

159TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

THUNDER ENLIGHTENING

*Inside this issue:
TF Thunder begins Afghan
partnership
Ground troops in CABs*

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Commander's Corner

Col. Kenneth T. Royar

Brigade Commander



I have often heard the saying that while here in theater the “days are long but the weeks go by quickly.” For those of us deployed, I think that is a true statement. The Soldiers of the Brigade continue to amaze me on a daily basis with what they can do. I could not be more proud of their accomplishments so far, so I’d like to share a few. Since our arrival:

The Brigade has identified and destroyed numerous caches (measured in the tens of thousands of pounds) of homemade explosives used to make improvised explosive devices.

The Brigade has turned millions of dollars worth of equipment and parts back in to the supply system.

The Brigade has flown our nation’s senior leaders on a daily basis, to include senators, congressmen, ambassadors, both U.S. and foreign cabinet ministers and secretaries, as well as senior military members like Gen. David Petraeus.

The Brigade has identified tens of thousands of pounds of illegal narcotics that were subsequently destroyed by ground forces. (Note: drugs are a primary source of income for the insurgent forces).

The Brigade has helped save hundreds of individuals by timely Medevac to an appropriate hospital.

The Brigade has routinely worked with the forces of other nations, to include: Australia, Canada, Great Brit-

ain, Romania, Italy, Lithuania and several others.

The Brigade has partnered with the Afghan Army, Police, Border Patrol and Air Force.

As you can see, the Brigade is doing a lot and has some great things to show for it. However, as we all start to settle into the routine of the rotation, I think we should all remember a few things:

First, it is important that those deployed stay connected with not only each other, but also with those at home. Phone and Internet services are available at no cost through MWR.

Second, R & R leave is starting, and everyone should enjoy some well deserved time off when it is their turn to go. Remember that no one is guaranteed to get back on a specific day, so be careful on buying tickets that have to be used on a specific date.

Finally, if there are any changes in your Family at any time, please ensure you let your S1 know and change your important documents accordingly.

I am proud to serve with the best Soldiers in our Army.

A word from

Brigade Command Sergeant Major

Eric C. Thom

Hello to all, I am glad to say another month has already passed, and the Brigade is doing a great job. We have had some trials and tribulations, but we are doing exactly what we need to do to assist our ground brethren in executing counter-insurgency operations here in Regional Command South.

I would like to start off by announcing the winners of the Brigade Soldier and NCO of the Quarter Board. The competition pitted the best and brightest from each battalion and Headquarters Brigade, and everyone was well represented. Each participant should feel proud of what they have accomplished, but there can only be one Soldier and NCO representing the Brigade.

For the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2011, the winners are Sgt. Josh C. Miller of Task Force Lift and Spc. Brandon S. Delerson of Task Force Attack. They will join the winners of the remaining quarter boards in competing for Brigade Soldier/NCO of the Year to represent us at division. Once again, congratulations to them both.

Next, I want to pass on three pieces of information that affect everyone.

The first item is battlefield promotions. This is one of the great opportunities for enlisted Soldiers while deployed. The enlisted battlefield promotion policy accelerates the promotion of courageous and extraordinary Soldiers who willingly accept and flawlessly perform at levels of increased responsibility. This opportunity is reserved for individuals who display exceptional leadership that sets them apart from their peers.

Battlefield promotions are limited to the ranks of staff sergeant and below. Here are some of the basic criteria:

You must be a sergeant or below serving in support of Afghanistan operations.

You must not be flagged.

You must be serving in an authorized position in the next higher grade.

Battlefield promotions are exempt from all waiver limits for E2-E4.

You can only receive one battlefield promotion.

Ask your supervisor or read Army Regulation 600-8-19, Enlisted Promotions and Reductions, for the rest of the criteria. You should know we are not guaranteed any promotions just because we are here, but if your chain of command thinks you are that extraordinary performer who is working above your current grade they can nominate you. Just remember you should feel privileged and proud to be nominated. Very few will be nominated, and even fewer will actually receive the promotion.

The second item I want to talk about is the new Semi-centralized Promotions Process. The way we promote our sergeants and staff sergeants has officially changed. Official implementation will be June 1, but parts of this change are already in effect. The MILPER Message Number is 11-084, and here are three of the biggest changes.

The commander will no longer award promotion points.

The command sergeant major will not award points for board appearance.

You will only get promotion points for completed Army Correspondence courses, not for completed sub-courses.

There are way too many other changes to list them all here, so I recommend every NCO who has Soldiers and every Soldier who wants to become an NCO review the MILPER message and the Semi-Centralized Promotion Point Computations worksheet. Read and heed.

The third item I wanted to talk about is R&R leave.

We have reached the 60-day mark already, and as most of you know, that is the magic number to start our R&R leave. This time around there is an added benefit of the leave being non-chargeable.

That's right, free leave.

That being said, everyone must know this is a privilege and not an entitlement. You must be projected to serve at least 270 days on the ground to be eligible for this privilege.

During this time, the brigade commander and I expect certain things from you. You will travel to and from your leave in the appropriate uniform. No baseball caps, no Stetsons, no Army combat shirts.

I have worked it out with Coalition Joint Task Forces-10 to allow personnel who were only issued the A2CU version of the OCP to fly in those, but keep in mind that CJTF-10's area of influence is limited to RC-S. If you were only issued the A2CU uniform, you can still wear the set of ACUs I told everyone to bring.

As it stands now, you will still depart Kandahar with your ACH and IOTV with front and back plates. You will drop off the plates to be scanned, and the IOTV and ACH to be stored in Kuwait. You will not be allowed to leave Kandahar without these items , so do not delay your opportunity because you wanted to lighten your load too soon.

Enjoy your leave and return on time so your buddy can do the same. Remember we can only have so many gone at one time, and if you slow your process that affects the next guy.

That's all I have for this edition.

Remember we are a professional organization based on standards and discipline. You can have all the talent in the world, but talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There's plenty of movement, but you never know if it's going to be forward, backward or sideways!

Stay focused, and stay disciplined!

E C T

TF Thunder provides logistics link between Americans and Afghans



Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

Pathfinders from Task Force Palehorse, which is part of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade (Task Force Thunder), pull a large bag containing humanitarian assistance supplies out of a UH-60M Blackhawk helicopter in Deh Gholaman village in southern Afghanistan March 18. The supplies were donated by individuals and companies in the U.S., then sorted at a humanitarian assistance yard on Kandahar Airfield where the Soldiers are currently deployed.

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan, (March 19, 2011) -- Pathfinders from Troop E, 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment (Task Force Palehorse), along with air crews from Task Force Lift's Black Widows, provided the critical link between humanitarians in the U.S. and Afghans in need March 18, when they joined forces with the Afghan National Police to distribute supplies to the people of Deh Gholaman in Kandahar Province.

This wasn't the first time Coalition forces have tried to help the farming community, but it is the first time they actually made it into the village.

"We tried to get out here about a month ago," said Patrick Pendergest, a member of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations who participated in the mission. "The ground was too muddy. There aren't really any defined roads going in, and we got stuck."

The village is only about 10 kilometers from Kandahar Airfield, but ground conditions made it impossible for Pendergest and his team to make it in. Instead, they coordinated with Task Force Thunder to have the goods



Sgt. Thomas Bohall, a Pathfinder with Task Force Palehorse, helps Afghan National Police load humanitarian relief items onto a truck in the village of Deh Gholaman in Kandahar province. The ANP officers distributed the items to the people in the village who are facing a difficult year due to poor crops.

transported by helicopter.

After two UH-60M Blackhawk helicopters deposited the team of Pathfinders and OSI representatives outside the village, the birds made the brief trip back to Kandahar to pick up the two large bags filled with school supplies, shoes, blankets, hygiene items and books. Meanwhile, the troops on the ground maintained a security perimeter around the landing zone and coordinated with local leaders, including the local commander for the Afghan National Police.

"We're not the ones distributing the humanitarian assistance," said 1st Lt. John Runkle, the Pathfinder platoon leader. "We help unload it off the aircraft, but the ANP are the ones who will actually distribute it."

Runkle explained that Coalition forces are really just serving as a logistics conduit for the Afghans. This coordinated effort helps to further legitimize the Afghan government among a group of people who enjoy a peaceful, albeit difficult, existence.

"The area around here is predominantly farmland, and the villagers are typically poor," said Pendergest. "They rely heavily on their crops, and this year was a horrible

year for rain, so the crops aren't going to do so well. This, in turn, means they won't have too much money."

The villages that depend on farming for their survival are often more susceptible to bribery from the Taliban and insurgent forces.

"The Taliban try to use this as a way to influence the locals to support their efforts by supplying them with the money they'll miss from their crops," Pendergest explained. "Humanitarian aid provides a way for them to make it through the year without having to rely on the Taliban."

All of the humanitarian aid delivered to the village is donated by individuals and companies in the U.S. through non-profit organizations.

After the goods are collected, they're shipped off to humanitarian assistance supply yards - one in Kandahar, one at Bagram Airfield in eastern Afghanistan and one in Iraq. There, the goods are sorted and distributed according to needs. Some humanitarian missions focus on personal needs like clothing and hygiene, while other missions focus on distributing seeds, grains and other food or crop items.

TASK FORCE THUNDER MAKES MARK IN HISTORY

By Spc. Shanika L. Futrell
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

TARIN KOWT, Afghanistan (March 30, 2011) – Military members who have served for at least 30 days in a combat zone earn the right to wear the combat patch, formally known as the shoulder sleeve insignia for former wartime service, which is placed on the right sleeve of their uniform. The combat patch was indoctrinated after World War II and was authorized to Soldiers assigned with a division or higher element actively involved in combat operations against hostile forces.

Soldiers with the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, (Task Force Thunder), received the 101st Airborne Division SSI-FWTS during the unit's fifth deployment downrange in ceremonies throughout Afghanistan.

To some members of TF Thunder, the patch ceremony symbolized the mark they have made in history with TF Thunder as they deployed for either the first time ever or the first time with the 101st Abn. Div.

It feels good to be a part of tradition while serving in the best aviation brigade around, said Morristown, Tenn., native, Pfc. Victoria Reaves, an aviation operation specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, (TF Attack).

"This enables me to walk a little taller during my day, and now I feel like I am a part of the team. I saw the faces on the (combat veterans) as I had the patch placed on my right sleeve - to see them smile made me feel proud of what I have accomplished and what I will be accomplishing in the future."

These ceremonies are also an honor for the leaders.

"This is my first time as a first sergeant being able to place a patch on Soldiers becoming combat veterans," said 1st Sgt. Derrick Davis, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Thunder.

"Knowing how I felt when I received my patch and what it means to me now, there is no better feeling than keeping with tradition. This day marks a special moment in each individual's lives and now as a leader, I am honored to have shared it with my Soldiers."

"Receiving the combat patch makes me feel good, because this patch is what sets me aside from many other Soldiers," said Pfc. José Rivera, Co. C, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, TF Fighting. "I just received the rank of private first class with only a year of service, and I have already earned the right to be called a combat veteran."

Leaders say they could have given the patch to Soldiers and informed them they are authorized to wear the patch, but it is important to keep with tradition.

"Many of the Soldiers may not fully understand the significance behind the patch and the ceremony, but they will appreciate it later," said Sgt. 1st Class Ronnie Delaney, the communication NCO in charge with TF Attack. "This day will be a permanent reminder of when they first became a combat veteran. This is something that can't be taken from them, and when they get out or retire, this day, this patch, will still be linked to them. They will remember standing tall as their first sergeant and commander placed the airborne patch on their arm, giving them encouraging words,

; they will remember the sacrifices they have made to have received this patch, leaving behind loved ones or losing a battle buddy, and they will always remember the unit they were with, standing next to their brethren making their mark in TF Thunder's lineage."

Since its arrival in theater, TF Thunder has made significant contributions to aiding their brothers on the ground.

"My job plays an integral role in our aviation mission," said Pfc. Amy Copeland, a signal support specialist with TF Attack. "In order to ensure that our aircraft are where they need to be to save lives, I come to work ready for anything and focused on my tasks. I have always felt a sense of pride for what I do, but now that I wear my patch it means that much more."

Sounds of Thunder

What was your favorite part of being a military child?

"Growing up, my dad taught me how to shoot and we went camping together. I think that was my favorite part of being a military kid."

**Staff Sgt. Donovan Bunson
Pathfinder, 4th Bn., 101st Avn. Rgt.**



"I really enjoyed the travel. We traveled to Germany twice and to Fort Bragg. I liked making new friends."

**Pfc. Darren Rose
Avionics systems & armament repairman,
563rd Aviation Support Battalion**

"My favorite part of being a military brat was moving around a lot. My dad and grandfather were both in the Army - I'm third generation."

**Pfc. Bradley Tolbert,
Pathfinder, 4th Bn., 101st Avn. Rgt.**



*And from
our
facebook
page...*

"Knowing that my father was a part of something much bigger than most men can ever hope to be. My father may not have always been with me, but he was and still is a big part of my life. I was so happy the day that my dad got back into his cracker jacks to give me away to my favorite soldier! Now I am raising military brats of my own."

Jackalyn Johnson

Female aviators defy reported odds

Story and Photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs



Chief Warrant 4 Anne Wiley (left), the senior standardizations instructor pilot for 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, and Capt. Carmel Cammack, an assistant operations officer for the unit, both OH-58D Kiowa pilots, conduct pre-flight inspections on their aircraft at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan.

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (March 21, 2011) -- When Chief Warrant Officer 4 Trudy Truax arrived at her first unit as an OH-58A pilot in 1996, her commander refused her orders.

"I've had my own battalion commanders not speak to me," Truax said.

Truax was one of the first females to join the community of Cobra, Apache and Kiowa pilots after then-President Bill Clinton lifted the restrictions that kept women from flying the traditionally combat-focused rotary-wing birds. She was one of only six women in her class -- three from West Point and three warrant officers. Today, she's the only one of the six still serving in the Army, and she serves as the standardization instructor pilot for Company C (Dustoff), 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, which is currently deployed to Afghanistan with Task Force Thunder, the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade.

According to a study released earlier this month by the Military Leadership Diversity Commission, women account for only 16 percent of leadership positions in the military -- a seemingly staggering statistic to release during National Women's History Month. But not so much so when compared to the overall statistic of women serving in the military, which is 16.4 percent, according to a September 30 report released by the Department of Defense.

To Truax and the other women who fill key positions within the aviation



From left to right: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Elizabeth Kimbrough, Capt. Donna J. Buono, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Anne Wiley, and Capt. Carmel Cammack, all leaders within Task Force Palehorse, join for a group shot in front of an AH-64 Apache at their landing pads on Kandahar Airfield. All four of the women fly either Apaches or OH-58D Kiowas. Wiley serves as the unit's senior standardization instructor pilot and is the first to hold that position at a squadron level.

community, the numbers are just that -- numbers. And they don't taken into account the positions that women are holding within the military or where they were 20 years ago.

Lt. Col. Neil Reilly, the squadron commander for 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, was assigned to 2nd Sqdn., 17th Cav. Rgt., in 1998. With him was then-Warrant Officer Anne Wiley, who had recently graduated as an OH-58 Kiowa pilot. Today, Wiley is a chief warrant officer 4 and serves as the senior standardization instructor pilot for Reilly's unit. She is the first female to hold that position at a squadron level. But she didn't get there overnight.

"I went through relentless hazing," Wiley said of her time as a new pilot and a female in a man's world. "But today, when one of my peers comes up and bumps me on the shoulder and asks how it's going, I know it

was worth it, and that I've made it."

The challenges Wiley and her counterparts faced in the beginning paved the way for many who've come since.

"Flying has been my recurring dream since I was little," said Capt. Carmel Cammack, an assistant operations officer in Task Force Palehorse and an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior pilot. "I've never been treated any differently, and I appreciate the fact that (other women) were the ones to pioneer this for me. I know that they went through a lot of hazing and a rash of other stuff that I have not had to go through."

For Reilly, it's never been about gender, and Wiley and the female pilots like her have proven that time and again.

"Miss Wiley maintains a mission focus, but has the personality, the charisma, and also has the profes-

sionalism and experience that afford her a great deal of credibility," Reilly said.

For the women filling the leadership roles, the professionalism and experience are the important parts.

"As you show your competence and as you show that you can hang with the boys, you show that you're as good as the boys, your acceptance is there," Truax explained. "You must always maintain -- as with any aviator -- proficiency and excellence, and if you can show that's what you have, then you're fully accepted."

While Truax and Wiley have been around long enough to know what it's like to be evaluated on gender rather than competency, they've witnessed the shift throughout their careers, and the younger women coming up behind them have only experienced evaluations based on capabilities.

Capt. Donna J. Buono, the company commander for Company B, 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, which is task-organized under Reilly's unit for the deployment, was commissioned in 2004 and joined her first unit as a platoon leader while the company was deployed to Iraq. She was the first female to serve with the company in more than 15 years.

"I was anticipating a little bit of push-back," she said. "And I think what I got for about a month was less female-male stuff it was more new platoon leader, and after about that month of transition – getting used to them and getting to know 'em – I think I had a very positive experience.

"It's more about being a good leader and being competent, and much less these days about male-female," she explained.

In fact, the main challenges that limit the number of females serving in leadership positions are often brought on by their own accord rather than by restrictions or gender bias within the Army.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Elizabeth Kimbrough is a pilot in command and safety officer with Co. B, 3rd Bn., 101st Avn. Rgt. She flies the AH-64D Apache, which often serves to intimidate on the battlefield. At nearly 32, Kimbrough said she loves what she does, but thinks her family is afraid she'll stay in forever.

"My time will be up after June of next year, and I'm still on the fence," she said. "I love, love my job, but I'd still like the opportunity to get married and have kids, and I don't know how I'd do it if I'd stay in. So that's something I think about nearly every single day."

Kimbrough isn't the only one facing that challenging decision.

"I have kind of fended off most relationships that have possibly started," said Cammack. "I personally think it would be extremely hard to have a

From left to right: Capt. Carmel Cammack, Capt. Donna J. Buono, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Anne Wiley, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Elizabeth Kimbrough, all leaders within Task Force Palehorse, join for a group shot in outside the task force's operation center at Kandahar Airfield.

family in the military. Right now I have the opportunity to say that I don't want kids in the military – I think that would be hard, and that is not something that I want to do, how that's going to play into future career, I don't know. I don't know. It's tough."

As pioneers for women in aviation, both Wiley and Truax stand as an example in this regard too. Wiley started her aviation career as a single mom. Truax has a different perspective.

"Women can be in the Army, and we can have 20-plus year careers and we can have 20-plus years married to the same man, and like I have – I have four children," she said. "I want it all. I want the cake and the ice cream. You can have a solid marriage. You can have children and still do your time in combat."

As with anything in life, it's about balance and maintaining that delicate harmony between professional and personal. But for those women who want to fill the leadership roles, the doors are far from closed.

"I never expected to be where I am today, and I never expected to be in the positions I've been in," Truax said. "Standardizations wasn't a place women went. I think the new men of the Army - new commanders - they understand, and if I didn't cut the mustard I wouldn't be in the positions I've been in. But they very much have unlocked the doors to allow us to show that we have the ability to do what we (Army aviators) do.

"I had to open the doors by proving myself, but they unlocked them for me."



RTOs - The ears of the operation

Story by Spc. Shanika L. Futrell
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

TARIN KOWT, Afghanistan (April 1, 2011) – As the radio telephone operator with the 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, (Task Force Attack), arrives for duty, the entire tactical operations center conducts a shift-change brief informing the oncoming shift of what has happened and what is currently going on.

“The brief is vital for the next shift because anything that has happened prior to take over could potentially affect missions throughout the day,” said Sgt. Kenneth Mattson, the nighttime battle NCO. “Because all information is essential to ongoing missions, we ensure that we provide a well-composed debrief of what has happened during our time on shift.”

RTO is the most important job within the operations center because of what the job entails.

“The RTO is the central point of communications between the pilots on the aircraft and the battle captain,” said Spc. Andrew Glover, an aviation operations specialist with TF Attack. “The RTO is the glue that keeps the mission together.”

Just as communication is necessary for a successful relationship, RTOs keep the mission successful, he said.

The TOC as a whole forms the brains of each mission, and the RTOs are considered the ears that receive all the information and forward it to the brain.

“As an RTO I listen, write down the information, report and communicate back,” said Pfc. Erich Kerkow, an RTO with TF Attack. “The most important part for an RTO is to listen, so we ensure we have all the correct information to pass to the battle captain to make the best decisions.”

The RTO doesn't just pass the information to the battle captain; he also has to catch the attention of everyone else in the room.

“Attention in the TOC (is) yelled so all personnel are actively paying attention to what is going on,” said Pfc. Erich Kerkow, an RTO with TF Attack. “Then we put out the vital information to ensure we provide the nec-

essary support for that mission.”

RTOs have a variety of tools that help them communicate with each of the task forces.

“We use the blue-force tracker to track aircraft, the transverse to communicate information concerning medevac missions and posting wheels up and wheels down, and we use a (Department of the Army Form) 1594 to log everything that happens during our shift,” said Spc. Eric Lane, an RTO with TF Attack. “We also log significant actions and post when the mission is complete.”

Unfortunately, there are times when the electronic equipment fails, taking away computer communications. When this happens, RTOs are forced to call different task forces on the phone to relay information.

“When our equipment goes down, we have to use other assets to get the information to the necessary people,” said Kerkow. “This throws a wrench into our mission, but we are trained for situations like this.”

If the main generator goes down, all power connected to that generator goes out causing a blackout for the TOC.

“We have installed a backup generator for the TOC ensuring that the mission is carried forward,” said Master Sgt. Bailey Deeds, the operations NCO in charge. “The aviation mission never stops, so the mission that the radio telephone operators have to support them must continue as well.”

Pilots say RTOs are essential to them for relaying information.

“(RTOs) are an essential relay between the pilots and the commander's guidance, said Cpt. Andrew Bailiff, a CH-47F Chinook pilot with TF Lift. “They provide us with the most current information, (from) whether we can go out on a mission or not, to what to expect in a certain area of a mission.”

RTOs say their mission is never done.

“Until we are back at home with all of our troops safe and sound, with all birds on the ground,” said Kerkow, “we will continue to provide the necessary coverage to keep the mission going and successful.”

Women's History Month celebrated on Kandahar Airfield



The all-female color guard retires the colors during a National Women's History Month observance put on by the Equal Opportunity advisors for Regional Command - South at Kandahar Airfield March 18. The event raised awareness of monumental contributions by women throughout American history.

Story and photos by Spc. Jennifer Andersson
TF Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (March 19, 2011) - The movements that so greatly influenced the growth of women's roles in today's society were celebrated in a Women's History Month observance put on by the equal opportunity advisors from Regional Command-South here March 18.

The event highlighted five particularly notable movements that influenced women's history: the Labor Movement, the Women's Suffrage Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Rights Movement and the Environmental Movement.

"The significance of this event is to make people aware of the roles women have played in our American history," said Master Sgt. Earl Edmund, the RC-South EO NCO in charge. "We are here to educate folks on those events. We have women who've been in the military – women who, before the military started taking females, played a part in the wars – dressed as males, so they would not be discovered. They were spies, nurses, doctors, mechanics and so forth."

Although Women's History Month is formally recognized nationally in the United States and United Kingdom, the women featured at the booths at the event were from international backgrounds.

The EO advisors celebrate observances each month in an attempt to educate people about cultural diversity, said Tech. Sgt. Tanya R. Wyatt, the Air Force EO Director for the 451st Air Expeditionary Wing here.

Even the all-female color guard showed diversity – racially, ethnically and in service affiliation.

"This is to educate ... people from all different backgrounds about the part that women have played in developing our country, not only in the military, but in science, in the medical field (and) in the economy as a whole," said Edmund. "We are not celebrating only American women. We are celebrating women from all over the world."

According to Army.mil, women have been serving in the U.S. Army since 1775 as nurses, cooks and laundresses. Women's roles in the military changed after the Vietnam War. In 1972, all military occupational specialties opened to women, both enlisted and officer, except for those requiring combat duty.

"It shows in women's equality that we are able in the military, especially in the Army, that we can do just as much or maybe a little bit more than a male can," said Staff Sgt. Melanie Coronado, NCOIC for Battalion Command Group, Headquarters Support Company,



A Soldier reads about women highlighted at a booth during a National Women's History Month observance. The major objective of the event was to educate people on matters of equality and women's influences in modern society.

which women are growing to be accepted as figures in society.

"I appreciate what I have by serving in Afghanistan because the contrast is so stark," Averett-Brauer said. "Even when I was in Bagram the last time, it is so profound - the difference in our societies, the role of women and where women stand in our societies that I really appreciate what I have and I appreciate how easy my life is. I have amazing respect for the women in this country, for what they have done and what they do every day and how they fight for the things we take for granted. Is it that much more special here? Yes, it really is, actually."

Averett-Brauer said as the societal roles of women change, so change the

Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 10th Mountain Division. "I was in a unit that was all males and I did as much as they did, or even pushed myself further. It goes to show our male counterparts that just because I'm female, it doesn't mean anything. We're Soldiers the last time I checked. We all wear green."

Women have been mechanics since World War II, said Col. Tamara Averett-Brauer, the Air Force commander of the 451st Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, and the guest speaker at the event.

"These were women who had to prove themselves as maintainers and introduced the little red wagon as a way to carry the heavy tool box, but who came to be valued and respected particularly when the guys found out that their smaller hands could reach some areas that the men's hands couldn't."

Pfc. Keyata Abbitt, a mechanic tasked out as a Supply clerk for 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, said that even in her lifetime, she's seen women's roles grow in the military.

"I'm an Army brat," she said. "When I would go to the bases, I would see mostly males. Now you see (as many) females as males. You see more females gaining rank. You see more females doing different jobs."

The location of this event is significant because of the advances women have made in many societies in the world, including including Afghanistan, a country in

roles of men. Her husband is technically an Army wife, she said. It is a non-traditional role, which puts him in an awkward position.

"One of my personal challenges I have right now is the support for our male spouses," she said. "Because there are more women in the military, that means there are more men doing something really different. They don't necessarily want to go to a breakfast and talk about babies. They want to go mountain biking or bowling."

"This event is an opportunity to recognize the journey



women have had to where we are today in our society. It helps us understand where we came from and to appreciate those who went ahead of us and paved the way to let us do the things we do now," said Averett-Brauer.

Soldiers discuss historically noteworthy women at a booth as they enjoy refreshments after the Women's History Month observance held here.

Afghan Air Force, Thunder talk partnership



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Elizabeth Kimbrough - an AH-64 Apache pilot - and Capt. Donna Buono (middle) - the commander of Company B, 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, and an AH-64 Apache pilot - introduce Afghan Air Force Maj. Gen. Abdul Razik Sherzai, the commander of the Kandahar Air Wing, to the helicopter during the general's visit with Task Force Thunder here April 2. Sherzai met with Col. Todd Royar - the task force commander - and his subordinate leaders to discuss future partnering opportunities between their two units.

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (April 2, 2011)
– Members of the Afghan Air Force met with the leaders of Task Force Thunder here April 2 to discuss future partnership opportunities to further expand the capabilities of native rotary-wing assets.

Afghan Air Force Maj. Gen. Abdul Razik Sherzai, the commander of the Kandahar Air Wing, along with members of his staff, met with Task Force Thunder commander Col. Todd Royar and his subordinate leaders to evaluate how the two organizations could best work together.

“We’ve been looking forward to this partnership,” Sherzai said after Royar provided an overview of the composition of Task Force Thunder and the ways in which he believed his Soldiers could best help Sherzai and his team.

Among the possible areas for partnership discussed were crew chief training, air assault operations, security forces, sling-load operations, air and ground force integration and medevac operations.

The crew chief training is especially important, said Afghan Air Force Capt. Payenda, an MI-17 pilot with the Kandahar Air Wing. They see everything the pilots can’t see and have a very important job.

Another area the two teams will likely focus on initially is the air-ground integration.

“The (U.S.) Air Force has been the lead for helicopter training here since about 2007,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Fred Koegler, the commander of the 441st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, which is part of the NATO team of advisors for the Afghan Air Force. “We haven’t had any Army advisors (for the helicopter teams).”

Koegler explained that the Air Force has a different skill set than the Army when it comes to rotary-wing aircraft.

“We have the search and rescue teams, so we’re able to provide a lot of advice on the medical side of things, but we don’t integrate our air and ground assets the way the Army does, and we absolutely welcome any help the Army can offer in advising the Afghan Air Force.”

Another focal point of Sherzai’s was the possibility of Pathfinder training for his forces. While the Army doesn’t offer a formal Pathfinder course in Afghanistan, Royar did present the possibility of his Pathfinder company teaching at least parts of the course to the Afghan forces.

Though this was one of the initial meetings between Task Force Thunder and its Afghan counterparts, it’s expected that there will be many more in the future as the two join in a partnership to benefit the people and the future of Afghanistan.

Some troops qualify for extended tax filing deadline

By Elaine Sanchez
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 1, 2011 -- Servicemembers serving outside of the United States -- including those supporting operations in Libya and Japan -- will receive an automatic two-month tax filing extension this year, officials said.

This extension is in addition to the nation's already extended deadline. Due to Emancipation Day, a holiday recognized by the District of Columbia, government officials have pushed the nation's tax filing deadline from April 15 to April 18.

Deployed service members already receive an automatic 180-day extension from the last day served in the deployed location, plus the number of days remaining to file before entering that location, officials said. This extension includes filing taxes or paying them, and interest doesn't accrue on any taxes owed.

Service members supporting Operation Tomodachi in Japan and operations in Libya are entitled to receive a two-month extension, pushing the tax filing deadline to June 15. Also eligible are service members serving outside of the United States, and U.S. citizens and residents living and working outside of the United States.

Service members and their spouses who file a joint return both qualify for the extension, but if filing separately, each spouse must qualify separately.

Taxpayers eligible for the extension should keep in mind that the extension applies to filing and paying taxes, officials said. If taxes are owed, they still will accrue interest from the April 18 deadline. People who qualify for the two-month extension are still eligible even if physically present in the United States or Puerto

Rico on April 18, officials added.

To use the extension, people must attach a statement to their return explaining which situation qualifies them for an extension, officials said. If filing at a military tax center, the tax preparer can enter the explanation on the electronic return.

All taxpayers can request a six-month extension to file if they can't file by the April 18 due date by filing a Form 4868, which is available on the Internal Revenue Service website at <http://www.irs.gov>. They'll have until Oct. 17 to file, but must pay any



owed tax by April 18 or face penalties and interest charges.

People who qualify for the automatic two-month extension but need more time to file also may request an additional four months to file by filing a Form 4868 and checking Block 8: "Out of the country." They'll also have until Oct. 17 to file, but payment is still due on June 15, and if taxes are owed, the interest will accrue from April 18.

For tax preparation help, service members and their spouses have a host of free, expert tax-preparation services at their disposal, from

on-base centers to online software, Army Lt. Col. Evan Stone, director of the Armed Forces Tax Council, told American Forces Press Service.

People can visit most any installation around the world for free, in-person tax-preparation assistance through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, Stone said.

Service members and their families also can take advantage of free, online electronic tax filing services through Military OneSource. The customized program offers free federal filing and free filing for up to three states.

People can access the H&R Block at Home program by going to Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.com/> and clicking on "Tax Filing Services." For free tax-related phone consultations, people can call the Military OneSource Tax Hotline at 1-800-730-3802 seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. EDT.

The online program is open to active-duty Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force personnel; Guard and Reserve service members regardless of activation status; as well as spouses, dependent children and family members standing in for a deployed service member.

Stone suggested people take advantage of the free advice offered at military tax centers.

"Even the simplest return may have issues or deductions or credits that a person might not be aware of," he said.

For more on military-related tax laws, people should visit the Military OneSource website or the IRS website, which features a section for service members and their families.

Attack: COIN at Altitude

Story by Spc. Shanika L. Futrell
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs



A OH-58D Kiowa helicopter provides overwatch during a humanitarian mission in Deh Gholaman in Kandahar Province March 18. In an effort to shore more respect for the local population, aircraft will often fly at higher altitudes in certain areas.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl

TARIN KOWT, Afghanistan (April 4, 2011) – For 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, (Task Force Attack), a critical component of counterinsurgency at altitude is having air mission commanders who can properly execute rules of engagement and tactical directives.

“We have to ensure we do things by the books,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kristopher Cornelius, the standardization instructor pilot for TF Attack.

Each engagement is investigated to ensure the Soldiers involved followed the ROE properly, and people who don’t follow the rules properly are subject to punishment, he explained.

The 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, (TF Thunder), falls under International Security Assistance Force ROE, a directive outlining limitations and circumstances to determine whether or not a target is hostile and can be fired upon. The aviators are very deliberate when they engage and exercise levels of precaution to ensure they are making the best decision.

Part of the ability to effectively make these decisions comes from the guidance they receive from their commander, Lt. Col. Roderick Hynes, the battalion commander. Hynes converses with his crew often to ensure they do not become complacent with COIN and ROE.

“The battalion commander says it best when he tells us

to think ‘Can I and should I?’,” said Capt. Tricia Hale, the TF Attack operations officer. “This means (asking) ‘Can I legally do what I intend to do and should I do it?’ while keeping in mind our overall efforts.”

One of the main things commanders take into consideration is how a course of action will impact the local population.

It’s important to make sure innocent people won’t suffer from our Coalition actions, said Cpl. Kenneth Keisler, the mid-shift battle NCO for TF Attack.

To make sure this doesn’t happen, Soldiers conduct damage assessments after every engagement.

Unfortunately, accidents happen, said Keisler. But the damage assessments help keep Coalition forces from making the same mistakes twice. This helps build the trust and confidence of the Afghan people, which is critical to the nation’s progress.

As a result of ongoing assessments, Task Force Thunder has adopted practices that are more respectful of the people and their way of life.

“We fly our aircraft high in order to not scare or disrupt the Afghan people,” said Cornelius. “This is important so the people know we are not here to intimidate or humiliate them.”

In addition to being considerate of the locals, another



Photo by Sgt. Richard Carreon

Above: An AH-64 Apache helicopter comes in for a landing in southern Afghanistan. The Apaches are an intimidator on the battlefield, but Task Force Thunder aviators are careful to exercise levels of precaution before engaging targets.

Below: Brig. Gen. Timothy J. Edens (center), the deputy commander of the Army Aviation Center of Excellence at Fort Rucker, Ala., joins members of the Afghan Air Force and Task Force Thunder for a dinner April 11 to discuss upcoming partnership efforts between Afghan Air Force and TF Thunder.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl

important part of aviation COIN is partnership.

Right now, TF Thunder is in the initial stages of its partnership with the Afghan Air Force.

“Our Afghan partners are extremely important not only because of what we are trying to accomplish, which is the government building a better rapport and building an accountable governance with their Afghan population, but it shows the locals that we can work well together, and they can trust their forces, as well as the U.S. Forces,” said Capt. Clint Galloway, the battle captain for TF Attack.

Marines, Army combine efforts at FARP

Story and photos by Spc. Jennifer Andersson
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE EDINBURGH, Afghanistan (March 21, 2011) – While Task Force Thunder primarily comprises Soldiers, it's not just Soldiers who are making the mission happen.

Eight Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit based out of Cherry Point, N.C., and two Marines from the Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 based out of Miramar, Calif., received Army Achievement Medals March 20 for their part in the joint mission here.

Lt. Col. Charles R. Bowery Jr., the commander of the 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, (TF Dragon), which is based out of Fort Hood, Texas, presented the awards to the Marines for their exceptional speed and efficiency at the forward arming and

refueling point in support of Army special operations with TF Dragon.

Since their Oct. 1 arrival here, the Marines have provided Army aircrews with more than 25,000 gallons of fuel, said 1st Lt. Nathaniel G. Miller, the air traffic control officer in charge for the 26th MEU.

The Army welcomed the assistance from the Marines, which has proved beneficial to the efforts in Afghanistan.

"A lot of our (special operations) missions have been run in the RC-Southwest in the Helmand River Valley," said Bowery. "The Marines have come online and offered FOB Edinburgh to conduct refuel and rearm ops to support our mission. Without the folks here at Edinburgh, we'd have to fly all the way to Camp Bastion for fuel, which is a half-hour away. It would decrease our response time and decrease our support of ground forces."

"We've done eight different deliberate operations sup-

ported out of FOB Edinburgh," he said. "The Marines are awesome. They provide great, fast fuel support. On the last few operations we've sent a number of our fuel and armament Soldiers out here to work at FOB Edinburgh and they've been welcomed on the team every single time, so it's been a great example of joint operations between the Army and the Marines."

Joint operations offer advantages to missions that a single-service operation might not offer.

"We take advantage of the skills of every service brings to the fight," said Bowery. "By operating this way, it extends our reach. We can operate farther from our home base at KAF because we know the Marines understand our systems. We share a common language in terms of air traffic control, and we share common procedures for refueling and rearming aircraft."

"When a Marine runs up to an Army Apache, he knows where the refuel nodule is; he knows how it works, which is not something you can take for granted. These guys have to be trained to do this, and they do a superb job."

"Our battalion's mission is to fly and support ... special operations forces," said Bowery. "RC-Southwest is a Marine theater of operation, so they run all of the bases out here in Southwest. So, by its nature, every time we're out here, it's a joint op."

The Marines don't work with the AH-64 Apache helicopters very often, said Sgt. Jeff Neely, a bulk fuel specialist with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373, based in Miramar, Calif., from Yadkinville, N.C., so learning how to refuel them quickly was a skill they had to improve.

Special operations missions are particularly time-critical, which put the Marines under increased pressure.

"I never knew how critical missions were with special operations teams," said Neely. "I never worked with them before, until we got out here, and realized that timelines were so crucial to a mission."

Despite the newness of the mission in the beginning, Bowery said the Marines nailed the process down quickly. In fact, he compared the speed with which the Marines



Lt. Col. Charles R. Bowery, Jr., the commander of 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, congratulates and thanks Pfc. John A. Coleman, a bulk fuel specialist with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373, after awarding him the Army Achievement Medal. The Marines supported the Army's aircraft needs in a joint mission critical to the special operations of the 1st ARB, 4th CAB.

worked to refuel the aircraft to that of a NASCAR pit crew.

The Marines found they worked well with the Army. "We both showed each other equal amounts of respect," said Neely.

"There (are) no real differences," said Pfc. John A. Coleman, a bulk fuel specialist with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373, from Johnson City, Ill. "Everyone still follows the same safety rules. Everyone moves with the same intensity. I get along great with them. They had their job, and we had ours, but it was the same mission. We were able to work together with that, and we weren't stepping on each others' toes."

The combined efforts between Army and Marines seemed to

have produced effective results for the mission in Afghanistan.

"The special operations forces that operate out here in the Helmand Valley have had an impact on the enemy as a result of the great support that we get from the folks here at Edinburgh," said Bowery. "We are really excited to come out and present some Army Achievement Medals to them to recognize them for their work."

The recognition for their hard work was not the only thing these Marines will be taking away with them - it's the pride in the accomplishment and experiences others may never have.

"I'm really proud to work with the Army," said Coleman. "Not too many Marines out here with our unit got a chance to, especially got a chance to work with the special forces, so I'm proud to go back home and say that. I'm pretty new to the Marine Corps, so I don't have a lot of rank, but now I have a lot more experience because I got to work with the Army, different birds and different missions."

"I don't have a lot of rank, but now I have a lot more experience because I got to work with the Army, different birds and different missions."

*Pfc. John A. Coleman,
Bulk fuel specialist
Marine Wing Support Squadron 373*



Ten Marines return to their position after receiving Army Achievement Medals during a ceremony here March 20. They were recognized for helping Task Force Dragon complete their special operations missions by offering exceptional efficiency in refueling aircraft.



Lt. Col. Charles R. Bowery, Jr., the commander of 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, expresses his thanks to the Marines who played integral roles in TF Dragon's mission success.

The First Cup refills Soldiers' minds, bodies, spirits

Story by Spc, Jennifer Andersson
TF Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (March 23, 2011) - Visitors to The First Cup enjoy coffee or tea on a sofa in front of a large-screen TV during shift change or a work break. The movie is hard to hear because of the construction that is going on directly overhead.

The noisy workers upstairs are focused on the sanding, grinding, cutting, measuring and nailing pieces of wood to be able to open for business. The workers had a goal to open The First Cup's morale center for business by March 25.

The volunteer construction workers, all Soldiers of 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, (Task Force Thunder), are there only during daylight hours. In fact, The First Cup, which is solely supported by donations and run by the unit's chaplains, was not built by DynCorp, which builds the facilities the units here use, but was built originally by volunteers from 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, (TF Destiny) before TF Thunder arrived in theater, said Robert S. Lee, of Los Angeles, the chaplain for 7th Bn., 101st Avn. Rgt., 159th CAB, 101st Abn. Div., (TF Lift). "Whoever had time off helped build this, including the chaplains and the carpenters within the battalions and within this area," he said. "Some of the Seabees helped donated some wood and supplies, and OneStop helped supply some things, too. It was the people who helped build this coffeehouse."

Spc. Joseph Socha, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter maintainer for Company D, TF Lift, was tasked to help with the construction of The First Cup due to his 27-years' experience in construction.

"I did something similar to this with the coffeehouse in Bagram," the Richmond, Va., native said. "My name was passed from sergeant major to sergeant major. I was told about the project, and because of the quality of work I put out, I was requested (for the job)."

Socha has been working on this project since the reno-

vation began in February, said Lee.

"Specialist Socha deserves a lot of credit for his work," said Spc. Eric Glaser, a resident of Vancouver, Wash., and a CH-47 Chinook helicopter mechanic for Co. D, TF Lift. "I know last deployment he was doing a lot of hands-on projects for the sergeants major out there then. We all knew when we got out here there would be some project for him to work on. The fact that he put the actual labor into this, I think he deserves a lot of credit. Without him, I don't think this would really be accomplished."

When TF Thunder first received the building, the second floor was more of a covered balcony, and not of much use, he said.

"It was like an open bay," Lee said. "It was supposed to be like an open-air lounge. We were thinking

about making an open-air movie theater upstairs so you could just hang out during the summer nights. That was the original intent by 6-101."

But the spring showers brought leaks into the coffeehouse, he said. Instead of simply correcting the roofing, the chaplains nurtured TF Lift's Command Sgt. Maj. Jean Thomas' idea of transforming the original open-air sitting area into a United Service Organization-type computer and telephone room.

Jack Helmuth, of Corry, Penn., a CH-47 Chinook mechanic with Co. D, TF Lift, was one of the first TF Thunder Soldiers to arrive at KAF, so he has seen the transformation of The First Cup morale center.

"We started using The First Cup almost immediately," he said. "I've used their cards, board games, everything, including watching their movies."

The benefits of the coffeehouse don't stop only at morale. It includes areas that encourage either interaction with others, such as the board game area or the video game room, or private time, such as the reading area. The computer center and phones upstairs keep Soldiers connected to their Families.

People in the motorpool don't have access to computers. Where are they going to get on a computer?

Spc. Sandie De Los Reyes, Night shift customer service attendant The First Cup



Photo by Capt. Robert S. Lee
Spc. Joseph Socha from Co. D, TR Lift, returns to his task of enclosing the upstairs of The First Cup. The upstairs of the building, initially constructed by 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, (TF Destiny), had been intended as an open-air lounge, but remained unused.

"People in the motorpool don't have access to computers," said Sandie De Los Reyes, a wheeled vehicle mechanic for TF Fighting, currently working as a night shift customer service attendant at The First Cup. "Where are they going to get on a computer?"

Time and location constraints often inhibits the ability of workers at Mustang Ramp to use the MWR or USO computer or phone centers. Travel time between the billeting and work is sometimes an hour long, one way. Time to contact family sometimes cut into much-needed sleep.

Until now.

"We don't have that much free time back at the barracks because it's so far away from work," said Helmuth. "I can use these computers and phones right after work instead of taking the bus all the way home to the barracks, then walk all the way to the USO, then all the way back to the barracks. Now, once I'm done with work,

I can run upstairs, talk to my family and then go home. It will be so much simpler. I work seven to seven. I haven't gone to the USO for that reason. By the time I get back to my room, it's ten. Then you have to wake up again at five to get back here to do it all again. It's not that simple to just use a computer or phone whenever."

"Our job (requires) 24-hour ops, so we're 12 hours here, and the bus ride back, chow, and sleep. It's nice to know that if you have a minute or two of downtime, you can shoot an e-mail out to your family, or give your mom a call, or your wife," said Glaser. "With your down time, you want to be efficient with it, because you never know when you'll get it again."

"I haven't seen my Leave and Earnings Statement since



Photo by Spc. Sandie De Los Reyes

Pfc. Bryan Torres, an aviation specialist with Co. B, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, TF Fighting, coaches his wife during labor via an Internet video call April 5. He said he might have missed the birth of his first child had the computer center not been opened for operation only days before.



Photo by Spc. Jennifer Andersson

Spc. Joseph Socha, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter maintainer for D Co., 7th Bn., 101st Avn. Rgt., inspects a piece of fresh-cut trim for the finishing touches to the computer room upstairs in The First Cup March 22.

I've been here," said De Los Reyes. "I've had to rely on my husband to get it for me. Now, when I have a minute, I can go upstairs and check it."

Pfc. Bryan Torres, an aviation specialist with Co. B, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, TF Fighting, who works night shift, was delighted The First Cup's computer center opened April 3 – almost not soon enough. Because of the facilities' opening, he was able to watch the birth of his first child over a video call.

"The baby was two weeks early," he said. "I was scheduled to go on R&R when the baby was due, but my wife delivered early. I wanted to be there, and I was so nervous."

Torres was discouraged when he was not able to be at his wife's side to witness the miraculous moment they had planned to share together.

"When I found out she went into labor early, Major

(Nathan) Surrey told me to take the rest of the night off and sent me to (The First Cup's computer center)," he said. "If the computer center had not been open, I would have been very sad because I would have missed it all. I couldn't hold her hand, but to be able to see her and talk to her during the birth was great."

In addition to its other uses, the coffeehouse is currently being used as a worship center on Sundays for those who work at Mustang Ramp, said Maj. Brian Curry, 159th CAB, TF Thunder's brigade chaplain, from Shepherdsville, Ky.

Those who attend services at The First Cup are not from just TF Thunder. Contractors who work in the dining facility nearby also make up the body of the worshippers.

"The coffeehouse can easily accommodate up to 30 or 40 people at a worship service in the dayroom area. We set up at (10 a.m.) for the day shift on Sunday, and at (8 p.m.) for night shift. We've been averaging 20 worshippers on Sunday mornings and 15 to 18 on Sunday nights."

Right now, there are no plans to construct a chapel at Mustang ramp, unless the number of worshippers at The First Cup grows to a point where services can no longer be held there, Curry said.

If that is the case, there would likely be a number of volunteers to help construct it, and Socha would likely be its ringleader.

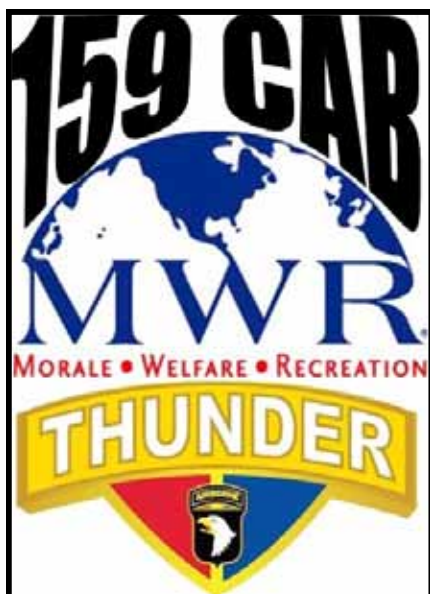
"It's an honor to promote morale for this many Soldiers and to do something like this," he said.

"This is something I've always enjoyed doing.

It's in my blood."



Photo by Capt. Robert S. Lee



5K RUN MAY 22

\$10 DONATION & FREE SHIRT

Come dressed to express your Patriotism
Help your fellow military members who were
injured in the line of duty!

Sign up with SSG Fick in the TF Thunder Legal Office or at the
 Boardwalk M-W-F & Sun @ 1100-1300 Starting May 1st (must
 have your \$10 to sign up)



April-2011

**WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT**

In MWR Music Room from 19:00-23:00

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16 Spoken Word
17	18 958TH NCO CALL	19	20	21	22 Birthday Bash	23
24	25	26	27	28	29 Photo Night	30 Spoken Word

ROCKBAND NIGHT STARTING IN MAY
AT 1ST CUP ON MUSTANG RAMP!!!



TF THUNDER
Command
Retention Officer
 Col Kenneth T. Royar

TF THUNDER
Command
Retention NCO
 CSM Eric C. Thom

TF THUNDER
Senior Career
Counselor
 MSG Jose Urbaz
 DSN 318-481-2522

Why We Continue to Serve:
 To support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.



TF THUNDER RETENTION

What's Happening in Retention !

Lowered Retention Control Points

An enlisted person cannot stay in the military forever. Enlisted Soldiers must be promoted by certain time frames during their careers, or they must separate from the service. This is known as the retention control point. Lowered retention control points are designed to retain Soldiers with the greatest potential for future service.

Effective 1 June 2011 (Milper message #11-096), Regular Army and Active Guard Reserve (Title 10) Soldiers may perform active service up to their retention control point or age 62, whichever occurs first. Soldiers may not exceed the RCP shown below by more than one month.

ARMY RETENTION CONTROL POINTS

GRADE	TOTAL AD YRS
PVT-PFC.....	5
CPL/SPC.....	8
CPL/SPC (PROMOTABLE).....	12
SGT	13
SGT (PROMOTABLE)	15
SSG	20
SSG (PROMOTABLE).....	26
SFC	26
SFC (PROMOTABLE).....	29
1SG/MSG	29
1SG/MSG (PROMOTABLE).....	32
CSM/SGM	32

● Soldiers with questions pertaining to RCP changes should contact their appropriate career Counselor for clarification

TF THUNDER Retention Contacts

● SFC Middleton	TF Fighting	DSN: 318-431-2841
● SFC Depontee	TF Attack	DSN:
● SSG Holman	TF Wings	DSN: 303-673-4613
● SSG Cartwright	TF Lift	DSN: 318-421-7216
● SSG Scruggs	TF Palehorse	DSN: 318-421-7950

For additional information see your servicing career counselor or visit www.armyreenlistment.com

“COIN SLOT”

Promotion not just a gimmie

By Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tony Soto’s promotion to chief warrant officer 5 wasn’t like many other promotions.

Sure, there was a cake to celebrate, and his family was there – albeit via video teleconference from Fort Campbell, Ky. – but the spirit of this promotion was different.

“Everyone makes (chief warrant officer 2),” explained Mr. Joe Roberts, a fellow chief warrant officer 5 and the command chief warrant officer for the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Thunder. “But there are only about 350 CW5s in the Army.”

Chief warrant officer 5 is the pinnacle of a warrant officer’s career, and very few ever attain that rank. It takes dedication and drive to reach that point. It also takes diversity.

“My success has had a lot to do with having the opportunities to take the right jobs at the right times,”

explained Soto. “I’ve been multi-tracked – working both safety and standardization – which has also helped me to reach this point.”

Soto began his career in the Army much like most warrant officers – as an enlisted Soldier. He started out as an infantryman and served for eight and a half years, attaining the rank staff sergeant while at flight school, after assignments in both Colorado and Germany.

“I thought it was going to be a quick four years,” he said.

Soto said he joined the Army looking for some direction after completing an associate’s degree. He was also looking for additional funding for school.

“I didn’t come from a well-to-do family,” explained the Bronx, N.Y., native. “Everything we ever had fell on the shoulders of my mom and dad.”

Going on 30 years later, Soto is setting the example for others to follow.

“Tony has had to stand out way above his peers,” said Roberts. “He has done everything the Army asked of him and more.”

Early in his career as an aviator,

Soto used his proficiency as a Spanish speaker to serve in South America working for the State Department.

“That assignment really helped me see the big picture of aviation,” Soto said.

While he was there, Soto helped standardize the maintenance and



Soto beams with pride after receiving his “Coin Slot” promotion to CW5 April 1 at Kandahar Airfield.

training cycles for the UH-1 Huey and MI-17 helicopters being used in theater, as well as the C-27 fixed wing aircraft. Today, he fills a similar role within Task Force Thunder.

“He gets the point across in a professional way that lets the rest of the brigade know what’s expected of them,” said Roberts.

As the brigade standardization officer, Soto is responsible for ensuring there is consistency throughout the brigade in terms of aircraft procedures. He said he volunteered for the assignment, and he couldn’t be more proud to be part of the task force. In his position, and now as a chief warrant officer 5, he has the opportunity to influence change, which he feels is important and should be a focus of every warrant officer.

“It’s about improving systems and making air crews safer,” he said. “Whatever you do, you should do it with a lot of passion and put safety first. It’s easy to identify a problem, but to come up with a solution, that’s what sets you apart.”



Soto’s children, Xavier, 6, Jesse, 10, and wife, Karen watch via VTC as Soto shares his thoughts after his promotion to CW5 here April 1. His son, Daniel, 19 could not attend.

SAFETY ALERT

Base rules for cycling usually add a strict code of conduct for military cyclists in the interest of safety. The information for KAF personnel lays out the ground rules for safe bicycle usage.



❖ Helmet Use

Wearing a helmet on a bicycle is like wearing a seat belt in a car: essential for safe operation. Putting on a helmet is the single most important thing you can do to make sure your ride is safe, according to the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute. When cycling, accidents happen. Without a helmet, a bicycle ride can easily become far more dangerous than necessary. Bicycle helmets are required when riding on KAF. Helmets must meet the requirements of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the Snell Memorial Foundation.



❖ Lights and Reflectors

On KAF "all bicycles must be equipped with a functioning (head) light and a rear light reflector visible from a distance of 300 feet during hours of limited visibility." Limited visibility hours are typically dusk to dawn, although it is arguable that this pertains to dark, stormy days as well. Bicycles are required to obey all traffic laws of the military, IMP. Typical traffic laws include those listed by base regulation: "ride with traffic, obey all signs and use hand signals."

❖ Clothing

All riders on KAF must comply with strict clothing rules while bicycling in the interest of safety. KAF rules require "high visibility garments" garments "bright color (clothing) for daytime and retro-reflective (vest or belt) during hours of darkness or reduced visibility."

❖ Check Tightness

The bolts on your bicycle are meant to be loosened if necessary. This means they need to be checked for tightness periodically. You should check to make sure the bolts holding on your handlebar, stem and seat post are tight. Each component should be snugly tightened, but be careful not to strip or over-tighten any of the bolts.

Fort Campbell Bicycle, Skater Guidelines

Bicyclists and skaters on Fort Campbell are restricted by Campbell Regulation 190-5, Paragraph 4-5.

Bicyclists, skateboarders, rollerbladers, and skaters must wear safety helmets that are approved by the American National Standards Institute or the Snell Memorial Foundation. Bicyclists must also wear a reflective belt over the shoulder, diagonally across the chest at all times. Wrist guards, elbow and knee pads are recommended for all forms of skaters. Every bicycle must be equipped with:

- A brake that will enable the operator to make the braked wheel skid on dry, level, clean pavement.

- A front white light visible from a distance of at least 500 feet to the front and a red reflector or red light on the rear during hours of darkness.

Bicyclists will obey the following rules:

- Keep as near as practicable to the right-hand side of the roadway and ride with the flow of traffic.

- Exercise due care when passing a stopped vehicle.

- Obey all traffic signs, signals or devices, or orders of Fort Campbell Police or road guards directing traffic

Come to a full stop when riding from an alleyway, driveway, between buildings, or from behind any parked vehicle and yield the right of way to all pedestrians and oncoming traffic.

Keep at least one hand on the handle bars at all times.

The following practices are prohibited:

- Riding any bicycle without a helmet.

- Riding abreast of more than two bicycles on any roadway.

- Clinging to any vehicle or apparatus while it is in motion.

- Parking bicycles so as to obstruct any vehicle or pedestrian traffic.

- Riding in any manner other than astride the seat or saddle or carrying another rider unless such bicycle is equipped with a firmly attached second seat or saddle for tandem riding.

- Riding any bicycle on sidewalks.

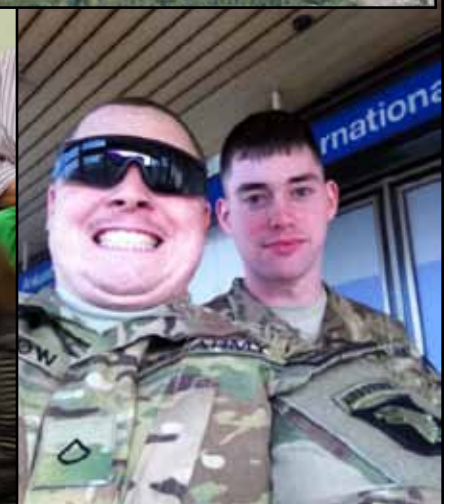
- Exceeding posted speed limit.

Skateboards, rollerblades and skates are authorized for use on driveways, sidewalks and parking lot areas, but are prohibited on all roadways on the installation.

Sponsors are responsible for ensuring strict compliance of their family members.



Through your eyes



A day in the life



From your Equal Opportunity Advisor

Sexual assault within any organization has detrimental effects on unit cohesion, productivity, and the overall feeling of a safe work environment.

The month of April has been designated as Sexual Assault Awareness month and here are some tips to help reduce your risk.

Whether you are in a garrison or deployed environment, be assertive when stating your intentions. Don't "beat around the bush" or send mixed signals. Statements such as, "Maybe this isn't a good idea right now," is not a confident, clear way to send your message. Internally, you clearly understand your intentions; however, the individual receiving your message is unclear and may interpret your message in a very different context.

The statement, "I am not interested in any sexual relationship with you and you should leave," leaves no room for interpretation and sends a very clear message. Statements like this should be used while breaking any physical contact and conveyed in a clear confident voice. Clear and concise delivery of your intentions will greatly reduce any confusion on the perpetrators' part.

While serving in a deployed environment, Soldiers will encounter experiences and conditions that are unique to their usual surroundings. Dimly lit or dark alley ways are common place among all forward operating bases. Showers and latrines are often crowded during morning hours and Soldiers like to use these facilities late at night or very early in the morning to avoid the rush.

Most FOB's have many different countries, local nationals, and various contractors serving alongside our men and women. Some of the cultural differences may view females in a different role that is inconsistent with our views. My best advice is to always travel with a buddy. Whether you're a male or a female, big or small, there is always safety in numbers. Wear your reflective belt, and always carry a flashlight to expose any potential hazards or hiding places.

Always be aware of your surroundings. Developing friendships with people you just met the previous hour is



acceptable. However, leaving your friends that you have known for several months, or years, to join a person for a walk alone is not. Never leave your trusted friends with a newly-found acquaintance. Trust your gut feelings. If it doesn't feel right it probably isn't right and trouble likely lies ahead. Even if your new found friend is a member of the same organization, if you don't know him or her, it's probably not a good idea to venture off alone.

Be proactive and act on incidents that don't look right. If you notice an individual that doesn't belong in your housing area, barracks, or off post living quarters, ask that individual to leave and report it to the appropriate authorities. In a deployed environment, males do not need to be hanging out around female living quarters and the opposite applies. Facilities are provided such as the MWR and USO for common areas.

Following these simple guidelines will greatly reduce the risk of a sexual assault. Remember, our Soldiers are our greatest asset!



THUNDER LEGAL



GENERAL ORDER #1

- Soldiers of opposite sex will not cohabitate or reside with each other at any time. Lawfully married soldiers may cohabitate, but only at the first field grade officer's discretion.
- Sexual conduct which adversely affects unit cohesion, morale, good order and discipline, or jeopardizes unit readiness or mission accomplishment may face UCMJ action.
- Respect the laws and customs of Afghan culture. Non-Muslims may not enter a mosque or any other Islamic religious sites.
- Removing, possessing, selling, defacing, or destroying archeological artifacts is prohibited.
- Practice Safety! Always use proper head gear when using or riding Military Vehicles, wear seat belts when available, and ACH, eye pro, and reflective belt must be worn when riding or driving in an open air vehicle.
- Smoking in tents or buildings is prohibited.
- Soldiers are prohibited from giving host nation civilians any government property (ACUs, MREs, Gatorade, scrap wood, etc.) or personal property that bears a resemblance to government property (ACU or Multi-Cam pattern clothing or equipment) unless authorized.
- Selling, bartering, or exchanging currency that is not at the host nation exchange rate is prohibited.
- Use of proxy web servers on the DOD network is prohibited.
- Taking or retaining of any type of war trophy or souvenir is strictly regulated and must be handled through the proper channels.

Good News:

Chaplain's Message

Maj. Brian Curry

PART OF A TEAM

When we hear the word "teamwork," we usually think of people who volunteered to be on a team and work toward their success.

Sometimes a team can be made up of people who didn't volunteer. People who were, as we like to say in the Army, "Volun-told".

There is no doubt that Army spouses help the Army to accomplish its mission. Spouses support the Army's mission by supporting each other during deployments, volunteering at different agencies on post and being involved in Family Readiness Groups.

But what about our children – are they part of the Army team? The answer to that question: absolutely.

Military children endure a lot of things the average American kid doesn't. My kids, for example, have moved four times over the last 10 years and have been without their dad for three of those years. Sometimes we can feel guilty as parents for making our kids endure some of the hardships that come along with serving in the Army.

It may surprise you, but there are many advantages of being a military kid. Our children often have a great ability to cope with change, make friends quickly and have an informed view of how different cultures interact with each other. All of these skills are important as we raise them to be successful adults.

Our children are also part of the Army team. The modern Soldier is more likely to be older, married and has children versus Soldiers in our nation's past. I have witnessed how children help their parents during deployments with extra work around the home and help other kids to cope while their parents are gone.

As I walk around speaking to Soldiers, the subject of our children always comes up. Most, if not all, Soldiers can't stop bragging about their kids, and their successes. The sense of pride Soldiers have about their kids is a huge morale booster and helps a Soldier stay focused on their mission. Kids being kids and loving their parents make them part of the Army team.

This month I challenge each of you to let your children know that you're proud of them and that part of the success we have as an Army is directly related to them being great kids.

I'm reminded in scripture that Jesus said, "Don't stop children from coming to me! Children like these are part of the kingdom of God." I agree with this scripture, children are part of the kingdom of God, and I also believe they are part of the Army team.

Glad to be on your team,

CH Curry

From your FRSAs

National Volunteer Week:

National Volunteer Week was April 10-16. We would like to send a very sincere Thank You to all of our 159th CAB Volunteers. Without you our Brigade would not be where it is today!!!

This month we had several volunteers recognized at the division level for their contributions. Wendy Carlston, Amy Moring and Julie Singleton each received a commander's coin for their efforts. Nichole Lillegard, Stephanie England and Tara Habhab were each recognized as Volunteers of the Month. And last, but certainly not least, Nichole Lillegard, Summer Bush and Barbara Cato were each recognized as nominees for Volunteer of the Year!

Welcome:

Also I would like to welcome our new Military Family Life Consultant (MFLC) to our team. Donna Alexander comes to us from the nearby Nashville. Donna is a wonderful addition to our team. She is available to talk anytime Mon-Fri. She can be reached at 270-205-9171. Marsha Jackson has departed but is looking forward to returning in the fall to bring our BDE home again next winter. Welcome Donna!!!



Resource of the Month:

Here is a great resource of the Month. Please take a moment to look at it online. Military Onesource is an amazing website full of great information for all Military members, families, and more. Also Military Onesource offers a 24 hour 7 day a week help line for any Military Member, Family Member, etc, who needs assistance.

Web site is: www.militaryonesource.com and the phone number available 24/7 is 1-800-342-9647.

Month of the Military Child:

This is the Month of the Military Child, so be sure to say thanks to them as well. Here are a few great activities upcoming for our Military Children:

- Bring the kids out to DW Rec. on Easter Sunday, April 24, for an Easter Egg Hunt with prizes awarded in each age group for the child who finds a special candy. There are designated times that children may participate depending on their age.

Children ages "walking" through 2 years old start at 2:30 p.m.

Children 3 years old start at 3 p.m.

Children 4 to 5 years old start at 3:30 p.m.

Children 6 to 7 years old start at 4 p.m.

Children 8 to 9 years old start at 4:30 p.m.

Children 10 to 12 years old start at 5 p.m.



UNDER THE RADAR:

GROUND TROOPS IN A COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Char Fick
Dragonlords UPAR, TF Thunder

What exactly is an Army Pathfinder? Are they just a bunch of crazy guys running around with painted weapons finding paths?

In a combat aviation brigade, most operations revolve around the aircraft, the pilots who fly them, and the Soldiers who work on them. But there are a limited number of ground troops – Pathfinders – who are also assigned to CABs.

There are three standing pathfinder companies in the Army today, two of which are located within the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and one of which is within our brigade.

There seems to be a lot of uncertainty amongst the aviation and support Soldiers of Task Force Thunder as to what the Pathfinders actually do and the role they play in a combat aviation brigade.

The Pathfinders are equally essential to the overall mission of a CAB. They use a wide array of skills to support ground-to-air communications, sling-load operations, security details and inspections, reconnaissance missions, intelligence collecting missions, and drop zone and helicopter landing zone support in order to ensure the mission is a success.



Spec. David Ojeda, Pathfinder Company, TF Wings prepares for potential enemy fire while outside of FOB Wolverine April 7.

“The Pathfinder’s mission during our deployment to (Regional Command-South) is as diverse as it is complex,” explained Capt. Mark Herlick, the Pathfinder Company commander.

“One of our primary responsibilities is to conduct personnel recovery, which is not only the recovery of downed pilots, but it is also the recovery of anyone who is either presumed missing, lost, detained or dead. Our other responsibilities include conducting key leader engagements, humanitarian assistance and battle-space ownership.

“We conduct both kinetic and non-kinetic operations in support of not only RC-S and Combined Task Force Zabul, but support any unit throughout RC-S,” said Herlick. “We are also fully partnered with the (Afghan National Security Forces) and other (Coalition) forces throughout RC-S and conduct joint operations with our partners.”

The Pathfinders rely on the support of their interpreters to help with this part of the mission.

“I love working with 1st Platoon,” said Waheed Rahimi, the translator assigned to the Pathfinder Company. “They are good guys and they are not idiots.”

Rahimi works with the Pathfinders on a daily basis, accompanying the team on missions, interpreting



Pathfinder Soldiers perform maintenance on a .50-caliber machine gun during a mission April 7.

information that may be useful for future missions or intelligence collection.

“I like working with the American units because they are here to help our people,” he said.

The Pathfinders enjoy working with Rahimi as well.

“Waheed is more than just an average (interpreter), he is very responsible and hard working,” said Sgt. Eric Gillespie, one of the Pathfinder NCOs. “He drops by on his own time to help us better understand the local culture and customs, and answer any questions that we have.”

The company currently has two interpreters who will work with them throughout the year. In addition to helping the team accomplish their mission, they help the Afghan people feel more comfortable.

“Without the understanding that (they provide) us, it would be more difficult to gain the trust of local villages and their confidence in the ANSF/CF partnership,” said Gillespie.

Together, the Pathfinders and interpreters make a strong team, keeping with the tradition of “teamwork” that is one of the foundations of the unit which leads to a successful deployment.

“The best thing about being a Pathfinder is being a

part of a team and participating in all of the great training and school opportunities,” said Pfc. Marcos Garcia, a Soldier in the unit.

This specialized training is reflected in the performance of the unit’s daily operations. Much of what the Pathfinders do is classified, but their reputation shows they’re leaving their own footprint in Afghanistan.

“The Pathfinders have been very successful thus far when it comes to making a difference in RC-South,” said Herlick.

“Our success as a company is a tribute to all of the Soldiers – enlisted and commissioned – without their support none of this would be possible. The support we receive from the battalion, from the task force commander down to the maintenance personnel and our caring (family readiness group) back at Fort Campbell plays a big part in our success,” said Herlick.

“The success of our deployment is not how many missions we have conducted, how many people we have detained or how many caches we have destroyed,” he said. “The success is based on the simple question of have we made a difference for the people of Afghanistan.”

So far, the Pathfinders mission sets have been very diverse, ranging from dismounted and mounted patrols to conducting air assaults. The company’s missions have taken them from one end of RC-S to the other, while the company is geographically split between two locations.

“The impact we are having from both locations is making a difference,” said Herlick.

With all that work, the answer to the original question is easy to see.

A Pathfinder IS just a crazy guy who runs around with a painted weapon finding paths – until you look a little deeper.



TF Thunder names Soldier/NCO of the Quarter

By Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Junior Soldiers and NCOs from throughout Task Force Thunder faced off here April 13 to become the faces of the brigade for the quarter.

While 12 representatives competed to become the Soldier or NCO of the Quarter, there could only be one winner in each category – those winners were Sgt. Josh C. Miller, from Company C, 1st Battalion, 214th Aviation Regiment (representing Task Force Lift), and Spc. Brandon S. Delerson, from Company E, 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment (TF Attack).

“It’s an honor to have won this title, based off of the competition I was up against and the lineage of the unit I’m now representing,” said Miller of his victory.

Miller and the other participants were evaluated on a variety of tasks, including their performance on a written knowledge-based test, hands-on Warrior Training Tasks, and in front of an evaluation board that comprised the command sergeants’ major from throughout TF Thunder. Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Eric C. Thom served as the president of the board.

“The thing that really surprised me the most was the level of confidence everyone displayed,” said Thom. “You could tell every person thought they could win.”

Thom said he made it point to ensure none of the board members knew where the participants stood going into the final evaluation board. But Miller and Delerson clearly stood out as the best.

“We knew which two were standing out during the board portion, and after everything was finished, the two of them were our winners,” he said.

Both Soldiers attributed their victory to the amount of preparation they put in.

“I bugged everybody to help me study,” said Delerson, who arrived from Forward Operating Base Wolverine at 2



a.m. that morning, just three hours before the competition began. “I studied for about three or four hours a day.”

According to Thom, that’s the real purpose behind such competitions.

“You have to know about the rest of the Army when you reach that level, not just about your own job.”

Eric C. Thom,
TF Thunder
Command Sgt. Maj.

“It’s not about winning,” he said. “It’s about building the foundation for our junior enlisted and creating that knowledge base they all need when they become platoon sergeants. You have to know about the rest of the Army when you reach that level, not just about your own job.”

This lesson seems to have definitely taken hold with Delerson.

“As I studied I found myself paying more attention to detail and learning to apply the things I was learning,” he said.

Aside from the professional benefit of competing at Soldier and NCO of the Quarter Board, there were some personal motivators. Each of the winners received an Army Achievement Medal, a \$50 gift certificate from AAFES, and, if they were based out of Kandahar, they would have won the use of the CSM’s vehicle for a week.

Hydraulics is the lifeline of the aircraft

Story and photos by
Spc. Shanika L. Futrell
TF Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (March 20, 2011) – Helicopters may appear to be hulking masses of metal that defy the odds of gravity, but underneath the tough exoskeleton lies an intricate maze of tubing that is the lifeline of the birds.

“The hydraulics move everything,” said Sgt. Chris Razo, the hydraulics shop squad leader for Company B, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, Task Force Fighting. “It is just like the power steering fluid in cars. Without it, it would be hard to steer your vehicle in the right direction.”

Each aircraft requires a balance of hydraulics and pneumatics to get off the ground. The hydraulics systems use the power of compressed liquids to help pilots maneuver the aircraft, while pneumatics - compressed gases - is required to even start the engines. Combined, the aviation community refers to these two components as “pneudraulics.”

Every airframe in the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade uses a hydraulic system for its flight controls, said Sgt. 1st Class John Wheritt, the NCO in charge of the brigade aviation maintenance office.

“Without hydraulics, the aircraft would not be able to leave,” said Spc. Jess Quidachay, an aircraft pneudraulics repairer with TF Fighting.

The Soldiers from the hydraulics shop are responsible for making sure that never happens. For starters, they conduct phase maintenance on the aircraft at regular intervals. Just like a car requires a tune-up after so many miles, a helicopter needs one after a certain number of hours flying.

“In maintenance, we get the parts and run tests on them and repair whatever is needed to be repaired,” said Razo. “If we cannot fix the part, we will order it to ensure mission readiness.”

“Many of the parts on the aircraft that we maintain are flight controls, landing gears, damper systems on rotor blades, the cargo ramp on a Chinook, and its cargo ramp hook, and the emergency life saving winch,” said

Pfc. Warrick Birch, an aircraft pneudraulics repairer with TF Fighting.

Depending on what they’re repairing the shop might have to make its own parts.

“If there’s a nick in a line, they have the capability to make lines,” Wheritt said. “Our guys have what’s called a swedge machine. Essentially, this machine melts metal and allows it to flow into the hole and fill it in.”

While the Soldiers might not always be completing repairs, they do stay busy, particularly in Afghanistan.

“Because of the dirt and sand that gets into the aircraft often, the heat and the dust getting all over the mechanical rods, it and its seals wear away faster,” said Razo. “To combat these issues

we conduct maintenance steps to purify the hydraulic systems.”

These steps are critical to ensuring the aircraft are always operational.

“Hydraulics is the lifeline of the aircraft; it’s like the blood that

runs through our veins,” said Razo. “Though it is the Soldiers on the ground risking their lives to save the lives of many others, what we do behind the scenes is what aids in that mission success.”



Sgt. Chris Razo (left), the squad leader for the hydraulic shop, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion looks on as his Soldier Spc. Jess Quidachay, an aircraft pneudraulic repairer, calibrates flight controls here, March 20. 159th Combat Aviation Brigade's hydraulic shop Soldiers conduct maintenance on aircrafts daily to keep the mission going successfully.

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