

THE
SEMINOLE
STANDARD



Volume 3 | May, 2026

THE COMMANDER'S COUNCIL OAK

Building Readiness, Strengthening Partnerships



Greetings once again from the Horn of Africa!

I can't believe it's already the third edition of the Seminole Standard. As we continue to push through this deployment, I find myself increasingly humbled by the dedication, professionalism, and sheer grit of the Soldiers under this command. I want to state right up front: the higher headquarters leadership here at Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) continues to be thoroughly impressed with the caliber of our Soldiers. You are proving every single day what the Florida Army National Guard (FLARNG) brings to the fight, setting a standard of excellence that resonates across the entire theater.

The success we are seeing across this vast area of operations is no accident. This Task Force is in absolutely phenomenal hands thanks to our outstanding subordinate leadership teams. From our Company

Commanders and First Sergeants down to the Squad Leaders and Team Leaders, the leadership at the tactical edge is making the right calls, taking care of their people, and driving the mission forward.

Our core foundation remains our lethality and readiness. To that end, our formations are engaged in relentless, ongoing Infantry competency training. Despite the operational tempo and the austere environment, our Soldiers are constantly refining their battle drills, mastering their weapon systems, and conducting rigorous tactical exercises. We are an Infantry Task Force first and foremost, and these continuous repetitions ensure that if we are called to react to a crisis, our response will be swift, precise, and overwhelming.

Operating in a coalition environment also means building deep, functional relationships with our multinational partners. We have had some incredible training opportunities recently that highlight this effort.

This past month, Blackjack Company partnered with our German military counterparts to compete for the Schützenschnur, the highly coveted German Armed Forces Badge for Weapons Proficiency. Earning this foreign award requires our Soldiers to step outside their comfort zones and demonstrate expert-level marksmanship using German service weapons, specifically the G36 rifle and the P8 pistol. Blackjack Company integrated seamlessly with the German range cadre, adapted to their tactical standards, and ultimately dominated the event. We had a phenomenal number of FLARNG Soldiers earn the coveted badge. It was a proud day for the Task Force and a step forward in allied interoperability.

That multinational camaraderie extends beyond the firing range and onto the training mats. Recently, several of our Soldiers have been conducting joint Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) and Combatives sessions with Japanese and French service members deployed here in the Horn of Africa. Language barriers disappear when you are training on the mat. These sessions build mutual respect, physical resilience, and the kind of ground-level trust that is essential when operating alongside partner nations in a complex environment.

While I am incredibly proud of our Soldiers' tactical and physical prowess, I am equally proud of their compassion. A group of our Soldiers dedicates their limited off-duty time to conduct volunteer work at a local orphanage in partnership with the Friends of Africa organization. They spend the day interacting with the children, helping with facility improvements, and delivering much-needed supplies. Their actions serve as a powerful reminder that the American Soldier is not just a warrior, but an ambassador of goodwill. They represent the United States, the State of Florida, and this Task Force with the utmost honor.

To the families, friends, and employers back home: your support remains our greatest strategic asset. We know the burden of this deployment falls heavily on your shoulders, and we are deeply grateful for your resilience. We will continue to train hard, strengthen our partnerships, and execute the mission with the professionalism you expect from us.

Stay strong, stay connected, and look out for one another.



With pride,

LTC Ryan M. Swinford

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NEVER SURRENDER!



(U.S. Army photo illustration by CPT Dakota Burr)

THE WARPATH

This Month's Focus: Building Cohesive Teams



The pace of our operations over the past month has been exceptionally demanding. I want to acknowledge the relentless effort every Soldier and leader has put into our mission. When operations move fast and pressure increases, the true strength of our formation is tested. For our Soldiers on the ground, and for the families, friends, and alumni supporting us from home, it is important to understand how massive our operational footprint is. That scale is exactly why this month's focus must be on Building Cohesive Teams.

Task Force Seminole is a unique, highly capable, and widely dispersed formation comprised of nine companies and consisting of Soldiers from six different states. Currently, we are executing base defense, security, and crisis response operations at eight different

sites across three countries in the Horn of Africa. Operating across this vast geographical separation means team cohesion does not happen by accident. It requires deliberate, relentless communication up, down, and across the chain of command.

To enable mutual support and shared understanding, information must flow freely in every direction. Leaders must ensure their intent is clearly understood at the lowest level, and we must empower our Soldiers to provide honest, accurate feedback up the chain. We must actively break down the silos between our dispersed units and headquarters elements. True cohesion across the African continent means trusting that the element hundreds of miles away is executing to the exact same Seminole standard as the team right next to you.

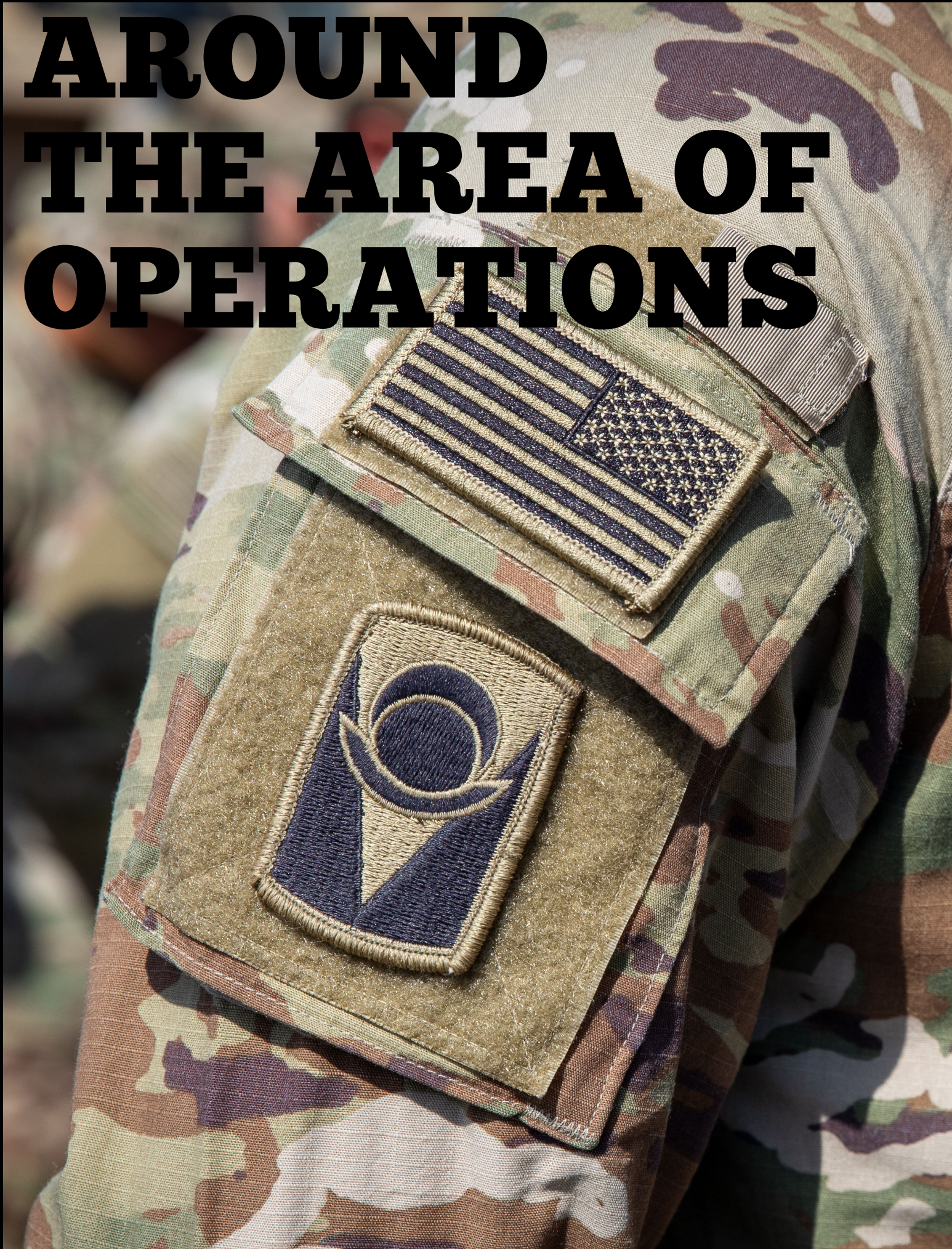
This is where the strength of our NCO Corps makes the difference. NCOs are the standard-bearers, responsible for discipline, training, and leader development across the entire Task Force, no matter how remote the outpost. Building true cohesion across our area of responsibility starts with your leadership. Your ability to build trust, enforce standards, and communicate effectively across these massive distances will determine how well we adapt and execute our mission. Soldiers will follow your example. Lead with purpose, bridge the physical gaps between our locations through constant communication, and drive excellence in every formation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan D. Pletcher".

CSM Jonathan D. Pletcher
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NEVER SURRENDER!

AROUND THE AREA OF OPERATIONS



APACHE COMPANY



As Apache Company approaches the one-third mark of its deployment, Soldiers continue to build momentum while supporting mission requirements across the area of operations. Over the past month, personnel have balanced operational responsibilities with training, professional development and quality-of-life initiatives designed to maintain readiness and strengthen the team.

Training remains a key focus for the company. Soldiers have participated in a variety of exercises and readiness activities aimed at reinforcing individual and collective skills. These efforts help ensure Apache Company remains prepared to respond effectively to mission requirements while maintaining the high standards expected of the unit. That commitment to excellence was recently exemplified by SPC Michael Johnson, who was recognized by the area of operations command team for his exemplary dedication to the mission.

Outside of mission operations, Soldiers have found ways to stay engaged and connected through Morale, Welfare and Recreation activities. One recent addition is a Tae Kwon Do club led by PFC Kevin Griffin, a first-degree black belt who volunteers his time to teach fellow Soldiers. The club has

provided an opportunity for participants to learn a new skill, stay active and build camaraderie. Soldiers have also taken advantage of fencing classes led by CPT Aaron Benningfield, introducing many to a sport they may not have otherwise experienced.

Apache Company continues to place a strong emphasis on maintaining combat readiness. Recently, SSG Kyle Nash used his time as Sergeant of the Guard to conduct weapons familiarization and knowledge refreshers with Soldiers across the company. The training reinforced the importance of weapons proficiency and highlighted the role every Soldier plays in the defense of the installation, regardless of military occupational specialty.

The company has also celebrated several personal and professional milestones. SSG Brandon Paramore recently welcomed twins into his family, marking an exciting new chapter while deployed in support of the mission. Additionally, SPC Chee-Ming was promoted from private first class to specialist, recognizing his continued growth, dedication and contributions to the team.

As the deployment progresses, Apache Company remains focused on accomplishing its mission while investing in the professional development and well-being of its Soldiers. Through training, mentorship and shared experiences, the company continues to strengthen the readiness and cohesion that enable it to meet the challenges ahead.

BLACKHAWK COMPANY

Over the past several weeks, personnel across the Blackhawk area of operations have remained focused on maintaining readiness, strengthening partnerships and supporting community engagement efforts. Through a combination of emergency response training, weapons familiarization and partner force development, service members continue to build the skills and relationships necessary to support mission success.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP) training remained a priority throughout the month. Personnel participated in drills and scenario-based exercises designed to reinforce procedures for responding to potential threats and emergencies on the installation. These training events emphasized accountability, communication and coordination between units while providing realistic opportunities to practice emergency response procedures. Regular repetition of these scenarios helps ensure personnel can react quickly and effectively when called upon.

Soldiers also conducted familiarization training on several weapons systems, including the AT-4 anti-armor weapon system and the Javelin missile system. Training focused on weapons safety, system capabilities and operational employment, providing Soldiers with additional experience and confidence working with equipment commonly used in modern military operations. These sessions contribute to overall combat readiness while reinforcing individual proficiency across the formation.

Blackhawk Company also expanded its partnership efforts through security-focused training with partner force personnel. Led by SSG Peters, SGT Hoyeck and SPC Shola, the instruction focused on Entry Control Point (ECP) procedures, including vehicle and personnel search techniques used to enforce established security measures. Linguists supported the training by translating instructions and facilitating communication between participants. Following each session, leaders conducted After Action Reviews to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Additional training events are scheduled in the coming weeks and will continue to build partner force capabilities through hands-on instruction and practical exercises.

Beyond training, Soldiers took opportunities to engage with members of the local community. During a recent visit to a neighboring village, SPC George and SPC Cundiff spent time with local residents, sharing tea and

interacting with families. The visit provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships and foster goodwill while demonstrating the importance of community engagement as part of the broader mission.

Looking ahead, personnel are preparing for the upcoming Norwegian Foot March, a challenging endurance event that requires participants to complete a long-distance march while carrying a 25-pound rucksack within an established time standard. The event will provide another opportunity for Soldiers to test their physical readiness and resilience while representing the unit.



A U.S. Army Soldier assigned to Task Force Seminole pulls security during a battle drill exercise in the Horn of Africa, May 2, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Jake Anico)

BLACKJACK COMPANY

Over the past month, Soldiers assigned to Blackjack Company, have continued building readiness through joint training, operational exercises and partnership activities across their area of operations. Working alongside Air Force counterparts and multinational partners, Blackjack Soldiers have participated in a wide range of events designed to strengthen interoperability and enhance mission effectiveness.

A key focus has been joint training with personnel from the 776th Expeditionary Air Base Squadron (EABS). Soldiers from 1st Platoon recently trained with military working dog handlers to gain a better understanding of K-9 capabilities and their role in installation security operations.

The platoon also participated in aircraft interdiction drills alongside Air Force personnel, providing valuable experience operating within a joint environment while refining response procedures and coordination between services.

Blackjack personnel also took part in multiple readiness events designed to test installation defense and emergency response capabilities. During two separate base validation exercises, Soldiers and Airmen worked together to respond to simultaneous threat scenarios, manage casualties and coordinate medical evacuation procedures. The exercise included both medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) scenarios. MEDEVAC operations use dedicated medical assets and personnel to transport injured service members, while CASEVAC relies on available operational vehicles when medical evacuation assets are not immediately accessible. The training allowed Soldiers and Airmen to practice both methods while refining emergency response procedures and improving coordination during casualty situations.

Physical readiness remained an important part of the company's operational tempo. Soldiers participated in the Norwegian Foot March, an endurance event requiring participants to complete an 18.6-mile ruck march within established time standards. SPC Victor Gavin of 2nd Platoon finished first among approximately 40 participants, demonstrating the high level of fitness and determination found throughout the formation. Blackjack Soldiers also participated in a competitive Murph workout event alongside members of the 776th EABS, earning first place against teams from across the installation.

Beyond operational training, Soldiers continued to contribute to installation events and strengthen relationships with joint-service partners. Members of 2nd Platoon formed a color guard in support of a recent change of command ceremony, helping welcome the incoming Air Force commander. Soldiers also participated in recreational activities across the base, including a pickleball tournament that brought together personnel from multiple units and fostered camaraderie through competition.

Company leadership also engaged with multinational and diplomatic partners during a recent event at CADJ honoring the outgoing base commander and welcoming the incoming commander. Representatives from Japanese, French, Spanish and German partner forces attended the gathering, providing an opportunity to strengthen professional relationships and reinforce the cooperative partnerships that support regional security efforts.

As operations continue, Blackjack Company remains focused on maintaining readiness, strengthening joint-service integration and building the partnerships that contribute to mission success throughout the region.



SSG Sean Roberson, assigned to Blackjack Company, 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole, performs pistol marksmanship training in the Horn of Africa, May 14, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Marshall Verkler)

COMANCHE COMPANY



SPC Brimah Smart, assigned to Comanche Company, Task Force Seminole, East Africa Response Force, practices CQB techniques at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 7, 2026. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Alicia Campbell)

Throughout May, Soldiers assigned to Comanche Company continued enhancing readiness through partner force training, professional development, joint-service integration and community outreach initiatives. From weapons instruction and tactical training to volunteer service and financial education, the company remained focused on developing well-rounded Soldiers while strengthening relationships with partner forces and the local community.

A major effort during the month involved partner force training with members of the Djiboutian Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR). Soldiers from 1st Platoon conducted four days of instruction covering pistol and shotgun. The training began with classroom and practical exercises focused on weapons handling, safety procedures and marksmanship fundamentals before culminating in a live-fire range event.

Within the company, Jabari Platoon continued to expand its tactical and professional capabilities through a variety of training opportunities. Soldiers completed instruction on radio communications, battle drills, drone recognition, reconnaissance operations and patrol base procedures through a combination of classroom instruction and practical exercises. The platoon also achieved 100 percent certification during Basic Life Support (BLS) training, ensuring all personnel are prepared to provide emergency medical care when required.

Jabari Platoon further strengthened its tactical proficiency through Close Quarters Battle (CQB) training conducted alongside Air Force Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs). The training focused on movement techniques, building entry procedures, room-clearing operations, communications and standard operating procedures. Working alongside Air Force personnel provided valuable opportunities to improve interoperability while refining individual and collective skills.

Joint and multinational integration remained another area of emphasis throughout the month. The company's mortar and sniper sections participated in combined allied lethal training with Air Force JTACs and military personnel from Japan and France. Training included weapons systems familiarization, preliminary marksmanship instruction and live-fire exercises at the Gun Fighter Gym Engagement Skills Trainer range. A total of 23 allied personnel participated, improving understanding of weapons capabilities while strengthening professional relationships and interoperability among partner forces.

Beyond training, Comanche Soldiers continued supporting the local community through volunteer efforts in partnership with the Friends of Africa organization. Jabari Platoon participated in four outreach events, contributing a combined 460 volunteer hours. Soldiers provided English and French language instruction focused on practical communication skills, while CPL Riley Walker assisted approximately 20 local residents by providing basic medical care and support. These engagements helped foster positive relationships while demonstrating the company's commitment to community involvement.

The company also placed an emphasis on personal and financial readiness. On May 1, SFC Sylvester Gomes conducted financial counseling sessions for 21 Soldiers, helping them establish long-term savings goals and develop strategies for financial success during deployment. The initiative encouraged responsible financial planning while reinforcing the importance of personal readiness as a component of overall mission readiness.

As operations continue, Comanche Company remains focused on developing capable Soldiers, strengthening partnerships and maintaining the readiness required to support mission requirements across the region.

COMBAT COMPANY

Combat Company Soldiers continued demonstrating readiness and leadership throughout the month, supporting operational requirements across the area of operations while earning recognition for individual achievement in a joint-service environment.

Recently, Soldiers from 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, known as the "Snake Eaters," deployed to support security operations at a forward location. Led by SSG Leonardo Calderin, the squad was tasked with reinforcing a sister unit and providing additional security support to ensure continued mission effectiveness.

Preparation for the mission began immediately upon receipt of the warning order. The squad conducted weapons proficiency training during both day and night conditions while reviewing procedures necessary to operate effectively in a forward environment. Soldiers also focused on sustainment planning and coordination with the supported unit to better understand mission requirements and ensure a smooth transition upon arrival. The preparation allowed the squad to integrate quickly and effectively while maintaining operational readiness throughout the deployment.

In addition to operational accomplishments, Combat Company celebrated the achievements of one of its noncommissioned officers. On May 5, 2026, CPL Ramon Campbell was recognized as the Air Force Noncommissioned Officer of the Month, an award highlighting his contributions within a joint-service environment. As part of the recognition, Campbell received the Air Force's "Rafiki Stick," a symbol of partnership and cooperation between service members working together in support of the mission.

Campbell earned the distinction through his professionalism, work ethic and commitment to both mission accomplishment and Soldier development. Known for consistently taking initiative and supporting daily

operations, he has established himself as a dependable member of the team while continuing to expand his knowledge and experience. Beyond his individual responsibilities, Campbell actively mentors junior Soldiers and encourages them to pursue professional growth while maintaining high standards.

The accomplishments of both the Snake Eaters and CPL Campbell reflect Combat Company's continued focus on readiness, teamwork and leadership. Whether supporting operational requirements or investing in the development of fellow Soldiers, members of the company remain committed to mission success and the professional growth of the formation.



From left to right, newly promoted SGT Bryan Nunez, SSG Leonardo Calderin and newly promoted SGT Michael Davis, all assigned to Combat Company, Task Force Seminole, pose for a photo in the Horn of Africa, May 2, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by SGT. Nicholas Roy)



Air Force COL Gabriel Brown and CMSgt Jason Logan, assigned to the 406th Air Expeditionary Wing, recognize CPL Ramon Campbell, assigned to Combat Company, Task Force Seminole, as Noncommissioned Officer of the Month in the Horn of Africa, May 5, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Manuel Valle)

NASTY DAWG COMPANY

Throughout May, Soldiers assigned to Nasty Dawg Company remained focused on readiness, regional engagement and professional development across their area of operations. Through humanitarian support efforts, joint training and tactical skill development, the company continued strengthening its ability to support mission requirements while enhancing partnerships throughout the region.

1st Platoon played a key role in supporting regional stability efforts in their area of operations. Working alongside Civil Affairs personnel, Soldiers helped facilitate humanitarian projects aimed at improving access to clean water and educational resources for local communities. In addition to supporting these initiatives, the platoon maintained a consistent presence throughout the area, contributing to situational awareness and information gathering efforts. Soldiers also participated in a joint downed-drone recovery exercise alongside military working dog teams, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel and Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC). The training improved coordination between organizations while strengthening the platoon's ability to operate effectively alongside joint partners.

2nd Platoon focused on enhancing reconnaissance capabilities and refining tactical procedures. SGT Antonio Jurado led efforts to improve the platoon's drone operating procedures, updating standard operating procedures and helping integrate daily aerial reconnaissance operations into routine activities. Working alongside SPC Sebastian Ramirez, Jurado's efforts improved situational awareness and contributed to force protection across the area of operations. The platoon also participated in advanced training opportunities with Special Forces, the Joint Engagement Team, Counterintelligence personnel and EOD specialists. Additionally, Soldiers integrated sniper teams into camp security patrols, expanding observation and overwatch capabilities.

3rd and 4th Platoons concentrated on mobility, emergency response preparedness and leader development. Working with Hatchet Company, Soldiers conducted vehicle recovery training designed to improve their ability to recover disabled equipment and maintain operational mobility. The platoons also partnered with the Task Force Medical Platoon to plan and rehearse mass-casualty response procedures, ensuring personnel understand their roles during emergency situations. Platoon leadership further enhanced their capabilities through site exploitation training,

learning techniques used to identify, collect and preserve information during operations. Leaders will continue sharing this knowledge throughout the formation to strengthen overall unit proficiency.

As operations continue, Nasty Dawg Company remains focused on maintaining readiness, developing new capabilities and strengthening partnerships across the region. Through training, innovation and engagement with joint and multinational partners, Soldiers continue to build the skills and relationships necessary to support mission success.



U.S. Army SPC Carlos Bofill, a machine gunner assigned to Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole, operates a Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS) during a mass-casualty training exercise at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 15, 2026. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Abigail Duell)

DISCO COMPANY



SSG Alexander Godard, an infantryman assigned to Disco Company, Task Force Seminole, responds to a simulated base attack during Exercise Pale Serpent at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 15, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)

Throughout the past month, Soldiers assigned to Disco Company remained focused on supporting installation security operations while continuing to develop their tactical proficiency, physical readiness and relationships with joint and multinational partners. Whether standing watch, conducting training or participating in professional development opportunities, Disco Soldiers continued contributing to the mission across multiple areas of responsibility.

The company's primary mission remains supporting the security and defense of Camp Lemonnier. Soldiers maintain a constant presence across the installation, monitoring activity, enforcing security procedures and helping ensure the safety of personnel and resources. In addition to their operational responsibilities, Soldiers regularly conduct infantry-focused training, including

weapons familiarization, simulation-based exercises and physical fitness activities designed to maintain readiness and sharpen core warfighting skills.

Disco Soldiers also participated in several events that promoted professional development, competition and partnership building. SPC Ferguson, SPC Carter and SPC Hathorn, represented the company during a base-wide chess tournament hosted by Morale, Welfare and Recreation. Although they did not place in the competition, the event provided an opportunity to engage with fellow service members across the installation and demonstrate some friendly competitive spirit.

Several Disco Soldiers were also recognized for their contributions during the Navy's monthly top performer ceremony held May 1 at the Goat Locker. PFC Colin Handerhan, CPL Brennan Cypher and SGT Robyn Major received recognition for their performance and dedication to the mission.

Handerhan, a Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC) operator, has developed extensive expertise in maintaining and troubleshooting critical systems that support daily operations. Cypher has leveraged his infantry experience to assist leadership with planning and refining defensive operations that contribute directly to installation security. As the BDOC noncommissioned officer in charge, Major plays a central role in coordinating operations, maintaining communications and improving processes that support the installation's defense mission.

Disco Company also continued strengthening relationships with partner forces through multinational training opportunities. On May 2, six Soldiers participated in joint martial arts training hosted by the French Forces. The event brought together service members from the United States, Japan and Kenya, providing an opportunity to exchange techniques, build relationships and enhance interoperability in an informal training environment.

Physical readiness remained another area of emphasis throughout the month. Soldiers from 1st and 3rd Platoons participated in the first of two qualifying ruck marches in preparation for the Norwegian Foot March. Thirty-three Soldiers completed the six-mile qualification event and are continuing to prepare for future qualification requirements and the final Norwegian Foot March later this deployment.

As operations continue, Disco Company remains committed to maintaining readiness, supporting installation security and developing the skills and relationships necessary to accomplish the mission. The professionalism demonstrated by Soldiers across the formation continues to earn recognition from leaders throughout Camp Lemonnier, Task Force Seminole and CJTF-HOA.

HATCHET COMPANY



SGT Makayla Borders, assigned to Hatchet Company, Task Force Seminole, demonstrates weapons maintenance procedures and troubleshooting techniques on various weapon systems to members of the Djiboutian Rapid Intervention Brigade in the Horn of Africa, May 11, 2026.

Throughout the past month, Soldiers assigned to Hatchet Company remained focused on sustaining task force operations while continuing to enhance readiness through training, maintenance and partnership activities. As the unit settled into its operational environment, Soldiers continued refining the skills and procedures necessary to support transportation, logistics and maintenance requirements throughout the area of operations.

Training and readiness remained a priority across the formation. The distribution section participated in an integrated mass-casualty (MASCAL) rehearsal, providing an opportunity to practice emergency response procedures alongside other elements of the Task Force. Meanwhile, the maintenance section conducted vehicle recovery

training designed to improve the unit's ability to recover and return disabled equipment to service. These events helped reinforce critical skills and ensured Soldiers remain prepared to respond effectively to real-world operations.

Hatchet Company also expanded its technical expertise through a variety of professional development opportunities. Vehicle and small-arms maintainers completed Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS) maintenance training, increasing their ability to troubleshoot and sustain the system in support of operational requirements. Soldiers also attended instruction on the capabilities and employment of the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS), broadening their understanding of weapons systems operating within the theater.

Partnership development remained another area of emphasis during the month. Hatchet Company hosted partner force maintenance training conducted in coordination with the Security Force Assistance Brigade and members of the Djiboutian Bataillon d'Intervention Rapide (BIR). The training provided an opportunity to exchange knowledge, strengthen professional relationships and improve maintenance capabilities among participating forces.

Outside of daily operations, Soldiers continued participating in activities that strengthen morale and community engagement. Personnel volunteered with the Friends of Africa organization and took part in cultural exchanges with partner nation service members stationed throughout Djibouti. These events provided opportunities to build relationships and foster greater understanding among the multinational forces operating in the region.

The company also celebrated an important milestone during a recent combat patch ceremony. Soldiers were awarded the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team combat patch in recognition of their service in support of operations in Africa. During the ceremony, Task Force leadership recognized the contributions and accomplishments of Hatchet Company personnel. The event also included the promotion of SPC Smalls, who advanced from the rank of private first class to specialist.

As the deployment continues, Hatchet Company remains focused on supporting Task Force operations, developing technical expertise and maintaining the readiness required to sustain mission success.

TOMAHAWK COMPANY

Throughout May, Soldiers assigned to Tomahawk Company continued supporting Task Force Seminole operations through administrative support, professional development, community engagement and participation in key training events across the area of operations. From supporting Soldiers and families to strengthening joint-service partnerships, Tomahawk personnel remained actively engaged in activities that contribute to overall mission success.

The company's S1 section continued providing critical personnel support while also participating in opportunities to expand individual skills and readiness. Working alongside Navy counterparts, members of the section participated in weapons familiarization training focused on the assembly, disassembly and operation of military weapons systems. The training provided an opportunity to increase technical proficiency while strengthening relationships between Soldiers and Sailors serving together on Camp Lemonnier.

Tomahawk Soldiers also contributed to morale and readiness initiatives across the Task Force. On May 2, SPC Tito Anthony Vega volunteered during the Norwegian Foot March qualification event, assisting participants at hydration stations throughout the route. His support helped ensure competitors remained safe and hydrated while preparing for future qualification marches and the final Norwegian Foot March later this deployment.



CPT Jason Fletcher and SGT Yalimar Mercedes, both assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole, receive their Shoulder Sleeve Insignia—Military Operations in Hostile Conditions during a patching ceremony at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 29, 2026. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Abigail Duell)

Community engagement remained another area of emphasis during the month. Through the Friends of Africa volunteer organization, members of Tomahawk Company participated in service projects at the Deacon Wildlife Animal Refuge. Soldiers assisted with trenching operations to support the installation of new water lines, contributing to infrastructure improvements that benefit both the refuge and its staff. The effort reflects the Task Force's ongoing commitment to supporting the local community and strengthening relationships within the host nation.

The Task Force Unit Ministry Team also remained active throughout the area of operations. Chaplain Jason Fletcher and SGT Yalimar Mercedes visited Soldiers at Chabelley Airfield, providing spiritual support and facilitating discussions focused on the SAFE program, which

promotes suicide prevention awareness and resiliency. The team also supported several Soldiers during a baptism ceremony, continuing its mission of supporting the spiritual well-being of deployed personnel.

Tomahawk Soldiers also contributed to Exercise Bull Shark, a multinational command post exercise designed to strengthen cooperation and coordination among partner nations operating in the region. Personnel from the S2, S3 and S6 sections participated alongside U.S. and partner force representatives, helping support planning and coordination efforts that enhance collective readiness and regional security cooperation.

The month concluded with an important milestone as Tomahawk Soldiers received the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team combat patch in recognition of their service in support of operations in the Horn of Africa. The ceremony recognized the commitment and contributions of Soldiers serving throughout the deployment and marked a significant moment for members of the formation.

As operations continue, Tomahawk Company remains focused on supporting Task Force Seminole through personnel services, training, community engagement and staff integration efforts across the area of operations.

SOLDIER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Specialist Samuel Soto



Hometown: St. Petersburg, FL

MOS: 11B Infantryman

Favorite MRE: None

Favorite Movie: Star Wars Universe

Hobby: Video Games

For SPC Samuel Soto Jr., serving in the Army was never just a career choice; it was a dream he had since childhood.

Early on, Soto developed a fascination with military history and the profession of arms. As he learned more about the Army, he found himself drawn to the infantry and the sense of purpose, challenge and brotherhood it represented.

“I’ve always wanted to join the Army since I was a little kid,” Soto said. “I saw myself being part of a brotherhood that cared for each other. I wanted to travel the world, make it a better place and do things people my age never had the courage to do.”

Now five and a half years into his Army career, Soto serves as an 11B infantryman with Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole. As part of the unit’s security forces mission, he helps ensure the force remains ready to respond whenever called upon.

Prior to joining the Florida Army National Guard, Soto served on active duty with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. During that time, he participated in one of the most impactful assignments of his career while supporting Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Soto helped train and evaluate cadets completing one of the final requirements on their path to becoming Army officers. During the assignment, he developed a new process and instructional script for the course’s preliminary marksmanship instruction, helping improve how the training was conducted. The experience also sparked his desire to become a leader.

“I learned I had a desire to become an NCO when I was able to keep the cadets and Soldiers motivated on the mission just by being myself,” Soto said.

His contributions did not go unnoticed. During the assignment, Soto received recognition from senior leaders, earning Army Achievement Medals, challenge coins and other honors for his performance.

Among his many accomplishments, one stands out above the rest. Soto considers receiving an award from a Republic of Korea Army Sergeant Major for his support of Korean Augmentation to the United States Army Soldiers attached to his unit to be the proudest moment of his career.

While Army leaders have helped shape his development, Soto credits his parents as the most influential mentors in his life.

“They stuck by my side through all the hard times,” Soto said. “They became my best friends through all of the struggles and accomplishments during my career. There were a lot of long nights and long phone calls.”

For Soto, maintaining motivation during demanding training events comes from remembering the obstacles he has already overcome.

“Knowing what I’ve accomplished before and the hardships I’ve already worked through helps me stay motivated,” he said.

Outside of the Army, Soto enjoys playing pool, video games with friends, learning more about firearms and trying new activities. His favorite Army memories involve training alongside foreign military partners, experiences that reinforced his appreciation for international cooperation and military partnerships.

As Task Force Seminole carries out its mission, Soldiers like Soto bring enthusiasm, professionalism and a genuine passion for service. Whether training alongside partner forces, mentoring fellow Soldiers or standing ready to execute the mission, he continues to embody the spirit of the infantry and the commitment expected of today’s Soldiers.

SOLDIER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Staff Sergeant Alexander Godard



Hometown: Huntsville, AL

MOS: 11B Infantryman

Favorite MRE: Chicken Chunks

Favorite Show: Breaking Bad

Hobby: Golf

For SSG Alexander Godard, military service was never a difficult decision. Growing up, he was surrounded by family members who served before him. With both parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles having military backgrounds, joining the Army felt like a natural next step.

“I figured it would be a fun experience and a chance to travel,” Godard said. “I thought it would just be camping with guns, but it turned out to be a lot more in-depth than that.”

Now eight years into his Army career, including three years with the Alabama Army National Guard, Godard serves as the Base Defense Operations Center Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (BDOC NCOIC) for Disco Company, Task Force Seminole. As an 11B infantryman and squad leader, his current role places him at the center of force protection operations.

As the BDOC NCOIC, Godard’s responsibilities require close integration with joint partners and multiple security elements to ensure a rapid response to potential threats.

“Force protection is critical,” Godard said. “We coordinate the different units and capabilities that support the mission and help ensure the installation remains secure.”

The transition from traditional infantry operations to the highly technical world of counter-UAS and force protection has been one of the most professionally rewarding aspects of the deployment, allowing him to develop new skills and adapt to an evolving operational environment.

Throughout his career, Godard has accumulated a wide range of experiences, but his time with the “Rakkasans” of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), remains his favorite assignment.

Among his most memorable experiences were training alongside the Brazilian Army and earning Brazilian Air Assault Wings, as well as helping train cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

“Being able to mentor future leaders was a great experience,” Godard said.

Despite those accomplishments, he considers becoming a noncommissioned officer his proudest achievement.

“As an NCO, you set the standard,” he said. “You’re in the fight with your soldiers every day. You get to watch them grow and develop, and helping train the next generation is a great way to keep the traditions of the Army alive.”

In his free time, Godard enjoys golfing, bass fishing, shooting sports and spending time in the gym. Looking ahead, his focus remains on the Soldiers he leads.

“I’m looking forward to getting home and seeing how much my Soldiers have improved over the course of this deployment,” he said.

As Task Force Seminole continues its mission across the Horn of Africa, leaders like Godard help ensure the force remains ready, disciplined and prepared to respond to any challenge. Through his commitment to mentorship, professionalism and force protection, he continues to exemplify the standards expected of today’s noncommissioned officers.

FROM THE AID STATION

Insights and health guidance to keep Task Force Seminole mission ready

Sprains, Strains and Staying Mission Ready



SPC Samantha Guerra, a combat medic assigned to Task Force Seminole, retrieves medical equipment to treat a simulated casualty during a battle drill exercise in the Horn of Africa, May 2, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jake Anico)

Common musculoskeletal injuries such as muscle strains, minor sprains and overuse injuries are common in physically demanding environments and, in many cases, can be safely managed in living quarters using basic self-care techniques. Early treatment and proper recovery are important to prevent minor injuries from becoming more serious over time.

For most minor injuries, medical providers recommend following the RICE method: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. Rest helps prevent further strain, while ice can reduce swelling and inflammation, especially within the first 24 to 48 hours after an

injury. Compression with an elastic wrap can help limit swelling and provide support, and elevation helps reduce fluid buildup in the affected area. Soldiers may also use over-the-counter medications such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Tylenol) as directed on the medication label to help manage pain and inflammation.

"Ignoring a minor injury today can create a major problem tomorrow. Proper recovery is part of staying mission ready."

Recovery times vary depending on the severity of the injury, but most mild sprains and strains generally improve over several weeks and often do not require advanced treatment. During recovery, Soldiers should avoid immediately returning to high-impact activity too quickly, as doing so may worsen the injury or prolong healing.

However, Soldiers should seek medical attention if symptoms persist despite rest and treatment or if they experience severe swelling, discoloration, numbness, deformity or an injury involving a limb positioned unnaturally. Immediate medical care should also be sought for any suspected fractures, inability to bear weight or significant loss of mobility.

Soldiers are reminded they may visit the Aid Station during sick-call hours for further evaluation or referral to physical therapy if needed. Early intervention, proper recovery and knowing when to seek care are key to maintaining long-term readiness and preventing chronic injuries.

Exercise Bull Shark

Exercise Bull Shark was in full-swing this month, bringing together military forces from Djibouti, the United States, Japan, France, Spain, Germany and Italy in a Djiboutian-led effort focused on regional security and multinational crisis response. Bull Shark develops interoperability through a deliberate progression of planning, academic instruction and practical application. Participating nations worked together to establish shared procedures, improve communication and strengthen our collective ability to respond to regional challenges.

A key component of the exercise is the Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC), where representatives from each participating nation collaborate in a single command-and-control environment. By integrating planning, information sharing and decision-making across land, air and maritime domains, the MNCC helps reduce operational friction and build a common operating picture among partner nations. As Bull Shark progresses toward a culminating maneuver exercise later this year, participating forces continue to strengthen the relationships, trust and coordination necessary to operate effectively as a unified team.



SEMINOLE STRENGTH


Building strength, endurance and readiness — Never Surrender!

★ ★ ★

MURPH WORKOUT

★★ PARTITION OPTIONS ★★

1 MILE RUN • 100 PULL-UPS • 200 PUSH-UPS • 300 AIR SQUATS • 1 MILE RUN

<p>CINDY STYLE 20 ROUNDS</p> <p>5 PULL-UPS 10 PUSH-UPS 15 SQUATS</p> <p>Balanced sets, great for steady pacing.</p>	<p>HALF-CINDY 10 ROUNDS</p> <p>10 PULL-UPS 20 PUSH-UPS 30 SQUATS</p> <p>Fewer transitions, bigger sets.</p>	<p>BIG CHUNK 4 ROUNDS</p> <p>25 PULL-UPS 50 PUSH-UPS 75 SQUATS</p> <p>Less transition time, but more fatigue.</p>
<p>3-6-9 STRATEGY</p> <p>1 ROUND 1 PULL UP 2 PUSH UPS 3 AIR SQUATS</p> <p>33 ROUNDS 3 PULL UPS 6 PUSH UPS 9 AIR SQUATS</p>	<p>PUSH-UP PROTECTION 20 ROUNDS</p> <p>5 PULL-UPS 5 PUSH-UPS 5 PUSH-UPS 15 SQUATS</p> <p>Break up push-ups to stay fresh.</p>	<p>PARTNER MURPH YOU-GO-I-GO</p>  <p>Alternate full rounds or split reps any way you like.</p>
<p>QUARTER MURPH</p> <p>1/4 MILE 25 PULL-UPS 50 PUSH-UPS 75 AIR SQUATS 1/4 MILE</p>	<p>HALF MURPH</p> <p>800M RUN 50 PULL-UPS 100 PUSH-UPS 150 SQUATS 800M RUN</p> <p>Great for beginners or less experience.</p>	<p>MOVEMENT SCALING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pull-ups: Swap for ring rows, banded, or jumping pull-ups. ✓ Push-ups: Modify on knees or elevate hands on a box/bar. ✓ Run: Reduce distance, walk, or use a rower/bike if running is not possible. ✓ Vest: Perform without the 20/14lb weight vest.

★★ WITH HONOR & GRATITUDE ★★

Ruck Around Africa

The Task Force Seminole Around Africa Ruck Challenge saw tremendous growth during May, with Soldiers logging 1,994.24 miles across the formation. Combined with the 215.68 miles recorded during April, the task force has now accumulated 2,209.92 miles toward the 18,950-mile journey around Africa's coastline.

May's total represents a significant increase in participation and effort, largely driven by unit involvement in the Norwegian Foot March and increased individual rucking across the area of operations. At the current mark, Task Force Seminole has completed approximately 11.7% of the total route, a substantial jump from last month's 1.14%. While there is still distance to cover, the formation demonstrated that when Soldiers come together for organized events and individual fitness efforts, progress can accelerate quickly.

The Norwegian Foot March proved to be a major contributor to the challenge's success. Beyond providing an opportunity for Soldiers to earn a foreign military badge, the event added hundreds of miles to the overall effort while reinforcing endurance, resilience and esprit de corps throughout the task force.

Although the coastline ahead remains long, May demonstrated what the formation is capable of accomplishing. As a reminder, at our current pace, each Soldier would only need to complete 2.5 rucking miles a month to accomplish our goal. Every mile matters, whether earned during organized events, unit physical training or individual rucks. Keep reporting your miles through your chain of command and help Task Force Seminole continue closing the distance around Africa.



Current Distance: 2,209.92
Miles Remaining: 16,740.08

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

WHO'S SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Chaplain Jason Fletcher



Recently, I had the honor of teaching on one of the most foundational subjects in the Christian faith, baptism. Although there are varying traditions and viewpoints, one truth remains clear throughout Scripture, baptism is deeply important.

Baptism answers one simple but powerful question: “Who’s side are you on?” In the book of Joshua, before Israel stepped into battle at Jericho, Joshua encountered the Commander of the Lord’s Army. Joshua asked, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” The answer came back: “Neither, but as Commander of the Army of the Lord.” This moment shifted the question entirely. The issue was not whether God was on Joshua’s side. The issue was whether Joshua was on God’s side.

Baptism is very much the same. It is a public declaration that we are identifying with Jesus Christ. His death, burial, resurrection and His

Lordship. It is an act of allegiance. It is a line in the sand where we openly declare, “I am on the Lord’s side!” In military life, we understand the power of identification and commitment. Uniforms, patches, ceremonies and oaths all communicate who we belong to and what we stand for. Baptism carries that same kind of spiritual weight. It is not about empty religion or ritualism. It is about publicly identifying with Christ and becoming a part of the Army of the Lord.

No matter your background, your church tradition or your past, God is still calling people to Himself. He is still making dead things come alive. He is still rolling away shame, restoring identity and inviting people into new life.

So today, maybe the question is not, “What do I believe about baptism?” Maybe the deeper question is this: **Who’s side are you on?**



U.S. Army SSG Rodrigo Espana is baptized in the Horn of Africa, May 13, 2026. The baptism offered deployed service members an opportunity to practice their faith while serving overseas. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)

Cont. on next page

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

WHO'S SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Chaplain Jason Fletcher

One of the greatest honors of this deployment season has been discipling seven Soldiers in their journey of faith and then having the privilege of baptizing them. In the middle of missions, demanding schedules and life far from home, God has continued to move powerfully among our formation. These baptisms are more than just moments in the water, they were public declarations of faith, commitment and new life in Christ.

Watching these Soldiers hunger for God, grow through discipleship and boldly stand on the Lord's side has been a reminder that even here, thousands of miles from home, the Lord is still transforming lives.

These photos capture more than an event; they capture eternal moments and the power of God at work among our Soldiers.



Soldiers assigned to Task Force Seminole, Florida Army National Guard, participate in a baptism ceremony in the Horn of Africa, May 13, 2026. The ceremony provided deployed service members an opportunity to practice their faith and strengthen spiritual resilience while serving overseas. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD





A U.S. soldier with Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa places a simulated casualty onto a litter at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 15, 2026. Service members practiced treatment, documentation and patient movement under field conditions to strengthen medical readiness. (U.S. Army photo by Private Second Class Martavious McCoy)



U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the East Africa Response Force (EARF) in support of Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa, prepare to enter a building during close-quarters battle training at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 7, 2026. The EARF serves as part of U.S. Africa Command's crisis response capability and is tasked with responding to emergency situations in the East African region. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Alicia Campbell)



U.S. Army soldiers assigned to Task Force Seminole, 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Florida Army National Guard, receive their Shoulder Sleeve Insignia—Military Operations in Hostile Conditions during a patching ceremony at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 8, 2026. The Shoulder Sleeve Insignia—Military Operations in Hostile Conditions, commonly known as the “combat patch,” is worn on the right sleeve of the Army Combat Uniform to signify a soldier’s deployment and service in a combat zone. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)



U.S. Army soldiers assigned to Task Force Seminole, 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Florida Army National Guard, receive their Shoulder Sleeve Insignia—Military Operations in Hostile Conditions during a patching ceremony at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 29, 2026. The Shoulder Sleeve Insignia—Military Operations in Hostile Conditions, commonly known as the “combat patch,” is worn on the right sleeve of the Army Combat Uniform to signify a soldier’s deployment and service in a combat zone. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Abigail Duell)



Members of the Djiboutian Rapid Intervention Brigade set up an OE-254 antenna system to support command post exercise communications during Exercise Bull Shark at the Maryama Training Center, Djibouti, May 23, 2026. Exercise Bull Shark strengthens multinational coordination and interoperability among partner nations by enhancing command and control capabilities during crisis response operations. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)



SSG Nathaniel Robinson, assigned to Task Force Seminole, loads a simulated casualty into a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle (LMTV) during a battle drill exercise in the Horn of Africa, May 2, 2026. The exercise validated response procedures and enhanced unit readiness to respond to potential threats and emergencies in the area of operations. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Jake Anico)



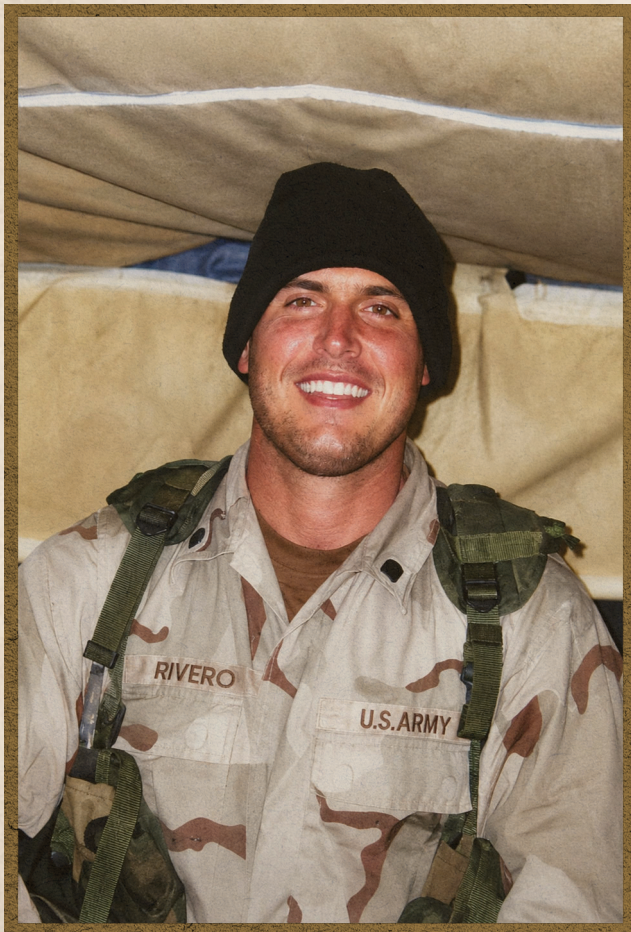
A U.S. Army Soldier assigned to Task Force Seminole pulls security during a battle drill exercise in the Horn of Africa, May 2, 2026. The exercise validated response procedures and enhanced unit readiness by rehearsing actions required to respond to potential threats and emergencies in the area of operations. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Jake Anico)



U.S. Army Private First Class Shawyan Watson, a medic assigned to Task Force Seminole, wraps a bandage around the hand of a simulated casualty during exercise Pale Serpent at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, May 15, 2026. Pale Serpent 26-3 was a comprehensive exercise that integrated critical functions including force protection, force health protection, physical security, and anti-terrorism to ensure rapid response and survivability during base attacks. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Alicia Campbell)

HONORING THEIR SERVICE

REMEMBERING THEIR SACRIFICE



CPL John T. Rivero

★
April 17, 2003



SPC Jeffrey M. Wershow

★
July 6, 2003

**Greater love has no one than this: to lay down
one's life for one's friends - John 15:13**

MASTHEAD

The Seminole Standard

Published by:

2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment
53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team
Florida Army National Guard

Command Team:

LTC Ryan M. Swinford — Battalion Commander
CSM Jonathan D. Pletcher — Battalion Command Sergeant Major

Editorial Staff:

CPT Dakota Burr — Public Affairs Officer / Editor
2LT Evan Hydock

Contributing Writers:

LTC Ryan M. Swinford	SSG Edward Peters	CPT Amber Presto
CSM Jonathan D. Pletcher	SSG Marshall Verkler	SPC Jacob McCaslin
CPT Dakota Burr	SGT Roy Nicholas	CPL Piper McIntosh
Chaplain (CPT) Jason Fletcher	SSG Hunter Hayes	SPC Ryan Alires
CPT McGuire Bennett	2LT Benjamin Bartlett	1LT Michael Kiser
SGT Jake Anico	1LT John DiCampli	2LT Evan Hydock

Photography:

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Contact:

If you have any suggestions, requests for future content, or would like to contribute to The Seminole Standard, please reach out to the Task Force Seminole Public Affairs Officer, CPT Dakota Burr at dakota.j.burr.mil@army.mil

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