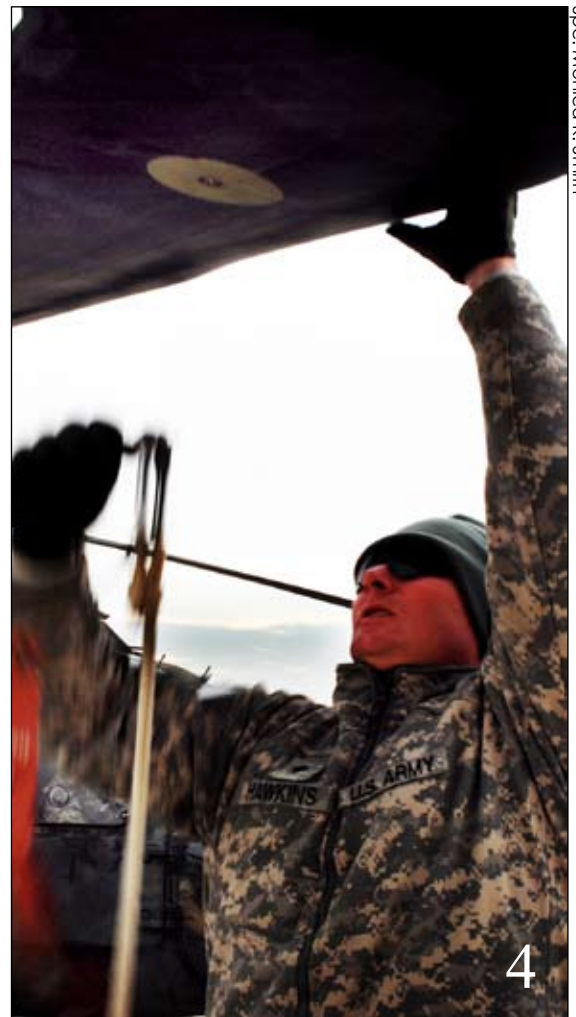
CW2 Robert Renny

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1. Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston, speaks to Soldiers during the “Hope and Freedom 2009” tour, Dec. 23 at Bagram Airfield. 2. Master Sgt. Ramon Almonte, HHC, TF Falcon receives an Army Commendation Medal from Lt. Col. William Cristy, deputy commander of TF Falcon, Dec. 8 at Bagram Airfield. Almonte earned the award for properly conducting the Heimlich maneuver on another Soldier, possibly saving that Soldier’s life. 3. Soldiers from HHC, TF Falcon, gather at the brigade headquarters to hold up Christmas cards sent to them from their family readiness group, Dec. 13 at Bagram Airfield. 4. Soldiers from TF Brawler organize incoming mail Dec. 24 at FOB Shank. 5. Soldiers from TF Knighthawk hang blades on a Chinook after changing out the swash plate on Christmas Eve on the flight line at Bagram Airfield.



Spc. Monica K. Smith



Spc. Monica K. Smith



Spc. Monica K. Smith



Sgt. Scott Tant



Spc. Grant Marzolf

1. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Chris Hinkle, TF Falcon tactical operations officer, explains the capabilities of various aircraft in TF Falcon during an air-ground integration class, Dec. 1 at the aviation chapel on Bagram Airfield. 2. Specialist Samantha Stuck, HHC TF Falcon, receives her first combat patch from Capt. Chris Rogers, Stuck's company commander, Dec. 12, at Bagram Airfield. 3. Sergeant Adam Bishop listens as Sgt. Scott Tant and Spc. Brian Wattenscheidt, all members of HHC TF Brawler, discuss the correct measurements and placement of the white stripes for the Marne patch, Dec. 4 at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan. 4. Specialist Daniel Hawkins, A Co., TF Knighthawk, removes the blade rope that harnesses the blade to the body of the Black Hawk before flight, Nov. 28 at Bagram Airfield. 5. The sun rises over the Afghanistan mountains, Dec. 17.

Parting Shot



Spc. Grant Marzolf

Chief Warrant Officer 2, Rick Campbell, A Co., TF Knighthawk, conducts engine start in a Black Hawk, Dec. 7, at the flight line at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.