



TAKIN' IT TO THE STREET

TF BRAWLER AND TF DARK KNIGHT
GET TO KNOW THEIR NEIGHBORS



FLIGHT SCHEDULE - MAY 2010



Spc. Monica K. Smith

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ANA Commandos train on how to call for fire during the Close Combat Attack Academy.



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TF Workhorse Soldiers begin grilling at 8 a.m. for Friday night's dinner meal: Surf and Turf.



Sgt. 1st Class Luke Lynch

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FALCON FLYER

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3rd ID Commander
Maj. Gen. Anthony Cucolo

3rd CAB Commander
Col. Don Galli

3rd CAB Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley

3rd CAB PAO
Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Green

Editor
Spc. Monica K. Smith

CONTACT
481.6597
HQCAB_PAOMail@afghan.swa.army.mil

TASK FORCE TALON
Bagram
Capt. Christopher Rogers
1st Sgt. Christopher Wood

TASK FORCE VIPER
Salerno
Lt. Col. Michael Musiol
Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Felicioni

TASK FORCE KNIGHTHAWK
Bagram
Lt. Col. Thomas Smedley
Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Blair

TASK FORCE LIGHTHORSE
Jalalabad
Lt. Col. Thomas von Eschenbach
Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Lemke

TASK FORCE BRAWLER
Shank
Lt. Col. Robert Ault
Command Sgt. Maj. Stuart O'Black

TASK FORCE WORKHORSE
Bagram
Lt. Col. Woodard Hopkins
Command Sgt. Maj. James Snyder

TASK FORCE ODIN
Bagram
Lt. Col. John Hinck
Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Sparks

TASK FORCE DARK KNIGHT
Bagram
Col. Monica Harwig
Command Sgt. Maj. Regina Rush-Kittle

COVER PHOTO

Cpl. Nicholas Niedbalski, squad leader for the E Co., TF Brawler ground combat platoon, pulls over-watch security while TF Brawler key leaders enter the village of Shulok, May 9.

Photo by Sgt. Scott Tant
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Members of an Air Force Parajumper unit practice repelling from a B Co., TF Knight-hawk Chinook, May 22, at Bagram Airfield.

FALCON 6 SENDS...

Col. Don Galli
CAB Commander

Soldiers, Family Members, and Friends of Task Force Falcon – Memorial Day has always been about Soldiers.

It started as Decoration Day and was set aside to commemorate Union Soldiers who had died in the Civil War. It was celebrated at the end of May to coincide with the reunification of the states. After World War I, it was extended to honor all American Soldiers who died in battle, including those Dog Face Soldiers who bravely held off the Germans at the Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne.

Back home in America and here in Afghanistan, we carry on that tradition by honoring the Soldiers who are serving in our ranks. We honor the 82nd Airborne Division, now returning home from a highly successful tour in Regional Command-East. We welcome the 101st Airborne Division, whom we will proudly serve under for the next six months. Most of all, we honor all of the Marne Air Brigade Soldiers and our 3rd Infantry Division brethren – our fellow Dog Face Soldiers - serving in Iraq.

In his famous Memorial Day speech in 1884, Oliver Wendell Holmes summed up what it means to fight and win a war: "To fight out a war, [Soldiers] must believe in something and want something with all your might ...," said Holmes.

More than 125 Memorial Days later, it still holds true that to

fight and win wars, Soldiers must believe in something bigger than themselves. They must believe in an idea. The Dog Face Soldiers in the Marne Air Brigade believe in supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States. They swore an oath not to a man or an institution, but to an idea. They swore to uphold the idea of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The idea of the United States has been supported and defended by Soldiers in all generations since our Founding Fathers. Our generation is no different. Our predecessors succeeded in defeating their incarnation of evil, just as we are facing down ours here in Afghanistan. Just as they were victorious, so will we be.

In the United States, Memorial Day serves as the unofficial start of the summer vacation season. We celebrate it with a long weekend, a trip to a beach or a lake, or just time at home with family. No matter how we celebrate, though, we take time to honor our fellow countrymen and women who have served, or are now serving, in harm's way. Our Wounded Warriors at Walter Reed and at VA hospitals around the country are never far from our minds. Neither are those who paid the ultimate price at Normandy, Baghdad, Kabul and everywhere in between.

Memorial Day is a time of reflection and dedication. It is a day when we celebrate those who are supporting and defending an idea that is bigger than all of us. But, in the end, Memorial Day has always been about Soldiers. And it always will be.

Marne Air! Rock of the Marne!
Falcon 6



Spc. Monica K. Smith

Col. Don Galli (left), commander of the 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, places the 3rd Infantry Division patch on the right shoulder of Lt. Col. Kevin Diermeier, incoming TF ODIN-A commander, June 7, at Bagram Airfield.

FALCON 7 SENDS...

Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley
CAB Command Sergeant Major

Hello again from Afghanistan! We're in the middle of what is called "120 days of wind" where the wind can reach speeds of more than 100 miles per hour. This obviously causes some trouble as the wind can make it hard to even walk, much less fly through, however you'll be proud to know our Soldiers, like always, have risen to the challenge while maintaining proper safety procedures.

At the same time our Soldiers are participating in job-specific training to maintain their technical skills making them proficient at their job. In addition our Soldiers are working to maintain their battlefield skills. Whether taking time to qualify at the range or participating in events such as TF Brawler's Leadership Certification Course – our Soldiers are maintaining the skills to stay fit to fight. The combination of sharp tactical and technical skills continues to

show why the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade is the most deployed aviation brigade in the Army.

With less than five months remaining in our deployment, I want this brigade to return the way it deployed, with 100% of our Soldiers. As a husband and father of three daughters, I recognize the importance of having support from family and friends back home. I know TF Falcon Soldiers are working extremely hard during this deployment, but I encourage you to take time to communicate with loved ones back home. Our families are part of the Marne Air Brigade and they require our time and attention just as much as our jobs do.

As always, I want to thank all the families and friends who continue to support us during this deployment. I can't express just how much morale is boosted when a Soldier learns they have mail. Thank you for taking the time to show your Soldiers that you care. Keep up the good work and we hope to see all of you soon.

Marne Air! Rock of the Marne!
Falcon 7



Spc. Monica K. Smith

Col. Don Galli (far left), commander of the 3rd CAB, and 3rd CAB Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley, (far right), pose for a photo with (from left) Combined Joint Task Force 82 Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel, CJTF-82 Deputy Commander of Support Brig. Gen. Clarence Chinn, CJTF-82 Deputy Commander Brig. Gen. Kurt Fuller, and CJTF-82 Commander, Maj. Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, after presenting the Bronze Order of Saint Michael, June 1, at Bagram Airfield.

SIGHT & PICTURE



Spc. Krystina Saft, D Co., TF ODIN-A, simulates calling in a nine-line medical evacuation request, May 10, at Bagram Airfield, during TF ODIN-A's Soldier/NCO of the Deployment Board.

Sgt. 1st Class Luke Lynch



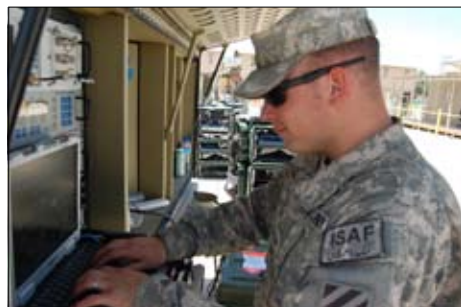
Spc. Monica K. Smith

Capt. Robert Molard, executive officer of HHC, 3rd CAB, prepares to shoot a basketball during the Talon Classic, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament involving Soldiers of the TF Falcon, May 16, at Bagram Airfield.



(Left) Spc. Luke Leija gives an IV to Sgt. Adam Morrell, both with HHC 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, May 22, at Bagram Airfield during the combat lifesaver portion of a forward observer class.

Spc. Monica K. Smith



Sgt. Roque Luna

Sgt. Michael Vancelette, a command post node operator with C Co., TF Workhorse, enters information to find the nearest satellite during CPN training, May 27, at Bagram Airfield.



Spc. Grant Marzolf

A Black Hawk with A Co., TF Knighthawk, flies over Bagram Airfield, May 30.

It's not easy being green:

Soldiers find support in midst of deployment

Story and Photos by Spc. Monica K. Smith

Deployments are hard. Soldiers spend months away from their families, missing key moments in their family's lives such as play-off games, graduations and anniversaries. Tensions can build between individuals and within units with few outlets of release. Our favorite puppet frog was right: It's not easy being green.

As the Task Force Falcon, completes their seventh month of deployment, TF Workhorse, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon's battalion chaplain offered a prayer breakfast, June 22 at the Falcon Cafe, for Soldiers stationed at Bagram Airfield with the goal of offering support and encouragement during the deployment.

"What I see is people don't take time to focus on what they need to focus on," said Chap. (Capt.) John Monahan, battalion chaplain for TF Workhorse. "If you focus on God and scripture and have faith that the Lord is your shelter and protector then you're not going to feel anxious. The prayer breakfast was a designed as a time to pray for God's protection from those who desire to do us harm and to ask for protection over those back home who support our efforts."

The event included readings from the Bible by Chap. (Maj.) Joseph Kilonzo, 62nd Medical Brigade, and Chap. (Maj.) Bill Lovell from the 82nd Sustainment Brigade. In addition there was singing provided by the Enduring Faith Chapel Gospel Praise Team and a devotional given by the division chaplain for Combined Joint Task Force-101, Chap. (Lt. Col.) Paul K. Hurley, who talked about the importance of being prepared.

"Before we deploy there are months of preparation," said Hurley. "At the time we just want to say, 'let us be there already,' but the preparations and the training is all good. It serves a purpose by preparing us and our families to be strong in the trials we may face."

Hurley went on to say Soldiers should strive to strengthen relationships with others, particularly with families to prepare themselves prior to emergencies and difficult situations.

"[The prayer breakfast] allows you to step back, like a timeout for the day," said Sgt. David Samuel, Headquarters and Support Company, TF Workhorse. "It takes you away from your job while you're here and asks you why are you here and how do you approach situations that come up?"

"What's the worst thing you can do when you're in pain? Go off by yourself and withdraw from society and the people who want to encourage you and have your best interest in mind," said Monahan. "So when we come together as a group like this, with people who want to encourage each other, you come away encouraged."



(Top) 1st Sgt. Spencer Foster, B Co., TF Knighthawk, leads Soldiers in singing during the TF Workhorse Prayer Breakfast, June 22, at Bagram Airfield. (Bottom) Chap. (Lt. Col.) Paul K. Hurley, Combined Joint Task Force-101 chaplain, gives a devotional on being prepared during the TF Workhorse, Prayer Breakfast, June 22, at Bagram Airfield.

CLOSE COMBAT ATTACK ACADEMY

STORY & PHOTOS BY
SPC. MONICA K. SMITH

After eight days of training, the inaugural class of the Afghan National Army Commandos celebrated Memorial Day with their graduation ceremony from the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade's Close Combat Attack Academy, May 31, at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

"I feel a tremendous sense of pride and honor today as we graduate these Afghanistan National Army Commandos from the first Close Combat Attack Academy," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Gross, senior instructor of the course, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon. "Especially on Memorial Day as we remember those service members that gave the ultimate sacrifice. I'm proud to carry on the legacy of those heroes that came before us. On this Memorial Day we remember those in the past, as we prepare and train for the future.

The ceremony included a speech from the TF Falcon executive officer, Maj. Brian Schaap, and each of the eight commandos received graduation plaques for their accomplishment in completing the academy.

"The goal of the academy was to further develop the skills of the ANA Commandos in the art of close combat attack with scout weapon teams, attack weapon teams and ANA Air Corps MI-35 [helicopters]," said Lt. Col. Douglas Carbone, officer in charge

of the Fires Support Cell, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon. "Close combat attack includes working with the ground combat forces to provide ground to air integration and to control and direct the rotary wing attack assets."

The Close Combat Attack Academy is one in a series of academies spearheaded by the 3rd CAB, to include the ANA Air Corps Crew Chief Academy, the Afghan National Security Forces Air Assault Academy and the ANAAC Flight Medic Academy.

"The goal of the ANA Crew Chief Academy and the air assault academy is to make [the ANA] fully functional on their own," said Gross. "The same goes for this academy because the more they can do on their own, the more we can let go and let them take control of their own country."

The ANA Commandos participated in five days of classes where they trained on basic map reading, methods for marking targets and how to call for fire. After those five days the commandos then participated in three days of hands-on training where TF Falcon Kiowa Warriors were used as the commandos called for fire and saw the accuracy of their training.

"When we're doing the training out there, they're actually calling our aircraft," said Gross. "Ultimately we want them to talk to the ANA helicopters. With the development of the ANA Air Corps, they now have MI-35 attack helicopters, so as they progress in their training there needs to be ANA Commandos or observers on the ground who can talk the MI-35s on to the target."

The idea of the academy began with the 3rd CAB, TF Falcon Commander Col. Don Galli, and was developed by Carbone and Gross to advance the ANSF Commandos capability to conduct air to ground integration on their own, like other Coalition forces.

"All of our scout weapons teams provide aerial reconnaissance," said Carbone. "They also provide close combat attraction to Coalition ground forces and by integrating ANSF Commandos, they will now be able to conduct the same type of missions as other Coalition forces."

(Left) The 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, Executive Officer, Maj. Brian Schaap, presents an ANA Commando with a graduation certificate during the 3rd CAB's Close Combat Attack Academy graduation, May 31, at Bagram Airfield. (Opposite page) Abdul Jamil, an Afghan National Army Commando, finds the azimuth during a course at the 3rd CAB, TF Falcon's, Close Combat Attack Academy, May 24, at Bagram Airfield.





Eyes in the Sky

Story by 1st Lt. Kaden Koba



CW2 Frank A. Stephens



Capt. Ryan Barrett

On the battlefield, ground Soldiers may not know what or who may be hiding behind the next turn or over the next hill. For those Soldiers operating in the Khowst bowl area of Afghanistan, the Kiowa Warriors of Troop B, Task Force Viper, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, provide scout reconnaissance and security and answer to the call sign "Pistols."

"We are requested by every ground force commander time and time again, simply because of the assets we bring to the fight," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Patrick Kelly, a maintenance test pilot, with B Troop. "We give the ground force commander peace of mind by facilitating security and recon missions while giving on call close combat flexibility."

The Khowst province in Eastern Afghanistan is surrounded by mountains on the north, west and south, and sealed by the Pakistan border on the east, creating what is called the "Khowst bowl." The Kiowa Warriors of B Troop, work to improve security in the area with their provisions of both reconnaissance and security to the ground troops.

"We have flexibility to do whatever the ground force commander needs and because of our ability to adapt we are constantly being thanked when we get to meet the guys we fly over," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Frank Stephens, a Kiowa Warrior pilot in B Troop.

The Kiowa Warrior can perform a wide range of missions making their versatility an incredible asset to TF Viper and the ground troops they support. A few of their missions include providing

route reconnaissance, area security and aerial escorts.

"We supply much needed photo recon for many of the missions in our [area of operations]," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Richard Blanton, a pilot with B Troop. "With our imagery the ground forces can produce much needed, and wanted, products for their missions."

The intelligence provided by the Kiowa Warriors enables the ground troops to make better decisions about the battlefield, resulting in more enemy forces killed and captured while minimizing friendly and civilian casualties.

"We are sent out into the battle space as the commander's eyes," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Frank Stephens, a pilot in B Troop. "Our spot reports and recommendations can make or break a mission. For air assaults we help find the [landing zones] that best suit the ground tactical plan and when the mission is complete we assist in coordinating the [pickup zone]. It's the little influences we have on all the different missions that occur in the bowl that contribute to the task force's success in our [area of responsibility]."

The Kiowa Warriors are renowned for their recon abilities, but armed with rockets, missiles and .50 caliber machine guns, these small, agile helicopters pack a deadly punch.

"We provide 24-hour quick reaction force coverage and reconnaissance throughout the province," said 1st Lt. Christopher Foley, platoon leader and pilot, in B Troop. "Our [quick reaction force] capabilities allow us to influence the battle anywhere in our [area of operations] within minutes, giving the ground force commander immediate close combat attack capabilities."

"I love my job for the simple fact that we support the ground guys who have the hardest job in the Army," said Blanton.



Capt. Ryan Barrett

(Above) Sgt. Joel Zahn, Sgt. Marcos Garza, and Sgt. Christopher Mertz, both crew chiefs with B Troop, TF Viper, and CW3 George Harris, a pilot also in B Troop, conduct maintenance on a Kiowa, May 10, on the FOB Salerno flightline. (Opposite page top) A Kiowa Warrior, with B Troop, TF Viper, flies off into the sunset over the Khawst province, May 16. (Opposite page bottom) Kiowa Warrior pilots, CW2 Patrick Kelly and CW2 Jeff Reilly, both members of B Troop, TF Viper, prepare for takeoff, May 16, from FOB Salerno.

HEAD OF THE FAMILY: 'Helldivers' provide direction for Task Force Knighthawk

Story by Task Force Knighthawk
Photos by Warrant Officer Robert Renny

Deployed Soldiers can have a multitude of priorities at any given moment. Between juggling work demands, scheduling times to conduct physical training, keeping track of online and correspondence courses, balancing finances and maintaining communication with family and friends back home, Soldiers in Afghanistan have their work cut out for them. Luckily for the Soldiers of Task Force Knighthawk, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, their Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the "Helldivers," acts as the nerve center supporting Soldiers as they support the fight.

"The purpose of HHC, TF Knighthawk, is to provide administrative support to TF Knighthawk and coordination between other task forces throughout Regional-Command East," said 1st Sgt. Richard Szlachta, HHC, TF Falcon. "We accomplish this in many



Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly Fawley, HHC, TF Knighthawk, reviews flight hours for nonrated crew members, June 11, at Bagram Airfield.

ways, thus allowing the Soldiers to focus on their missions and not on the smaller issues that may arise during the deployment. Our goal is to enable your enabler, meaning, we provide the Soldiers of TF Knighthawk the ability to focus on the task at hand, regardless of what that might be.”

The company is made up of Soldiers from many different backgrounds including communications, supply, and operations. The Soldiers of HHC, TF Knighthawk, ensure all the line companies have everything they need to successfully accomplish their missions.

“We do everything,” said Spc. Jacita Upshaw, a flight operations specialist in HHC, TF Knighthawk. “We issue radios, we give them weather and we are the voice of the battalion. Because we are the [operations office] everything goes through us. If you considered the task force as a human then HHC would be the heart that beats and pumps the blood to the rest of the companies.”

In addition to providing materiel for the companies within TF Knighthawk, the company also operates the task force’s tactical operation center. The responsibilities of the TOC include knowing what is occurring on the battlefield, analyzing data and planning and coordinating missions.

“In an extremely dynamic and kinetic war, it is imperative to have real-time battle tracking and constant communication with all line companies as well as keeping the chain of command informed of all missions,” said Capt. Ryan Welch, company commander of HHC, TF Knighthawk. “The TOC provides this vital role. It provides all aircraft with mission changes, meteorological

information, and updated threats throughout our area of operations ensuring 100 percent mission accomplishment.”

The Soldiers of HHC, TF Knighthawk, not only support Soldiers with military matters, they also provide spiritual, safety and medical assistance. The chaplain supports Soldiers by providing spiritual support in the form of chapel services, Bible studies and by offering a willing shoulder or a friendly ear to Soldiers. The safety and standardization officers constantly review missions, tactics, techniques and procedures in order to ensure mission success and Soldier safety. The task force’s flight surgeons say they take pride in ensuring each Soldier’s medical needs are met.

“Task Force Knighthawk’s flight surgeons are among the best in the Army,” said Welch. “From minor ailments to significant injuries they ensure each Soldier receives the proper medical care enabling them to return to duty and become combat multipliers. They also rotate through the MEDEVAC Company providing expert medical care to injured Soldiers, Coalition forces, and Afghans that require medical evacuation.”

“The company provides dynamic support and guidance necessary for the line companies to be successful in combat,” said Capt. Jeffrey Bess, the assistant operations officer for TF Knighthawk.

“Being a Helldiver is like being the head of an extremely large family,” said Bess. “From managing personnel status to tracking aircraft employment across the battlefield, we keep the companies on the road to success. ‘Helldivers’ are strong, assertive leaders who are not afraid to step up and take the fight to the enemy at a moment’s notice. Perfection is our goal, excellence is our watchword, no mission is too great, and no task is too small.”



Pfc. Sidney Brady, HHC, TF Knighthawk, base lines a computer to get it back up and running, June 11, at Bagram Airfield.



AROUND THE TASK FORCE



Spc. Monica K. Smith



Spc. Steven Rudy



Spc. Monica K. Smith



Warrant Officer Robert Renny

(Clockwise from top left) 1. Spc. Joshua Willoughby, A Co., TF Knighthawk, prepares for flight in a Black Hawk, May 29, at Bagram Airfield. 2. Spc. Kyle Noyes, A Co., 1-3, TF Lighthorse, fixes a tail rotor on an Apache, June 8, at FOB Jalalabad. 3. (From left to right) Spc. Richard Halstead, Spc. Michael Woning and Spc. John Chapman hold a blade while Spc. Jacory Williams, all members of D Co., TF Knighthawk, makes forward head adjustments on a Chinook, June 10, at Bagram Airfield. 4. Spc. Felicia Mickey, HSC, TF Workhorse, prepares dinner, May 9, at Bagram Airfield.



Sgt. Scott Tant



Sgt. Scott Tant



Warrant Officer Robert Renny



Sgt. Scott Tant



Sgt. Roque Luna



Spc. Monica K. Smith

(Clockwise from top left) 1. Staff Sgt. Kevin Bailey watches over a 'wounded' CW3 David Wells, both D Co., TF Brawler, during roadside medical training following a range, May 25, at FOB Shank. 2. An Apache with C Co., 1-3 Avn., TF Brawler, returns to FOB Shank, May 26, after a morning patrol of the Logar province. 3. Task Force Brawler's assistant civil affairs officer, 2nd Lt. Evan Mace, shares a laugh with local villagers after a successful resupply of a Sorkhab Valley school, May 31. 4. Sgt. Edward Wilson (left) shoots over CW2 Albert Chavez, both with HHC, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, during the Talon Classic, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament involving Soldiers of TF Falcon, May 16, at Bagram Airfield. 5. Spc. Joseph Hicks (left) and Sgt. Michael Vancelette, command post node operators with C Co., TF Workhorse, attempt to acquire a signal from a satellite in space during CPN training, May 27, at Bagram Airfield. 6. 1. Spc. Donald Burgett, D Co., TF Knighthawk, replaces a center console radio on a Chinook, June 10, at Bagram Airfield.

Son promotes mom before she redeploys

Task Force Lighthorse pilot promotes his mother to sergeant first class.

Story & photos by Sgt. Candice Pepple

Every Soldier leaves a deployment with memories, both good and bad. For Army mom, Sgt. 1st Class Pamela Honea, 180th Preventive Medical Detachment of the U.S. Army Reserves, she returned to the states on the 8th of May with the memory of her son promoting her before she left.

"Having Matt promote me was one of the highlights of my deployment," said Pamela. "I mean how cool is it? One, to see him but two, have him promote me and to salute him was an honor."

It is not uncommon to find a father and son deployed or even a brother and sister, but to have a mother and son deployed together, that is unusual. Even more unique is the opportunity for a son to promote their mother, as was the case when Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Honea promoted his mother, May 4 at Kandahar.

"It was a once in a lifetime opportunity," said Matthew. "How many Soldiers can say they were afforded the opportunity to promote their mother in combat? I felt very privileged, it was all most comical due to the fact it was family mixed with professionalism."

Pamela was stationed out of Forward Operating Base Stone in western Afghanistan and her son, Matthew, was stationed at FOB Fenty with Company C, Task Force Lighthorse, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon. Prior to the promotion the two were able to see each other in February when Matthew set up a special mission for his mom, "Operation Honea's Mom." It was the first time they were together in uniform at the same time in combat.

"I worked in [the plans shop] and had planned a deliberate operation around mom's arrival to Bagram," said Matthew. "Unfortunately the operation took longer than expected, so we launched two Black Hawks at night to go pick her up. It was a blessing in disguise because we rode in the back together which was more fun than if I had been up front flying."

Pamela's unit is returning to Beloit, Wisconsin, while Matthew will remain in country for another six months.

"I am just happy that I got to see him, while being in country, now he needs to hurry up and get his tour over with so he can come home to the family," said Pamela. "I am extremely proud of him and love that he is there serving our country, I am a very proud mother."

(From top) 1. CW2 Matthew Honea (left), C Co., TF Lighthorse, promotes his mother, Staff Sgt. Pamela Honea, 180th Preventive Medical Detachment of the U.S. Army Reserves, to sergeant first class, May 4, in Kandahar. 2. Mother, Sgt. 1st Class Pamela Honea, 180th Preventive Medical Detachment of the U.S. Army Reserves, and son, CW2 Matthew Honea, C Co., TF Lighthorse, share a family moment after her promotion, May 4, in Kandahar. 3. Newly promoted Sgt. 1st Class Pamela Honea, 180th Preventive Medical Detachment of the U.S. Army Reserves, salutes her son, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Honea (left), C Co., TF Lighthorse, out of respect, May 4, in Kandahar.



Soldiers renew their vows in Afghanistan

Task Force Brawler couple take time to focus on their marriage during deployment.

Story & photos by Sgt. Scott Tant

In the midst of a battle-torn country, two Soldiers took the time to renew their vows in a ceremony, May 12, at the Task Force Brawler Chapel on Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan. Specialist Brian Wattenschaidt, Company B, TF Brawler, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, and Spc. Jenifer Wattenschaidt, Company D, TF Brawler renewed their original vows in a quiet, half-hour ceremony, attended by close friends of the couple. The Wattenschaidts were originally wed on May 12, 2009.

"I think that renewing your vows means if you had the choice of getting married all over again, that you would gladly do it," said Jenifer, moments before the ceremony began.

The couple is stationed on FOB Shank and will complete their year-long deployment with the 3rd CAB – he is assigned as a door gunner on a Black Hawk; she works as a mechanic in the aviation maintenance section.

The Soldiers first met while both were on rear detachment with the 3rd CAB in the spring of 2008. They were married at the Chatham County Courthouse in Savannah, Ga. This deployment marks the second for Jenifer, and the first for Brian. Though the couple do not currently have any children, they are planning to build a family after redeployment.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Brian was asked what the reasoning behind doing a vow renewal in theatre.

"It was a rare opportunity to show our love for one another, a special memory we will always have," he replied.



(From top) 1. Spc. Jenifer Wattenschaidt (left), D Co., TF Brawler, and Spc. Brian Wattenschaidt, B Co., TF Brawler, renew their vows with Chaplain (Capt.) Abraham Sarmiento, May 12, at FOB Shank. 2. Spc. Brian Wattenschaidt (left), B Co., TF Brawler, and Spc. Jenifer Wattenschaidt, D Co., TF Brawler, renew their vows as Chaplain (Capt.) Abraham Sarmiento, May 12, at FOB Shank.



Spc. Monica K. Smith

FAST DESCENT

Soldiers from B Co., TF Knighthawk, had the opportunity to assist in repel training, May 22, at Bagram Airfield. The training allowed the Air Force parajumpers the opportunity to hone their skills at repelling on a small target and also allowed the Chinook pilots the opportunity to train on repelling missions and sharpen their hovering skills.



Under the guidance of Samar Gul (seated, in all white), interpreter for TF Brawler, and members of TF Brawler enjoy a meal of authentic Afghan food during a mock shura, May 7, at the TF Brawler Chapel on FOB Shank.

Understanding Afghan Culture

Task Force Brawler Soldiers participate in a mock shura to better understand the Afghan culture.
Story and Photos by Sgt. Scott Tant

In a move to help the leadership of his command better understand the Afghan culture, Lt. Col. Robert Ault, commander of TF Brawler, sponsored a mock shura, May 7, at FOB Shank. A shura, which in Pashto means 'consultative assembly,' is a meeting of elders, skilled individuals and sometimes outside visitors in which topics are discussed in order to resolve issues or problems. According to Afghan tradition, the shura is the only way of getting anything done in Afghanistan.

"You can't look at this the same way that Americans meet and discuss problems," said Samar Gul, cultural advisor

and interpreter for TF Brawler. "When you are at a shura, there are certain steps, certain protocol that must be followed or you are not going to accomplish anything."

In recent months, TF Brawler has attended more than 15 such shuras in local villages around the Logar region of Afghanistan. The high volume of shuras conducted necessitated a mock shura to instruct potential future participants on the proper customs and courtesies. During the mock shura the task force interpreters acted as the village elders, while the rest of TF Brawler's key leaders were

the "visitors" that the elders were hosting.

In addition to Ault and the interpreters, TF Brawler operations officer, Maj. Michael Stull and TF Brawler Command Sgt. Maj. Stuart O'Black acted as moderators for the shura, offering advice and direction for the attending staff.

Because of its large floor space the TF Brawler Chapel served as the meeting place. At a shura, chairs and tables are typically not used. All that is required is a large carpet for sitting on and either a picnic-style covering or plastic that acts as the table. Plates are not commonly used, so in some cases the food is placed



Samar Gul, cultural advisor and interpreter for TF Brawler, demonstrates the proper technique of eating rice without utensils to the TF Brawler key leaders during a mock shura, May 7, at the TF Brawler Chapel on FOB Shank.

directly on the plastic and eaten with the right hand.

Afghan-style food was brought in from a local restaurant, which included chicken, beef and lamb kabobs, rice, potatoes and local flat bread, or Nan. Nan is commonly called 'foot bread' for its resemblance to a slipper. Though not every shura leads to an actual meal, the staple of the shura is chai, a local flavor of hot tea.

"Once you have had the third cup of tea, be it the first visit or the third, only then can you actually talk about the business at hand," said Gul. "Up to that point, your conversation needs to be focused on building a bond between you and the host. 'How's the family, how's your health, how are the crops?' are common questions that will typically get a conversation started."

As the TF Brawler leadership entered the chapel, they were instructed on some of the procedures to ensure nothing is done to insult the host, such as removing your shoes before entering their house (although exceptions are made for military forces), never sit with your feet facing outward, as this is a sign of disrespect, and always speak loudly enough for all to hear.

"Side conversations are common for

Americans when they meet, but Afghans see it as insulting," said O'Black. "The reason for a shura is that everyone expresses themselves openly, with nothing to hide. Whispering amongst a small group at a shura can be seen as dishonorable. In this country, honor is everything."

Once introductions were made, and a few awkward moments of silence passed, the conversation started to move forward. The topics ranged from religious, civic and legal concerns in provinces to shared insights on Afghan culture. Occasionally during the mock shura Ault or O'Black would call a 'timeout' to stop the shura and analyze certain aspects. As most of the attendees discovered, among the largest of all the barriers for Americans at an Afghan shura is language.

"Talking through an interpreter can be challenging, but necessary for us as Soldiers when we are dealing with the locals," said Stull. "There are key words you should learn, but always remember to speak slowly and break often so the interpreter can keep up."

As the conversation resumed, food was offered to all the guests, with the "elder" providing a quick class on the art of eating without utensils. Especially with rice, many of the attendees were skeptical of eating with their hands,

but after shown how to accomplish it by picking it up with a piece of bread, the meal moved forward. The talk then turned toward fictional problems and possible avenues to solve them.

The conclusion of the two-hour shura centered on another common occurrence not only associated with shuras, but throughout Afghan culture; the holding of hands by the same gender.

"The connotation associated with this is not the same here as in the states," said Ault. "It is a deeper reflection of the bond you build between people, and means a lot more than you think."

At the end of the shura, Stull was asked if he and the other moderators felt they were successful in achieving the desired result amongst the attending staff members and leaders.

"Successful? I would say yes, for more than one reason," said Stull. "For us as an aviation task force to be effective on the battlefield, we have to visualize it from the ground level. The shura is the way forward toward gaining that effectiveness. I think our task force key leaders leave here seeing not only how that process is started, but how the Brawlers are currently accomplishing missions out in the surrounding villages, one cup of tea at a time."



WHERE THE STEAKS ARE HOT

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC. MONICA K. SMITH

Early on Friday mornings, billows of smoke can be seen rising through the air moving with the wind and dancing to the sound of the Red Hot Chilli Peppers. It will be hours before the dining facility opens for dinner, but those working on the Camp Albert area of Bagram can already inhale the drifting aroma of steaks meeting an open flame as the Falcon Cafe prepares for the night's meal: Surf and Turf. As the largest of the few Soldier-run dining facilities in Afghanistan, Soldiers of the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, work to provide meals to hungry Coalition forces and civilians who visit the cafe.

"They expect more from us because we are Soldiers," said Staff Sgt. LaJuane Lee, food service specialist and shift leader, Headquarters and Support Company, TF Workhorse. "They expect us to be a 5-star restaurant in the field. We work well with what we have and we strive to meet those expectations."

"One of the responsibilities we have is making sure we have quality meals and healthy meals for the Soldiers," said Spc. Howard Ellsworth, a cook with HSC, TF Workhorse. "If one person eats something and gets sick that's one person out of the fight, so we're maintaining the fight by keeping Soldiers healthy."

With Fridays as the busiest night of the week, the dining facility serves about 1,500 meals whereas on other nights the number is closer to 1,000. In order to prepare for the large dinner rush, Soldiers begin grilling steaks at 8:30 a.m. and work until 3 p.m.

"We have more than 1,000 steaks that we grill," said Ellsworth who, along with Spc. Christopher Mattingly, another cook with HSC, TF Workhorse, spend Friday's grilling steaks. "My biggest thing with the steaks is making sure it tastes good and that it looks like it came off a grill. We marinate them the night before to make sure juices have time to soak through and tenderize the meat. Then we're out here all day cooking them."

Though Fridays require additional work to prepare the steaks, Fridays are not the only day where cooks work long hours. Soldiers working at the dining facility may work 12 hours or more on any given day.

"We work hard and we get up earlier than most," said Lee. We are on a continuous work mode because our mission is essential all the time. I can get there at 4:30 a.m. and not leave till [5 or 6 p.m.]. But I enjoy the food industry, I enjoy seeing the response of people eating, I enjoy preparing food, the presentation of food and seeing how different people create different meals."

In addition to Friday's speciality meal, the Falcon Cafe is also known for its burgers

called, "Aviation Burgers," a name reflecting the assets of TF Falcon. The burgers are handmade with cheese infused in the meat and a special secret seasoning.

"You have to really want the aviation burger to get it and apparently everyone wants it because the line for the burger wraps around the building," said Spc. Bryce Hudgins, HSC, TF Workhorse. "In fact, the [food service specialists] will call out, 'who isn't waiting for a burger?' and if you're not eating a burger you get to jump to the front of the line. I wait for the burger though. Every other [dining facility] only makes the frozen, premade burgers but these are handmade so it's like eating at a diner instead of a cafeteria."

The Falcon Cafe also provides speciality meals including other favorites such as "Mexican Monday" and "Italian Wednesday." With many Soldiers facing monotony in their daily jobs, Warrant Officer Lawrence D. Perry, TF Falcon brigade food service advisor, said he hopes the dining facility provides a variety of delicious, nutritious meals.

"Having variety is important so you don't get redundant with the same meal over and over again," said Perry. "We have so many people from all over the world and we try to provide everyone with a home cooked meal. We're so far away from home for such a long period of time, away from our friends, families and loved ones – you need a sense of camaraderie and friendship. At home you can find that around a dining room table, in Afghanistan our dining facility is a place you can get it."



(Left) Spc. Elliott Armstrong, cook with HSC, TF Workhorse, slices onions while preparing the dinner meal, May 9, at Bagram Airfield. (Top) Spc. Howard Ellsworth, cook with HSC, TF Workhorse, checks to ensure a steak is cooked thoroughly, June 4, at Bagram Airfield. (Bottom) Spc. Christopher Mattingly, cook with HSC, TF Workhorse, seasons steaks, June 4, at Bagram Airfield.

Soldiers aid future leaders of Afghanistan

Story by Master Sgt. Mark Ligget
Photos by Pfc. Gregory Boster

The Soldiers found themselves surrounded, an unfavorable situation for anyone deployed in Afghanistan – at least under normal conditions. However, for Soldiers of Task Force Dark Knight, the situation was ideal as they distributed much-needed school supplies, May 1, to the Jan Qadam Middle School in Bagram.

"The children were extremely excited to receive the supplies," said Sgt. Amaryliss Becerra, a legal specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Dark Knight. "Even a handful of pens or some loose leaf sheets of paper [excited them]."

The Soldiers got a chance to relive their own school days by going into the classrooms, sitting down with the children and meeting with them for a while. The children sat in their seats and listened when the instructors spoke, but the classrooms had the bare minimum furnishings: desks, a chalkboard and some chalk. The classroom didn't have any books, audio visual equipment, or computers. Students sat together, up to three to a desk. The genders were taught separately, with only one classroom for girls in the entire schoolhouse.

"Being able to provide school supplies to young girls was a real treat - girl power!" said Sgt. Carla Perry, HHC, TF Dark Knight.

The Soldiers worked as a team to distribute the items outside the building and the school is staff organized the children to maintain order. Chaos now was inevitable from time to time as

the children were overwhelmed with all the items.

"Just having us as visitors put smiles on the boys' and girls' faces and made them giddy," said Becerra. "The candy was a hit with the children."

"Knowing that Afghan children are half the population and the future of Afghanistan, encourages me to do more for their future," said Perry.

"I had not been out of Bagram Airfield until this school trip," said Becerra. "It brought back to me the real reason why we are here and what this war is for. It's so easy to get caught up in the administrative part of my work. I sometimes forget what is out there and the circumstances under which these people live."

"As we were giving out [material assistance to the Afghans], the whole experience reminded me of my favorite quote from Mother Teresa: 'It is not how much we do but how much love we put in doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in giving,'" said Spc. India Jones, HHC, TF Dark Knight.

The supplies were donated from the students and families of Saint Michael's Academy in Austin, Texas. The school donated backpacks, as well as school supplies such as handfuls of pens and sheets of notebook paper. TF Dark Knight's battalion headquarters is in Austin and the daughter of the battalion commander, Col. Monica Harwig, attends Saint Michael's.

(Opposite page top) A student eagerly awaits a visit by Soldiers from TF Dark Knight, May 1, at Jan Qadam Middle School, Bagram. (Bottom left) Col. Monica Harwig (left), commander of TF Dark Knight, hands out school supplies while Sgt. Amaryliss Becerra, a legal specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Dark Knight, assists, May 1, at the Jan Qadam Middle School, Bagram. (Right) 1st Lt. Tara Briggs from TF Dark Knight, hands out school supplies, May 1, at Jan Qadam Middle School, Bagram.



TASK FORCE ODIN-A HOLDS AN EXTREME SOLDIER/NCO OF THE DEPLOYMENT BOARD

STORY BY SPC. KATIE STARKEY
PHOTOS BY SGT. 1ST CLASS LUKE LYNCH

After a month of training, Soldiers from Task Force ODIN-A (Observe, Detect, Identify, Neutralize – Afghanistan) completed their first ‘Soldier/NCO of the Deployment’ board, May 11, at Bagram Airfield. The Soldiers and NCOs who participated in this board had the rare opportunity to train and fight in actual combat and leadership scenarios that fully encompass what it is to be a leader and Soldier in the United States Army.

“Today’s Soldiers are tomorrow’s leaders,” said Sgt. 1st Class Luke Lynch, Company D, TF ODIN-A, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon. “The ODIN board is designed with the concept of instilling confidence, competency, and professional traits. Furthermore, the board instills in each Soldier that they must accomplish the mission regardless of the stressors involved. It’s imperative that the Soldiers learn to apply their physical and mental abilities to overcome adversity in order to fight, survive and win.”

The ‘Soldier/NCO of the Deployment’ board was completely situational and required the Soldiers and NCOs to push themselves to the point of giving up. They were tested on numerous subjects from counseling and drill and ceremony to battle drills, such as reacting to an ambush, evaluating and treating a casualty, and being taken into enemy control and becoming a prisoner of war. All board participants attended at least three days of mandatory training in preparation for the board, so everyone received the same amount and quality of training to ensure a level playing field.

“[The board] was stressful because of the hands-on [portion],” said Spc. Krystina Saft, D Co., TF ODIN-A, who won the ‘Soldier of the Deployment’ board for junior enlisted Soldiers. “It wasn’t just studying from a book. It was actual performance. It was really quick paced. You didn’t have time to think about a situation. You only had enough time to react to the situation at hand.”

The reason behind TF ODIN-A’s hands-on and situational based boards, instead of the traditional question and answer based boards, is to give the Soldiers and NCOs a chance to



prove they know how to practically apply their knowledge of the given subjects.

“Any Soldier, with enough repetition, can regurgitate an answer they have heard over and over,” said TF ODIN-A, Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Sparks. “Hands-on gives you the chance to prove you know what you are doing.”

As some leaders wane away from hands-on training opportunities, Soldiers lose the ability to correctly perform basic Soldiering tasks. The boards lean heavily towards the perishable tasks like map reading and first aid. The board also tends to be a way to gauge what kind of training the unit needs as a whole. This is a way to get

leaders back into training their Soldiers. For ODIN-A Soldiers, they cannot sit in front of a computer or study guide and expect to win at an ODIN-A board. As a Soldier, they have to rely on the training their NCOs can provide, and as an NCO they must lead and train their Soldiers in hands-on and situational methods in order for them to perform well at an ODIN-A board.

“Situational awareness boards are always more beneficial,” said Staff Sgt. Morgan Bevan, Company D, TF ODIN-A, and the NCO of the Deployment winner. “No one joins the military to answer from a book. The only way to prove that you truly know something is to perform it.”



"Every Soldier walked away from this event with a huge amount of pride and sense of accomplishment," said Sparks. "It was tough and realistic, just like Army training and testing should be and I'm very proud of each of the Soldiers and NCOs that participated, they all proved that they are ODIN-Strong."

(Above) Spc. Krystina Saft, D Co., TF ODIN-A, provides treatment to a Soldier's simulated chest wound due to a sniper shot, May 10, at Bagram Airfield, during TF ODIN-A's 'Soldier/NCO of the Deployment' board. (Right) Soldiers from TF ODIN-A practice tactical troop movement, April 21, at Bagram Airfield. (Opposite page) Staff Sgt. Morgan Bevan, an all source analyst, D Co., TF ODIN-A, calls in an enemy killed in action report, May 11, at Bagram Airfield, during TF ODIN-A's 'Soldier/NCO of the Deployment' board.



Task Force view



Spc. Monica K. Smith

1



Sgt. Scott Tant

5



Sgt. Scott Tant

2



Sgt. Scott Tant

4



Sgt. Scott Tant

3

(Clockwise from top right) 1. Staff Sgt. Ronald Mitchell, HHC, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, dribbles around defensemen during the Talon Classic basketball tournament, May 16, at Bagram Airfield. 2. Under the watchful eye of TF Brawler medic Spc. Lisa Cremeans (left, standing), Soldiers prepare to send a 9-line medevac request while tending to a mock patient during a combat lifesaver course, June 6, at FOB Shank. 3. Cpl. Nicholas Niedbalski, (center) E Co., TF Brawler, coaches an ANA soldier during a reflexive fire range, May 31, at FOB Shank. 4. Jordanian, Afghan and TF Brawler Soldiers form a perimeter as a Chinook prepares to land during a combined-operations patrol, May 20, in the Sorkhab Valley. 5. Task Force Brawler civil affairs officer, Capt. Douglas Gray, hands out a Pashtu-English dictionary during a mission to bring school supplies to remote villages in the Logar province, May 23.



Sgt. Scott Tant



Sgt. Scott Tant



Sgt. Scott Tant



Spc. Monica K. Smith

(Clockwise from top left) 1. Members of D Co., TF Brawler, simulate the evacuation a 'wounded' Soldier hit by an IED, during a scenario, May 25, at FOB Shank. 2. A pair of Chinooks with the Georgia National Guard 1st Bn, 169th Avn. Bde., TF Brawler, prepare to land, May 25, during a villiage medical outreach program in the Logar province. 3. Soldiers wait for the crew chiefs to signal for them to board a Chinook with B Co., TF Knighthawk, May 20, at Bagram Airfield. 4. Sgt. William Alford (right), squad leader with the ground combat platoon, E Co., TF Brawler, and ANA 4th Kandak Plt., Sgt. Abduhl Jan (center) help distribute school supplies to a remote school in the Logar province, May 23.

Parting Shot



Spc. Grant Matzoff

CW2 Marquis Devane, pilot in command with A Co., TF Knighthawk, varies the next checkpoint, May 30, on a flight from Bagram Airfield.