

A soldier in a camouflage uniform is shown from the side, working on the interior of an aircraft. He is focused on a task, possibly a wiring or mechanical component. The background shows the complex interior of a plane with various wires, panels, and structural elements.

159TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

THUNDER EATING TENING

Inside this issue:

TF Thunder welcomes Alaskan assets

Afghan medic completes flight training

TF Thunder teams shoot into semi-finals

Table of Contents

3	<i>Commander's Corner</i>	26	<i>CJCS addresses Retirement proposal</i>
4	<i>CSM</i>	27	<i>MWR</i>
5	<i>From Chief Warrant Officer 5 Roberts</i>	28	<i>What's happening in Retention: Economy or adaptation?</i>
6	<i>Afghan medic completes flight training</i>	30	<i>Safety</i>
8	<i>'King of Battle' steps back from gun line</i>	31	<i>EO</i>
10	<i>Soldiers celebrate Iftar with locals</i>	32	<i>Making the grade: BSEP helps Soldiers raise GT scores</i>
12	<i>B/2-135 hooks up with TF Thunder</i>	33	<i>Through your eyes</i>
14	<i>Pathfinders take fight to enemy at BP Osman</i>	35	<i>A day in the life</i>
18	<i>National Aviation Day</i>	37	<i>Legal</i>
20	<i>TF Thunder teams shoot into semi-finals</i>	38	<i>Chaplain's Message: Maintaining balance by saying no</i>
22	<i>Sounds of Thunder</i>	39	<i>TF Thunder welcomes Alaskan assets</i>
24	<i>Kitchen managers have a lot on their plates</i>		

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Commander's Corner

Col. Kenneth T. Royar

Brigade Commander

Halfway through the rotation and I could not be prouder of the entire formation. The Soldiers of the Brigade, whether in Afghanistan or still at Fort Campbell, continue to excel as we accomplish our mission. While recent events in theater show that tough fighting remains, the overall security situation continues to improve, making life better for the Afghan population. Challenges remain, but so do opportunities; opportunities not only to forward the progress in Afghanistan, but also to improve ourselves in the process.

The Soldiers of the Brigade are making the most out of opportunities to improve the lives of the Afghan population. In addition to conducting the traditional aviation mission, your Soldiers are branching out where they can to engage not only the Afghan security forces, but also the Afghan population. The impacts of this interaction cannot be understated, as our service members not only visibly demonstrate our values, but help build strong relationships with our partners.

Our Pathfinders interact daily with their Afghan counterparts at both Forward Operating Base Wolverine and at Kandahar. In addition to conducting combined missions to increase the security in their respective areas, they are also focusing on other areas. Equally important is the focus on improving the basic skills of the Afghan Army and Police to include literacy, Rule of Law, and evidence collection.

In an effort to reach out and engage the Afghan female population while being sensitive to the Afghan culture, units in the Brigade have stood up what are known as

female engagement teams. These teams, made up of volunteer female Soldiers, enable interaction with the Afghan women and children – interaction that would otherwise not be possible with male Soldiers.

Task Force Wings is also in the unique situation for an aviation unit in working directly to improve governance. Upon arrival in theater, they quickly recognized the need to help connect the people of the Shinkai District to their government. Working in conjunction with the District Governor, Army, and Police, the Task Force helped establish a district center where the local population can interact with the government to tackle some basic issues like education and health care.

In recognition of the Muslim period of Ramazan, this month units in the Brigade will host several Iftar dinners with our Afghan counterparts. A traditional dinner hosted at the conclusion of the daily fast observed during the Ramazan period, the Iftar dinner not only shows our respect for their culture, but also helps to strengthen our relationships.

The Brigade relentlessly pursues insurgents on a daily basis, but we equally pursue our opportunities to strengthen our ties with our Afghan partners. It is these relationships and our ability to help professionalize the Afghan security forces that will make the most difference.



A word from

Brigade Command Sergeant Major

Eric C. Thom

It is August, and our tour is half complete. There are mandated things that need to be done now that deal with redeployment and post deployment events for the Brigade. Awards have to be submitted in order to ensure presentation prior to departure, the sequence of events for the redeployment, how and when we will take leave when we return, who goes to school and when - these are but a handful of things that have to be taken care of now. With this it is natural to start thinking about what comes after this tour, for the unit, for yourself and family.

I say all that to remind us all, (myself included) that the most important thing to remember out of all that is our tour is only half over. The Army did not send us here for six or nine months, the Army sent us here for a 12-month tour, and we have to focus on what we do for the entire 12 months. Part of that is planning for what's to come back home, but a larger portion is to keep your head in the game and continue being the best damn combat aviation brigade the Army has to offer.

We will accomplish this the same way we always have. There is no secret to success, just diligence and hard work. We maintain the standards, 100 percent of the time. By doing this we keep the system moving. Surely everyone has heard the old adage "Slow is steady, and steady is fast". To me, this means we do every-

thing by the book; that is what keeps us moving forward. When someone cuts a corner, takes a shortcut, or neglects to follow a specified process, we lose that forward momentum and have to restart.

It is easy to be among the best if you do all the little things right because most simply don't. When everyone on the team is doing what they are supposed to do, the team is performing efficiently. Some units strive for this, here in the Thunder Brigade, we demand it. Standards and discipline are our trademarks. We have a great reputation for being professionals, but our reputation doesn't get the aircraft in the fight, your hard work gets them there and keeps them there.

Everyone in this brigade has an important job to do, otherwise you would not be here. Do not rate your importance to the mission to your proximity to the fight. I can't think of a better



way of saying it then E Company, 4-101, did on their sign during their sports day last month. If I remember right it went something like this, "Without petroleum, pilots are just pedestrians." Please forgive me if I misquoted, but the intent is there.

We are all important to accomplishing the mission. I need everyone (Soldier, Airman, and civilian) to maintain their focus on the job at hand and keep it there through redeployment when we return to our loved ones and friends.

Stay just, stay strong, and stay focused.

E C TH

From Chief Warrant Officer 5

Joseph Roberts



ing other various technical tasks, our warrant officers are proving themselves to be outstanding leaders who are applying the skills they've acquired over years of intense training and experience to defeat our enemy. I could not be prouder of them for their untiring contributions to our brigade, our Army and our Nation. As we complete the summer campaign and approach the fall, other initiatives such as the Personnel Distribution Roster or PDR, and preparation planning for warrant officer professional military education mobile training teams (PME MTTs) are on-going that are critical to our warrant officers'

As the Brigade Command Warrant Officer, it certainly is an honor and privilege to correspond with your through this forum. What I want to do is tell you about our great team of warrant officers who are truly America's finest.

Within our brigade, we are blessed to have about 370 warrant officers, which is approximately 60 percent of our total officer population. They are the face of the brigade as they support the ground commander around the clock. These great warriors are taking it to the evil-doers with great ferocity and courage under some of the most austere conditions imaginable. Whether they are flying aircraft, fixing aircraft, or perform-

future.

The PDR is a process used by the Human Resources Command to train and reassign commissioned and warrant officers within our brigade organization rather than individually. This process helps us to identify those who need a break from the fight and afford them an opportunity to PCS and receive the professional military training and skill qualification (SQI or "track") training necessary to progress through their careers. Within the brigade, we are doing all we can to ensure we advocate each warrant officer's desires and wishes. Although a few may not get exactly what they want when they want it, we will do the best we

can to accommodate everyone.

Professional military education has been difficult for many to receive due to a backlog that did not have the opportunity to attend the training at Fort Rucker, Ala., during dwell periods. However this training is critical along with SQI training to develop our warrant officers and professionally competent and competitive leaders. To rectify that, our brigade commander has requested mobile training teams to come to Fort Campbell and teach the courses locally. This will ensure our brigade gets its fair share of PME seats while at the same time providing our warrant officers more family time at home rather than traveling to Fort Rucker. This training will help to make our warrant officers more competitive for promotion.

Speaking of promotion, the FY11 promotion results were released recently. Congratulations to all of our selectees. Across the brigade, our CW2s considered for promotion to CW3 did very well. However, we did not fare so well on the CW4 and CW5 promotion boards. Hopefully, we will rebound next year with great results given the significant focus we are placing on PME and SQI training, all of which will strengthen the Thunder Team.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize another critical component of the TF Thunder team – the family members of all these great Soldiers. You are the ones who must stay behind and do it all to take care of your family while your loved one is doing the Nation's business. You are the true heroes. You more than anyone, bear the challenges and scars of a separated family, and you are doing it with great determination and grit. All of us on the TF Thunder command team appreciate your hard work, your sacrifice, and all you do to support your deployed loved one and our brigade as we serve together. Thank you for who you are, thank you for what you stand for, and thank you for serving our nation!

Afghan medic completes flight training



KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (July 27, 2011) -- Afghan Air Force flight medic Sgt. Gulap Ahmadzia receives a certificate of completion July 27 from Company C, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment company commander Maj. Michael Mendenhall, for completion of the U.S. Army and Afghanistan Air Force medevac partnership program here. Ahmadzia is the first Afghan flight medic to join Task Force Thunder's medevac crews as they move patients off of the battlefield.



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

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (July 27, 2011) – After approximately 30 days of technical training, Afghan Air Force flight medic Sgt. Gulap Ahmadzia received a certificate of completion July 27 from Company C, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, for his participation of the U.S. Army and Afghanistan Air Force medevac partnership program here.

Ahmadzia flew as a flight medic aboard a UH-60A Blackhawk during 13 medevac missions involving Afghan National Army and local national casualties from June 22 to July 13.

“The people I worked with (taught) me a lot,” said Ahmadzia. “They were patient and helpful through this (process), and now I am able to take what I have learned back to the other (Afghan) medics.”

Maj. Michael Mendenhall, the company commander for C/1-52, said Ahmadzia has been extremely receptive to the information his Soldiers were providing him, making the partnership program successful.

“Sergeant Gulap Ahmadzia has done an outstanding job in such a limited amount of time,” said Mendenhall. “We enjoyed working with him, and we hope the information he has learned from us will be used to teach other flight medics to save lives.” “Saving lives is what this training was all about.”

Ahmadzia said he was happy and excited he was able to learn how to apply a tourniquet and use technical medical equipment.

“Now I am able to help my people when they are injured,” he said.

Ahmadzia says the knowledge he has gained by working with C/1-52 will be useful to all of his fellow medics.

“It is very important the other medics have the opportunity (to learn) to what I have been (taught),” said Ahmadzia. “We don’t do this for us, but for our people. We need to know how to help them, so this is why I learned how to treat casualties and why I will now (become) the instructor.”



‘King of Battle’



A mortar team from the 25th Infantry Division (Light) fires an illumination mortar round from atop a Stryker at FOB Wolverine July 29. The fires team from Task Force Wings works with the intel section to determine where the assets are needed, then calls out the target to the team.

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WOLVERINE, Afghanistan (July 29, 2011) – The closest a combat aviation brigade normally gets to artillery is sling-loading a gun from point a to point b.

Likewise, the closest artillerymen normally come to aviation is when they call for close air support on the battlefield.

Despite the lack of Howitzers, the fire support teams within Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade) carry an important part of the brigade’s mission in Regional Command South.

“We work in conjunction with the (intel section) for targeting and developing effects on the battlefield,” said Staff Sgt. Joshua DeWitt, the fire support officer for Task Force Wings (4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment). “We manage and control fixed wing, (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) and indirect fire assets to support the unit.”

A large part of their job is focused on the Pathfinders – Company F, Task Force Wings, but the fires team is also busy when an aircraft goes down.

“When we have a downed aircraft, we request the support and make sure it gets pushed to the right area,” DeWitt said.

Before fires teams were added to CABs in 2005, the unit would have to call a middleman, explained Master Sgt. Terrence D. Reyes, the Task Force Wings operations NCO in charge.

“That took extra time,” he said. “Now we don’t have to wait for someone else to make the call for us.”

It’s often during these situations that the mission can get especially complicated for the fires team.

“Probably the hardest part of our job is coordinating the air space when there are multiple birds in the area,” said Sgt. David A. Rogers, the Task Force Wings fire support NCO.

Both DeWitt and Rogers have served with ground units previously, where they gained experience calling for fire. Their



Staff Sgt. Joshua DeWitt, the fire support officer for Task Force Wings (4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), calls to establish a restricted operating zone as he verifies grid coordinates for support from a mortar team at Forward Operating Base Wolverine July 27.

role in an aviation brigade is significantly different, but both said it’s an experience that is making them better-rounded artillerymen.

“The biggest difference is that there’s a lot more planning in an aviation unit,” Rogers said. “When I was on

the ground, I didn’t realize how much trouble it is and what people go through to get those birds to us.”

Artillery units on the ground often rely on aviation for fire support from AH-64 Apaches, as well as from MEDEVAC units.

“My experience with aviation was calling them up and saying, ‘Hey, I need you guys,’

and them showing up,” DeWitt said. “Now I know what it takes to get one aircraft off the ground. I definitely have a better understanding of the importance of thorough planning and timeliness on our part when we’re working missions on the ground if we think we might need air support.”

While DeWitt and Rogers have seen both sides of the fight, some of their Soldiers are in a different position – they don’t know anything but the aviation side of the artillery mission. This presents a different challenge for the NCOs who know their Soldiers will probably find themselves in leadership positions with ground units after they leave the aviation brigade.

“We really have to make sure they understand our (job specialty) and what we bring to the fight,” DeWitt said.

At FOB Wolverine, the fires team has had the benefit of working with artillery and mortars, which has allowed them to better maintain some of their basic skills.

They’ve taken turns calling for fire to send out illumination rounds that let the aviators and the ground troops get visibility of suspected enemy activity in hostile areas.

In conjunction with calling for fire, their job also requires them to set up restricted operating zones – essentially no-fly zones that protect coalition forces.

“When there are mortar or artillery rounds being fired we have to set up a ROZ,” explained Rogers. “If not, it puts our aircraft at risk.”

In addition to helping the pilots maneuver safely around the battlefield, the fires team helps the operations staff within the brigade better fill its support role.

“A lot of times we have a better understanding of what the guys on the ground are asking for when they call for (close-combat attack) support,” DeWitt said.

“They’re really another great enabler we have to help us accomplish our mission,” Reyes said.

steps back from the gun line

Soldiers celebrate Iftar with locals

By Spc. Jennifer Andersson
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan (Aug. 18, 2011) –Ramazan, also known as Ramadan, is a time Muslims use to “center” themselves through fasting and prayer. Muslims around the world do not eat or drink from dawn to sunset for 29 to 30 days during the 9th month of the Islamic calendar, which differs from the Julian calendar we use.

This Ramazan, Soldiers of Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade) shared the fast-breaking meal served after sunset, known as Iftar with the Afghan Air Force’s Kandahar Air Wing, the 2nd Afghan National Civil Order Police, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan Army’s 4th Kandak 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps.

“It’s important to recognize the religious traditions inherent in our partners because it shows our respect for them and it will help them grow closer to us as they see we respect their culture and that we understand them,” said 2nd Lt. Kyle Ryman, detachment commander for the Pathfinders at Kandahar Airfield.

“The holy month of Ramazan is a gift from God to ap-

preciate and understand (better) and to pray for God’s order (in our lives),” said Col. Mujib Rahman Mabariz, the religious and cultural officer for the Kandahar Air Wing of the Afghan Air Force. “(During) that month, we learn how to deal with brothers, relatives, and friends.”

The Iftar began with the Mullah, or religious leader, chanting an opening prayer, followed by the guests eating dates – just as the prophet Muhammed did centuries ago to break his fast. Then the Afghans left their seats and moved to prayer rugs, where the Mullah led the ritual of the fourth of their five daily prayers as they bowed toward Mecca, considered by Muslims to be the holiest of cities.

Iftar is a time of fellowship for friends and families, and even large communities.

“Because you are fasting all day, when you are breaking a fast, that’s the joy of having the break, and to share that with relatives and friends, that’s to give you more joy,” Mabariz said. “Fasting has another purpose – you understand the meaning of hunger (and what that means for) people who do not have enough (food).”



KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (Aug. 16, 2011) - Soldiers of Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade) join members of the Afghan Air Force’s Kandahar Air Wing during an Iftar celebration shared here Aug. 16. TF Thunder shared in the traditional feasts with four Afghan forces - the Kandahar Air Wing, the 2nd Afghan National Civil Order Police Brigade, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan Army’s 4th Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps.

The feast helped facilitate the team building Task Force Thunder has been developing since arrival in theater, Ryman said.

The Afghan Soldiers were happy to share the dinner with Soldiers of TF Thunder.

When a person shows generosity to an Afghan, the Afghan remains loyal to that person, said Hasan Sarwari, a platoon leader for the 2nd ANCOP.

“We celebrate you (Americans), and we consider you friends,” he said. “This (partnership) will bring more love and understanding between us.”

Mabariz said sharing the Iftar celebration was a big step toward peace and understanding between the two cultures, as well as bridging the religious gap.

“Through our mutual understanding, we will grow closer as a team and more cohesive as a (military) unit,” Ryman said.

“(You) understand our religion, and we will understand (yours),” he said. “This togetherness will make us more close, more friendly. If this goes on, it will bring peace

(and) friendship, and the enemy will be defeated, and there won’t be any enemy left.”

“Freedom will come,” said Sarwari. “Enemies of Afghanistan will be vanquished.”

(Below) A member of the 2nd Afghan National Civil Order Police breaks his fast by eating a date during the Iftar dinner shared between the 2nd ANCOP and Task Force Thunder here Aug. 18.



(Left) Soldiers of Task Force Thunder and the 2nd Afghan National Civil Order Police share in the Ramazan tradition of the fast-breaking feast known as Iftar here Aug. 18.

B/2-135 hooks up with TF Thunder



Story and photos by
Sgt. Shanika L. Futrell
Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (Aug. 15, 2011) – Hawaii's Task Force Voyagers (Company B, 1st Battalion, 171st Aviation Regiment), handed over its reins to Colorado and Nebraska's Company B, 2nd Bn., 135th Avn. Rgt., after its relief-in-place here at the end of July.

When it is time for units to rotate out of theater, they conduct a relief-in-place with the incoming unit to ensure its Soldiers have the necessary intelligence information and situational awareness to assume the mission seamlessly.

Though this transition may appear instantaneous because of the abrupt transfer-of-authority ceremony that finalizes the exchange, the process is not always easy.

"There are a number of tasks associated with conducting a proper RIP, and time definitely plays a factor into how effectively these tasks are completed," said Capt. Johnny Wandasan, the TF Voyagers' commander. "Fortunately, the incoming commander for B/2-135, and I have been in communication over the past few months, and that synchronization has allowed us to accomplish the RIP/TOA process within a short window



Sgt. Joshua Ommert (top), a flight engineer for Company B, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, and Staff Sgt. Rick Carter (bottom), a flight engineer for Co. B, 2 Bn., 135th Avn. Rgt., cover up an engine on a CH-47 Chinook to keep dust out while the aircraft is not in use. B/2-135 is deployed to Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, to provide heavy lift and personnel transport capabilities throughout Regional Command - South.

of time."

There are several things two units must do before the transfer of authority happens, and for an aviation unit, this task can be difficult to learn in a short time span.

"During a RIP, our counterparts had to show and tell us where the (forward arming and refueling point) operations were located, familiarize us with the local area orientation, talk about the different approaches to the (forward operating base), where things were and what they look like-the list goes on, and all of this is taught in a couple of weeks," said Sgt. 1st Class Brett Meredith, a platoon sergeant with B/2-135.

Before the reins were given over to B/2-135 the main things they focused on was identifying contacts who would help with their mission-inspectors, maintenance and technical supply personnel.

"Receiving this information is vital to the mission to keep the aircraft up and running," said Meredith. "It is imperative we keep every last bird properly working. You never know when you will get that call to do a long line or a sling load; you do not want to be that person to say you cannot perform the mission at that time because

the aircraft is down for maintenance. Our crew chiefs are full-time mechanics at home, so we bring more to the table than meets the eye."

B/2-135 trained hard before deployment to ensure they were ready for the mission.

"We trained a lot in the mountains and conducted several dust and high-altitude landings," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Sunny Beach, a CH-47 Chinook pilot for B/2-135. "Training hard brings about mission success, and this training was very important because this is exactly what we will have to do while deployed here."

B/2-135, has not conducted many deployments, but its previous two were definitely successful ones.

"We received a Quad-A Aviation Unit-of-the-Year award for one of them," said Meredith.

There are several challenges a unit will have to face when deploying, but for B/2-135, they have an advantage.

"Since our formation is composed of Soldiers from Nebraska and Colorado, we provide the perfect balance for the brigade," said Meredith. "The Soldiers from Colorado perform dust landings all the time and mountain training, which is much like the terrain here. The Soldiers from Nebraska do several snow landings and mountain training as well, which is something the unit will need here soon."

Falling into the footprint of another company that has already established itself mid-tour of a brigade's deployment can be challenging, but Capt. Marcus Wilhelm, the company commander for B/2-135, said, it's actually making things easier this time around.

"Our counterparts were in a good battle rhythm, and we can just fall right in and go with the flow of things," he said.

Now that the TF Voyagers have gone home for a well-deserved rest, Wilhelm said his company is more than ready to continue the mission with Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade).

"The weight has been lifted off the shoulders of the (TF Voyagers) Soldiers, and placed upon my formation, and we are more than prepared after a successful RIP to take this challenge," he said.

B/2-135 bring quite a few capabilities to the fight.

"Since we fly CH-47 Chinooks, we are able to sling load, conduct a long line, internal and external loads, as well as provide rescue and recovery," said Beach. "You don't find many companies that still conduct long lines, but we provide that capability as well."

This Chinook unit does not only move equipment, but passengers who are moving around within Regional Command-South's area of operation.

"This includes moving personnel from this aviation brigade, to moving ground units throughout the Regional Command-South's (area of operation)," said Wilhelm.

Ground units rely on aviation units to move around on the battlefield and to provide them with the equipment they need.

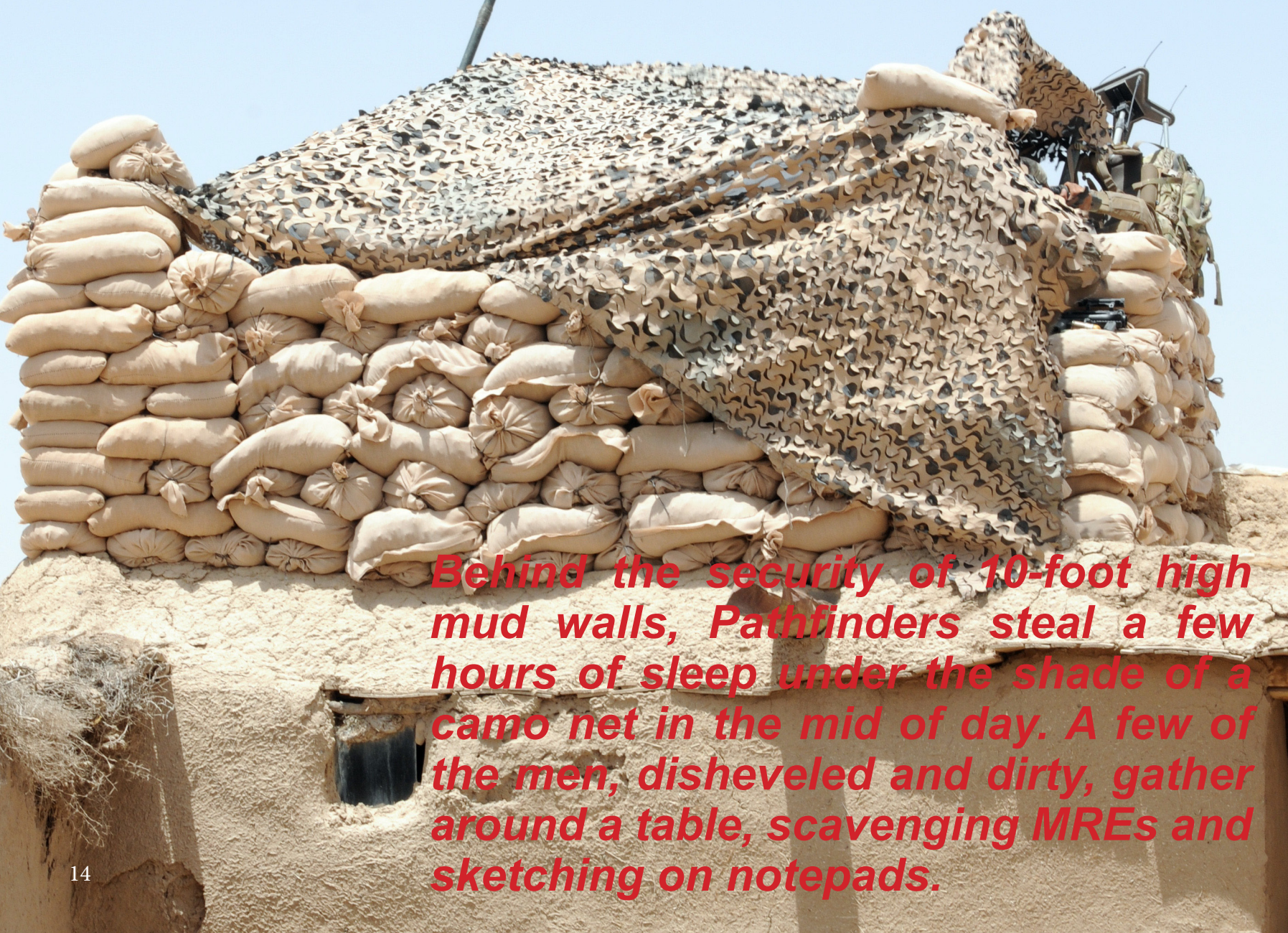
"You call, we haul," Wilhelm said. "We appreciate everything you do for us, and we will support you to ensure your success."

It is all about what the troops on the ground do out there, and B/2-135, supports them 100 percent, said 1st Sgt. Gregory McBride, the first sergeant for B/2-135.

"Stay safe and watch out for each other at all times," he said. "Safety is the key to a successful mission."

Pathfinders, Surrie District Police take the fight to the enemy at BP Osman

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



Behind the security of 10-foot high mud walls, Pathfinders steal a few hours of sleep under the shade of a camo net in the mid of day. A few of the men, disheveled and dirty, gather around a table, scavenging MREs and sketching on notepads.

BATTLE POSITION OSMAN, Zabul Province, Afghanistan (July 27, 2011) – The melody of a flute drifts over on the wind from the room in the compound their Afghan National Police partners call home. All of the men wear the evidence of days of enduring the sandblasts of southern Afghanistan's summer winds. In fighting positions around the compound, a few other Pathfinders and Afghans maintain a security watch, keeping a close eye out for any suspicious movement that could be a threat to the position, the villagers nearby or, more importantly, Forward Operating Base Wolverine, the group's home base that sits just a few miles away.

"This is what the infantry does and trains for," said Capt. Mark A. Herlick, the commander of Company F, Task Force Wings (4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment). "We seize and hold terrain, and deny the enemy the ability to influence local populations."

The main doctrinal mission of the Pathfinders is to provide personnel recovery assets to the aviation brigade they support – in this case Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade).

Here in Zabul Province, however, they've taken things a bit further.

The Pathfinders based at Forward Operating Base Wolverine established Battle Position Osman nearly two months ago, looking to provide more security to the FOB that isn't supported by any other maneuver element.

"No one's gonna come to our rescue," said Lt. Col. Christopher Albus, the Task Force Wings commander, as he evaluated BP Osman's impact on security in the region.

Since the establishment of the BP in the Suri District of Zabul, attacks in the region have been cut in half, said Capt. Marisa Touw, the Task Force Wings intelligence officer. Additionally, there have been no (improvised explosive devices) along the main route through the district, which used be littered with the bombs.

The unit is taking the fight to the enemy, and they're doing it in the name of a man who lived and breathed this philosophy.

BP Osman is named after the former platoon sergeant for the company's Kandahar Detachment, Staff Sgt. Ergin V. Osman, who was killed in an IED blast in late May.

"Oz was all about taking the fight to the enemy, and doing this personifies his personality," Herlick said.

The unit is doing more than just facing down the enemy on their turf, though. They are also ingraining themselves in the local populace, which is critical to their success in the area.

"We get a lot of recognition from the small villages," said Sgt. Nathaniel Lee, a team leader at the battle position. "They really appreciate us being here. Insurgent activity has slowed or stopped."

Herlick explained that this disruption of insurgent activity, which ruled the area with intimidation, means the villagers have freedom of movement they couldn't previously enjoy. They're



Sgt. Joseph Thornton, a squad leader with Company F, Task Force Wings (4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), takes a nap on a cot at Battle Position Osman before a dismounted patrol in the Suri District of southern Afghanistan's Zabul Province July 27.

now able to tend their livestock and harvest crops to feed the livestock during the winter months. Last year, this was out of the question. Any crops they did harvest were taxed heavily by insurgents.

As the Pathfinders built their presence in the Suri District, they've also built a rapport and trust with the villagers. Villagers have begun to provide information to the unit about IED emplacements, enemy spotters and enemy movement.

"These people find it hard to trust," said Lee. "But they seem to be becoming more trusting in us."

It's not just the villagers trusting the unit – their leadership is also placing a great deal of trust in them.

As a maneuver element assigned to an aviation unit, the Pathfinders have a mission that entails a different, and in some ways greater, level of acceptable risk than battalion leaders are used to.

"Fortunately, I've got the latitude and the trust to ma-

“Fortunately, I’ve got the latitude and the trust to maneuver my teams the way I need to.”

Capt. Mark A. Herlick
Pathfinder Company Commander

neuver my teams the way I need to,” Herlick said.

That trust comes from the top down, and it extends all the way to the lowest ranking Soldier in Herlick’s formation.

“Operations at the BP aren’t driven top-down, they’re bottom-up,” he said. “My team leaders are making strategic decisions every day that are usually made at a much higher level. But they’re the guys on the ground, and they see what I can’t see if I’m not out here.”

the biggest ways they support the aviation mission.

“As aviators, those of us who’ve never been in combat – on the ground that is – don’t always see things the same way,” said Master Sgt. Terrence D. Reyes, the Task Force Wings operations NCO in charge. “The Pathfinders really help us take the ground picture and the air picture and put them together.”

This helps the aviation unit more effectively fill its role as a supporting element to ground units.



Spc. Ryan Grace, a Pathfinder with Company F, Task Force Wings (4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), pulls security at Battle Position Osman July 27.



Capt. Mark A. Herlick (left), Pathfinder Company commander, discusses logistics needs with a member of the Surri District Afghan National Police following a shura July 28.

“What they’re doing at BP Osman has driven down IEDs and (troops in contact) in an area we used to get called to all the time,” Reyes said. “Now we can focus our air assets on supporting other areas in the region that need it.”

Just as the air assets are needed in other locations throughout Zabul Province, the Pathfinders are also needed elsewhere. This is where their partnership with Afghan forces becomes critical. The Pathfinders are focused on making sure the Afghan National Police have the ability to sustain the progress that’s been made. “The ANP are great partners,” Herlick said.

The Afghan forces face some logistical and manpower limitations, he explained, but they have the strategic ability and drive to make the mission successful.

“Many of our missions our missions are ANP planned and led,” he said. “We’re simply operating in a supporting role, and we do our best to support them without them coming to rely too heavily on us.”

As a result, the villagers have also come to trust the ANP.

“It helps that they see the ANP are out there 24 hours a day providing security for the villages,” Herlick said.

With this continued security, the villagers will have the ability meet their own goals.

“They just want to be able to live their lives,” Lee said. “They want to tend their crops and their livestock, and to be able to make money to take care of their families.”

The Afghan forces face some logistical and manpower limitations, but they have the strategic ability and drive to make the mission successful.

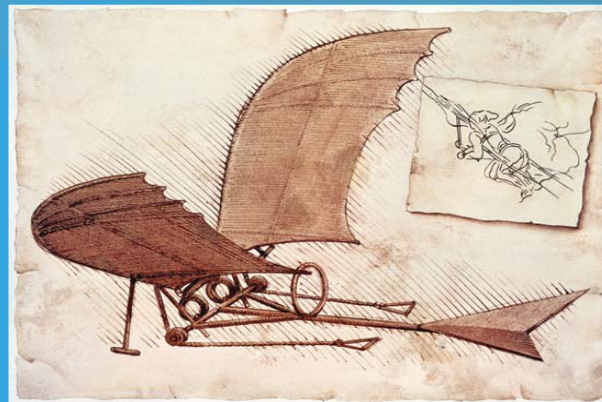
NATIONAL AVIATION DAY

AUGUST 19

NATIONAL AVIATION DAY IS IN HONOR OF ORVILLE WRIGHT, THE FIRST MAN TO FLY AN AIRCRAFT SUCCESSFULLY.

1480's FIRST REAL STUDIES OF FLIGHT

Leonardo Da Vinci made the first real studies of flight in the 1480's. He had over 100 drawings that illustrated his theories on flight. Da Vinci is credited with coming up with the concept that is the modern-day helicopter.



1903 THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT

The Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, were pioneer aviators in the United States. Orville was the first person to successfully fly an airplane. His flight was December 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, N.C.

1931

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT PROCLAIMS AUGUST 19 TO BE NATIONAL AVIATION DAY

The day that coincides with the birthday of Orville Wright, who piloted the Wright Flyer. He and his brother Wilbur are given credit for building the world's first successful airplane with aircraft controls that enabled them to steer the plane.



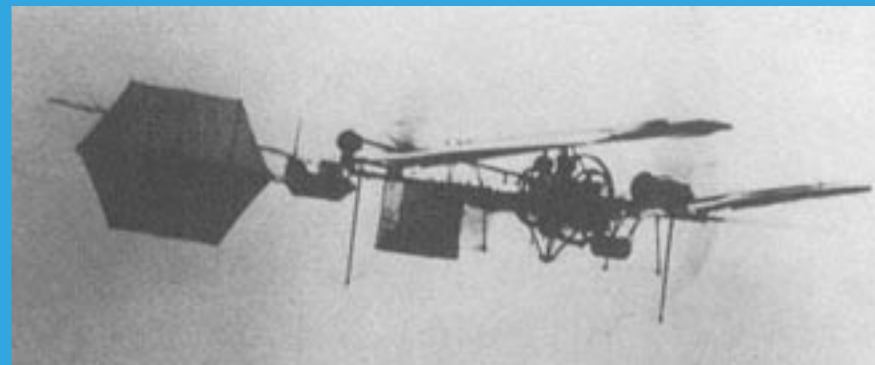
MYTH

MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF FLIGHT



Daedalus was an engineer who was imprisoned by King Minos. With his son, Icarus, he made wings of wax feathers. Daedalus flew successfully from Crete Naples, but Icarus, tried to fly too high and flew too near to the sun. The wings of wax melted and Icarus fell to his death in the ocean. Today, the Order of Daedalians recognizes the contributions of military aviators.

1891



LANGLEY'S AERODROME

Samuel Langley was an astronomer who realized power was needed to help a man fly. He built a model of a plane, which he called an aerodrome, that included a steam-powered engine. In 1891, his model flew three-quarters of a mile before running out of fuel. His major contributions to flight involved attempts at adding a powerplant to a glider.

CURRENT

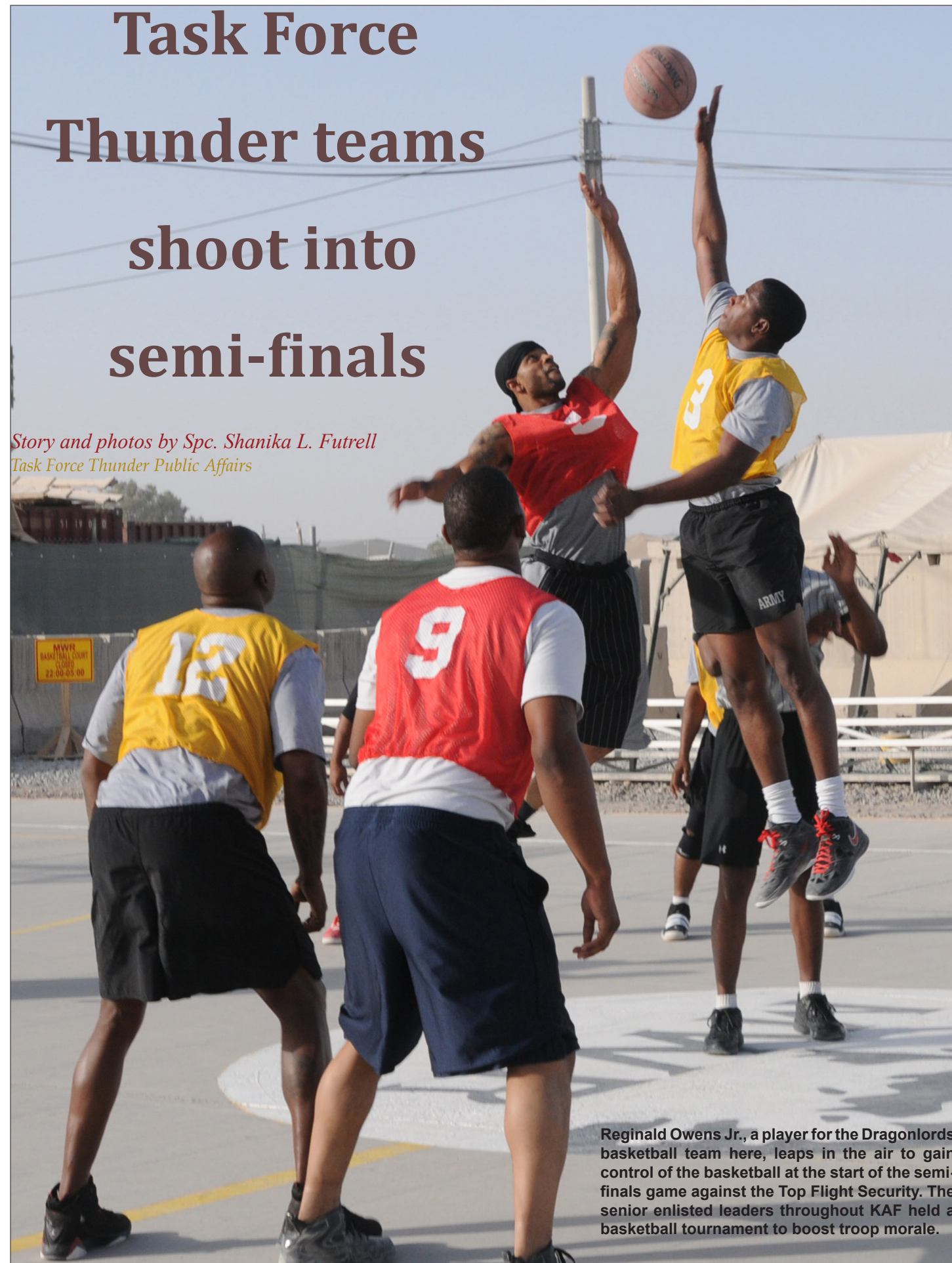


TASK FORCE THUNDER (159TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE) TAKES OVER AIR SPACE IN RC-SOUTH

The 159th Combat Aviation Brigade conducts full-spectrum aviation operations in support of coalition and Afghan National security forces throughout Regional Command- South and Southwest in order to neutralize the insurgency, protect the population, enhance freedom of maneuvers and build the capacity of our Afghan partners.

Task Force Thunder teams shoot into semi-finals

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



Reginald Owens Jr., a player for the Dragonlords basketball team here, leaps in the air to gain control of the basketball at the start of the semi-finals game against the Top Flight Security. The senior enlisted leaders throughout KAF held a basketball tournament to boost troop morale.

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (July 21, 2011) – With the basketball championship here heading toward its final game, no one was sure who would take it all, but several fans were leaning toward the Dragonlords, a team from Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade).

Three different teams from TF Thunder made it into the semi-finals, but there was only one advanced to the “Final Four.”

Fans cheered the Dragonlords basketball team on as they took the victory over Top Flight Security in the semi-finals here July 19, resulting in Dragonlords playing in the Final Four.

While walking off the court, the smiles did not stop as the games continued to see who the next team was they had to face.

“We were number one throughout the entire season, and my team had only lost one game,” said Spc. Barry Elliott, the Dragonlords coach. “We had never practiced together because we are in a war zone, and everyone has a job to do. I was proud of the team to have made it this far, but we still needed to fine tune a few things.”

After the second game was over the Dragonlords found out they had to play the team Council.

“We beat them during the season, so it should not be that hard to have a repeat,” said Staff Sgt. Barry Mayers, a player on the Dragonlords before the game.

Five minutes into the second half, Council led over the Dragonlords by three points. Elliott called a time out to strategize with the players. But not before he let one of



Jerret Amos, a player for the Dragonlords basketball team here, goes for a dunk during the semi-final game against the Road Warriors.



Jose Rodriguez, a player for the Dragonlords basketball team here, goes for a two-point shot during the semi-final game against the Road Warriors.

the teammates pump the players up.

“That’s alright; we can come back,” said Staff Sgt. Gabriel Bridges, another player on the team. “D-up (get on your defensive game) and make those free throws ... we got this.”

Reassured they had a solid plan, the Dragonlords stepped back onto the court to finish out the last 10 minutes of the game, but had trouble getting ahead in points.

“The team had a few issues while on the court. Their confidence dropped, resulting in a poor defense (and a lack of communication ...,” said Elliott.

At the end-of-game, the score was 24 – 21, with Council advancing to the finals.

Though the game was an upset for the Dragonlords, they still placed in the top three out of 24 other teams. Despite their loss, they stayed to cheer the other games and players on.

“This type of thing is all about camaraderie out here,” said Elliott. “We have met many different servicemen and have a better appreciation for one another. Many of the teams who had lost previously were out there on the sidelines cheering on the other teams, and that is what this all about - getting involved, supporting one another and being active.”

The Dragonlords say they are awaiting the next season to take the trophy home to their duty station.

“We will revamp and restructure this team, so that next season we win it all,” said Elliott. “The team worked well together, and teamwork was important to have made it this far. Without teamwork we could have placed a whole lot worse.”

Sounds of Thunder

What is your favorite meal served at the Dining Facility?



"The Mongolian grill is awesome. I look forward to Tuesdays. They have it for lunch and dinner every Tuesday. It's the best meal of the week."

**Sgt. 1st Class Ric DePontee,
Career Counselor,
HHC, TF Attack**

"My favorite meal would have to be breakfast at Niagra DFAC. The fruit is always so fresh and sweet. A scoop of cottage cheese makes it even better. Gotta love my fruit!"



**Spc. Lisa Beard,
Orderly room clerk,
HHC, TF Dragonlords**

"The buffalo wings and french fries got it going on!!"



**Staff Sgt. Bryan Corbett,
Network operations NCO in charge,
HSC, TF Fighting**



"I love the fried catfish with hot sauce. It tastes GOOD!"

**Spc. Talitha Holt
Orderly room clerk,
Company C, TF Fighting**



"At Wolverine, my favorite was the salad. The freshness of it reminded me of being back in the States."

**Capt. Alberto Guillen,
Human resources officer,
HHC, TF Dragonlords**

"Mongolian! You can choose your meat and rice or noodles. You pick exactly what you want. That's why people like it so much."



**Sgt. 1st Class Maurice Jones,
Camp Cole Mayor,
HHC, TF Attack**

Kitchen managers have a lot on their plates

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE TARIN KOWT, Afghanistan (July 25, 2011) - Around the world, no matter where from you hail or where you are, a commonality everyone shares is food.

Those of us bringing home the bacon out here in Afghanistan rely on core people who help keep us battle-ready in the most basic of ways: through our stomachs.

They are the bread and butter of the mission. Without them, our mission would crumble.

During the daily grind, we burn more calories here as we bake in the desert sun, more so than we do in garrison. Caloric intake must be preserved in order to balance work exerted here.

The core of the matter is nutritional needs vary in different environments. Undoubtedly, water is the most important nutrient a body needs, so it is paramount to hydrate in a dryer environment.

"Often what happens when the temperatures are high, folks lose their desire to eat, and then other nutrition problems follow," said Capt. Mariann Butler, the deputy chief of the Nutrition Care Division at Blanchfield Army Community Hospital at Fort Campbell, Ky. "It is important to consume three meals a day (to incorporate) lean meats, low-fat dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains."

Presenting a well-balanced meal for a body in this bone-dry environment is no cakewalk. Let's examine the important factors in serving food jam-packed with the nutrients Soldiers need.

Staff Sgt. Gabriel Bridges of Chicago, the operations NCO in charge for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade) was the the senior food operations manager for Headquarters Support



Spc. Nicholas Notter of Cleona, Penn., an aircraft pneudraulics repairer with Company D, Task Force Attack (3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), takes his plate from a food service worker at the Camp Cole dining facility at Forward Operating Base Tarin Kowt July 25.

Company for Task Force Fighting (563rd Aviation Support Battalion) when TF Thunder deployed to Bagram during Operation Enduring Freedom 09-10. He does not waffle around about the necessity for extra nutritional requirements here in this scorching sun.

"You have to prepare items higher in nutrients," he said. "You also have to have a large selection of fruits available to the Soldiers at all times because that's what's going to keep them sustaining the fight. It's important the Soldiers are provided the optimal selections of the foods available from the six food groups."

Making food that appeals to Soldiers and civilians from all walks of life is no small potatoes. At Kandahar Airfield, there are several dining facilities, some serving food of the American culture, some touting other cuisines, Bridges said.

That wasn't necessarily the case at Bagram because the dining facility concentrated on the palates of TF Thunder Soldiers, he said.

Running a quality dining facility

costs a pretty penny, said Bridges. Approximately 30 percent of the Army's dough goes toward sustaining the Soldiers, he said.

Naturally, the food is the biggest piece of the pie when it comes to the expenses involved in running a dining facility, Bridges said, but non-food items gobble up a good portion of a kitchen's budget.

"Out here, we use flatware, paper cups, paper plates and to-go boxes. All those are an additional expense," he said.

The best way to trim some fat in the budget is good planning. Planning a meal begins with an approximated head count, he said. Supply and demand should be equal.

"If we make it, and it doesn't get consumed, it was wasted. Therefore, money was wasted, and the government is not into wasting money," Bridges said.

Over the years, the tables have turned, and the government has been sending more and more contracted companies into the mix.

"Now we're in a contracted envi-

ronment. The Army has decided to go that direction, because, in the long run, it's cheaper, even when factoring in the contractors' salaries."

Charles Boling, the dining facility manager at Tarin Kowt is not one to mince his words. "(We are) always looking for ways to save the U.S. government money," he said.

One way the government can save some clams is by installing hand dryers, Boling said.

"These hand dryers will reduce U.S. government expenditure on procurement, transportation, storage and usage costs of paper towels," he said.

While budgeting is important to the meal, dining facility managers must plan ahead, because what really cooks a kitchen manager's goose is when a delivery does not come in. It is a

dicey situation that could leave the entire staff floundering at the last minute – a recipe for disaster. It can wreak havoc for a kitchen crew scrambling to produce a meal.

"The average time from ordering to delivery

on site is seven to nine days," Boling said. "Our DFACs consistently maintain 14 to 21 days of supply on hand in case there are problems with deliveries. If we were to run out of food, it would have a detrimental effect on the morale of our war fighters and their ability to perform their essential missions."

Morale is everything for deployed Soldiers.

"When Soldiers don't get fed, especially those outside the wire," Bridges said, "it's a problem. When those guys come back from (the field), and they come to these facilities, they deserve a good meal."

Teamwork in a kitchen is just as important as teamwork on the battlefield.

"You cannot do it by yourself,"

Bridges said. "I have yet to see one person, in my military career, do everything by himself – run a head-count station, run the administrative section, do the night baking, prepare the meals, serve the meals and clean all the kitchen equipment. It's just impossible."

"There are many facets to a DFAC team, and unless they all pull together to meet the DFAC's aim, our war fighters would suffer," said Boling.

Too often people complain about the foul cooking they experienced when they were deployed, but here at Tarin Kowt, the cooks take great pride in what they do, and the fruits of their labor do not go unnoticed.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Sickles of Kinnesaw, Wash., is the detachment tactical operations officer for the Sugar Bears (Company B, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment), out of Anchorage, Alaska. He has deployed seven times, and is an old salt when it comes to deployment food.

"I've had to eat all kinds of food during deployments, sometimes nothing but (meals, ready-to-eat)," he said. "In Pakistan, we had chicken at every meal. I got burned out on that real quick. You'd be amazed what I've had to eat during deployments."

You won't see Sickles turn up his nose at the food here.

He said he has no beef with it, because, compared to MREs, the dining

facility at Tarin Kowt simply can't be beat.

One thing Sickles said is extraordinary at the Tarin Kowt dining facility is the ice cream. He said he intends to milk that for as long as he can.

Until next time, chow!



Spc. Subash Chhetri of Dallas, a truck driver with Company E, Task Force Attack (3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), takes advantage of the "extras" at the ice cream bar at the dining facility at Forward Operating Base, Tarin Kowt July 25.

No changes to military retirement anytime soon, officials say

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (Aug. 15, 2011) - The military retirement system isn't going to change any time soon, Defense Department officials said.

"There's no immediate plan to affect retirement,"

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen told service members at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, July 31.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said any changes to military retirement should be studied carefully and should be "grandfathered" so the military doesn't break faith with those in the service.

Pentagon officials are reviewing all areas of the defense budget, and the goal of the review is to "inform the decisions and strategies that we have to make," Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said Aug. 4.

"So that's going to be key to what decisions we make and what areas we look to for savings," the secretary added.

In support of the department's efficiency initiatives, a small group of Defense Business Board members was tasked to develop alternative plans to the current military retirement system. The group briefed its findings

and draft recommendations to the full board during their July 21 quarterly meeting. The full board approved the recommendations, and the group will issue a final report by the end of this month.

The Defense Business Board provides DOD's senior leaders independent advice and recommendations

"on effective strategies for the implementation of best business practices on matters of interest to the Department of Defense," according to Pentagon officials. Meanwhile, a Pentagon spokeswoman said, officials are reviewing the board's recommendations.

"Any recommendation to change the military retirement system must be approached with thoughtful analysis, to include considerations of impacts to recruiting and retention," Eileen Lainez said. "While the military retirement system, as with all other compensation, is a fair subject of review for effectiveness

and efficiency, no changes to the current retirement system have been approved, and no changes will be made without careful consideration for both the current force and the future force."





ZUMBA!!
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2000 - 2130 in MWR

Break Dance
Thursday

2000 - 2100
@ MWR



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TF THUNDER HALF MARATHON SHADOW RUN COMING MID OCTOBER!!! (START TRAINING)

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TEN-MILER
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Sign up on the Boardwalk
Mon, Wed, Fri
1100 to 1300 / 1300 to 1930

POC : SSG Timothy S. Andzelik
timothy.andzelik@afghan.swa.army.mil

First place plaques for
Men and Women Finishers

Register to Run
Kandahar Air Base

Run @0400 show up
Start @0430



Army Strong



Run Army

B 2-4 FA BULLDOGS DOGPOUND BREAKOUT 5 K RUN

September 10th

Event starts at 0600

Brief at 0530

POC: SSG Soto, SSG Collazo, SPC Bullock
DSN: 841-3128

OUTLOOK: Soto.Jaime@afghan.swa.army.mil
Caroline.Collazo@afghan.swa.army.mil
Joshua.bullock2@afghan.swa.army.mil

Registration between the hours of 1830-2030 Monday-Sunday

\$15.00

First 300 Participants receive T-Shirt
Proceeds go to support
Army Emergency Relief Fund

KARAOKE:

Monday:

2000 - 2300 @ MWR

Wednesday:

2000 - 0000 @ Boardwalk

Friday:

2000 - 2300

@ C 422 cable yard

Sunday:

2000 - 0000 @ Boardwalk

Economy or adaptation?

By Sgt. 1st Class Richard C. DePontee
Career Counselor, Task Force Attack

As I walk out of my office, I see Soldiers duck into another office. I leave the building, and Soldiers are scurrying to their cars, hoping they made it unnoticed. I drive down to the motor pool, hoping to find Soldiers I am desperately looking for. Word has already gotten around telling everyone what I drive, so as soon as they see me pull in to a parking place, they scatter to the four winds.

No, I'm not the criminal investigation agent. I'm not the military police. I'm not even out to find anyone for any wrongdoing. I am the battalion retention NCO, on a mission to find Soldiers who need to talk to the career counselor. The end of the fiscal year is coming, and I need five more mid-career Soldiers to make my mission.

It wasn't long ago this was actually the scenario played out in brigades and battalions across the Army. The senior career counselor was pressuring the career counselors and battalion reenlistment NCOs, who, in turn, were pushing the company reenlistment NCOs. Brigade commanders were grilling battalion commanders, who, in turn, were holding company commanders' feet to the fire.

We had quarterly retention briefings at brigade-level and higher, with monthly battalion retention update briefs at battalion level and lower. Retention was always briefed first at command and staff meetings and set the tone for the briefing – and Heaven help you if

your unit was in the red. Weekly by-name rosters and stats were being reported to higher, from the Company Reenlistment Program all the way up to Department of the Army.

The retention NCO's, career counselor's and commander's combined efforts to "make mission," or failure to do so, greatly affected the outcome of their officer and NCO evaluation report. You could go from hero to zero from one quarter to the next.

Gone are those days, and to tell you the truth, good riddance. It's my opinion a system like that sets the norm of reenlisting any and everybody we can, as long as we stay in the green and make mission.

So what changed? There are many who say the economy changed the way we do business within the retention world in the Army. The theory is the economy is so bad that Soldiers "have" to reenlist. I disagree with that statement.

The way we do business started changing long before the economy started taking a turn for the worse. Yes, the sour economy does play a part in the decision-making process for those Soldiers who have no idea what they are going to do after they leave the Army, but that has just been in recent years. It is my honest opinion that three things have made a major impact in making changes to the way the Reenlistment Programs are operating today.

First, would be the Soldiers themselves. Back when I enlisted, a high number of Soldiers came in for the college money and no other

reason. Yes, there was Somalia and Haiti, but for the most part, we were not an "Army at War". It was relatively safe and easy to join for a few years and get several thousand dollars to assist with college tuition.

Today's Soldier has either enlisted or reenlisted, knowing they had a high probability of deploying to a designated war zone. Even knowing this, they still raised their hand and swore to an oath to "protect and defend the Constitution of the United States of America".

Keep in mind next time you are talking to your commander or the career counselor, if you are hearing something you like, you might want to take it right away because the next day it might not be available.

Each had their own reason for doing it, but make no mistake – they knew what they were getting themselves into and proudly raised their hand anyway.

The second major difference I have noted in my 15 years of working in a reenlistment role of one capacity or another, is the change in command involvement – not that they weren't involved before because, they definitely were. Now, however, their approach is much different from the role they played before. To me, it seems like they are more genuinely interested and concerned about each Soldier's

decision and less concerned about making mission.

I have been a firm advocate of the theory, "If you take care of your Soldiers, the mission will take care of itself." I believe the way commanders approach Soldiers now about reenlistment is congruent with this theory and proves its validity. Making mission has not been a problem or the focus for a few years now.

The last change in reenlistment I believe made a notable impact was the addition of approximately 300 more career counselors throughout the Army. This increase allowed us to put more career counselors at the battalion-level positions, as opposed

to a battalion retention NCO.

The battalion retention NCOs did the job they were intended for. However, the career counselor has the training and ability to properly counsel Soldiers. Additionally, they have the ability to actually match the Soldiers' needs, wants and desires to that of the Army, and when the time comes, produce a contract for signatures.

Of course, as with any change, there are always drawbacks that will affect one Soldier or another. An example would be the change in retention control points. When we had a harder time retaining

Soldiers, we raised the number of years a Soldier can stay in the Army at their current rank. Now that we are processing so many reenlistments, the Army needed to adjust the RCP again and lowered the number of years you can be retained at your current rank.

Another huge change that affected Soldiers immensely is the selective reenlistment bonus. Gone are the days of lucrative bonuses. The purpose of an SRB was never to be used as a reward for opting to continue with your career. Its purpose was actually to be "Selective" about who would actually receive them, meaning you receive a bonus if you are in an military occupational specialty that is either a high priority or a highly skilled or technical MOS and based on the strengths and difficulty retaining Soldiers in that MOS.

However, there are also positives. Before, it was extremely difficult to separate a Soldier who had no business being in the Army. Now, the process has become much easier and more readily condoned.

For example, we have all seen the one Soldier who is definitely a dirtbag, fails every APFT, has always been on the Weight Control Program with no satisfactory progress, can't qualify with his weapon, been flagged and even barred, but when his chapter packet went up for separation, it was denied.

There is another positive impact the current system has produced – the MOS administrative retention review. It is commonly called the MAR2. It has been in development for a couple of years now and, as of May 1, has been implemented at Fort Campbell. The MOS medical retention board is now a thing

of the past, as are the long waits for boarding procedures, repeals, appeals, screening, re-screening and medical separation processing.

I won't get into the ins and outs of the MAR2, but want to mention the streamlined process would never have come to be reality had it not been for the high success rate of our commanders' retention programs. The gist of the MAR2 implementation was to expedite the processing procedure for Soldiers who have a medical ailment or injury to be able to transition swiftly and smoothly through the medical reclassification or separation procedures.

Basically, there is no reason for a Soldier who has been injured to have to wait around for a board and all the exasperation that goes with the process, when they should be in a place where they can get the best medical treatment available, or reclassify into a different MOS where they will not aggravate the injury further ... Enter the MAR2.

Today's Soldier has become wiser and more educated on managing his career. More and more Soldiers are coming into the Army with the intent of staying for the long haul right from the start. The Army and its leaders at every level have, and will continue to, adapt to the new mindset of our Soldiers.

The Army Reenlistment Program has always been an ever-changing system. Some things have been to the benefit of the Soldier, some not so much. Just keep in mind next time you are talking to your commander or the career counselor, if you are hearing something you like, you might want to take it right away because the next day it might not be available.

Awareness of friends in need can curb suicide

By Capt. Michell Griffith
Task Force Thunder Psychologist

September is National Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month, which gives us an opportunity to think about what challenges life may throw our way. Two important questions I want you to ponder are "How do you recognize others may be hurting emotionally and what steps can you do to help them?" and "How do you ask for help when feeling emotionally overwhelmed or drained?"

The first step in answering these two questions is do you know the warning signs of suicidal behavior? There are 10 core signs to indicate people are struggling:

- depression
- talking about dying
- change in sleep patterns
- difficulties with concentration
- change in eating habits
- low self-esteem
- inability to focus on the future
- giving away possessions
- inability to control emotions (anger and sadness)
- history of suicidal behavior in the past.

If you notice a peer or friend's personality has changed recently, ask them questions about what is going on.

There is an old myth that talking about suicidal thoughts may actually encourage the person to follow through with suicide; however, this is not true. Having a heart to heart and being non-judgmental while listening is the key to helping people who are having thoughts of self-harm. Be the lifeline they need. You don't have to be brilliant or witty - listen and ask questions you would ask a loved one, such as "What's going on... have you ever felt this way before.... do you have a plan?" If you have concerns, walk with them to either the Chaplain or Behavioral Health. Don't leave them alone.

Practicing good self-care is essential, especially in a deployed setting. What are your individual signs that you are becoming stressed and/or overwhelmed? Self-knowledge is important, especially when addressing the above core signs of depression and suicide.

Take this month to practice being open with trusted individuals about your feelings and thoughts; allow them to give you a shoulder to lean on. Being there for each other makes a difficult situation a bit more bearable. Take the advice you would give a peer - see a Chaplain or Behavioral Health.

We have always been told that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound in care, meaning waiting until we - or others - are in a crisis is probably not the best time to develop a plan of action. Please take this month to consider what you would do to help others or even yourself when facing a personal crisis.

Celebrating Women's Right to Vote

Women's Equality Month

I AM
where I am
BECAUSE OF
the
BRIDGES

that I
CROSSED.

SOJOURNER TRUTH

was a bridge.

HARRIET TUBMAN

was a bridge.

IDA B. WELLS

was a bridge.

MADAME C. J. WALKER

was a bridge.

FANNIE LOU HAMER

was a bridge.

Oprah Winfrey

” Please join us as we celebrate

“ Women’ s Equality Day

Date: 26 August 2011

Time: 15:00 - 16:00

Location: The MWR Fest Tent

Contact your TF or Brigade EOA for details

Making the grade:

BSEP helps Soldiers raise GT scores

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WOLVERINE, Afghanistan (July 29, 2011) – With the Army tasked to cut Soldiers, tens of thousands of many are facing limited options.

It's getting harder for Soldiers to obtain promotions, and many career fields are merging or eliminating job specialties. Soldiers who plan to progress in the Army have to take more initiative.

One way Soldiers here are doing this is by participating in the Basic Skills Education Program classes to help them improve their GT scores on the ASVAB.

The class focuses on math and English skills, explained 1st Lt. Qiong Garner, the executive officer for the Task Force Wings Forward Support Company and a math instructor for the class. These are the two areas evaluated by the GT score.

"I haven't done math in six years," said Cpl. Natasha Dupree, a human resources NCO with Task Force Wings and a student in the class. "This class is really serving as a refresher for me."

Dupree is working on raising her GT score to above 110 so she can submit a drill sergeant packet, and she realizes the value of the tools available to her.

"I had planned to take this class when we got home," she said. "Now I'm getting to do it sooner."

Garner said this is the perfect time for Soldiers

to seek improvement.

"They don't even have to take the test right after the class," she said. "They have the whole rest of the deployment to get ready."

The BSEP class begins with Soldiers taking a TABE test, which evaluates a Soldier's math and English skills. At the end of BSEP, they take another TABE test to gauge how much they've improved. The instructors make a decision then whether or not to recommend the student take the ASVAB.

"They don't have to take the test right away," she said. "If you're only going to improve your score by five points, then why waste the test?"

While Soldiers aren't required to have a recommendation from their instructors, they can only take the ASVAB three times in their careers, not including their initial test they took when they joined the Army. For those Soldiers who have to raise their score significantly, it's imperative to give as much as they can to the class.

"I can't help someone who doesn't want to help themselves," Garner said.

Some ways Soldiers can help themselves is by building flashcards to study, completing assignments that aren't required, and by taking advantage of extra study time offered by the instructors.

"If you don't work for it, then you don't want it that bad," Garner said.

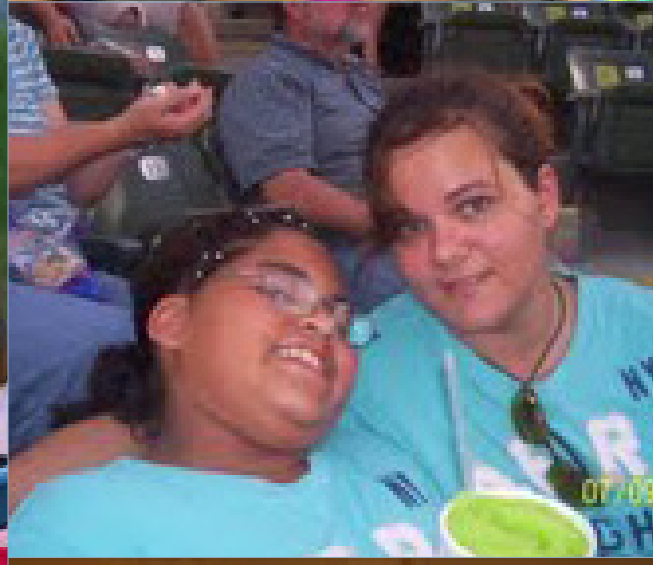
"I can't help someone who doesn't want to help himself."

1st Lt. Qiong Garner
BSEP Math Instructor

Through your eyes



Come home soon, Daddy!





A day in the life



WHAT'S UP WITH JAG ?

Bldg 407a
Screaming Eagle Blvd
NIPR: 841-2235
SIPR: 841-2031
CENTRIXS: 265-0418



Time for this months...

ASK LEGAL: Can you help me get a divorce?

No we cannot. We can, however, provide you with a list of attorneys in Clarksville, TN and Hopkinsville, KY that will be able to communicate with you via e-mail and telephonically. This will assist you with the process and point you in the right direction. Once your paperwork is started, you can set up an appointment with the legal assistance office (LAO) to go over your documents in case you have any questions. If you need a notary, we can help you with that!

LAO: 841-1163/Bldg 245 (next to Ed Ctr. On KAF)

ASK LEGAL: DO I NEED A GENERAL POWER OF ATTORNEY?

NOPE! You absolutely do not NEED a General Power of Attorney. There should be absolutely no reason that a business tells your spouse "We cannot use a Special POA, we need a GPOA". In fact, most businesses have their own special powers of attorney, such as: USAA, Bank of America, DEERS, Finance, on-post housing, and TRI Care. There are also SPOAs that are specific for taxes, vehicle registration, purchasing or selling a vehicle, purchasing or selling a home, paying bills, dependant medical care, guardianship, or anything else you could possibly think of. Just let us know what kind of SPOA you are interested in and we would be happy to help you!



If you have a question for next months magazine, please send it to your Task Force Paralegal.

Chaplain's Message

Maintaining Balance by Saying "No"

Have you looked at the news recently? This past month's top two news stories were riots in the world's major cities and market turmoil. I kept wondering this past month whether I should keep all my retirement money in a market that yo-yos and seems out of balance. Investment advisors always tell us that we need to keep our future goals in mind and don't panic when the investment markets fluctuate. But how do you do that? How do you resist temptation when it seems so strong?

People have always struggled with temptation to things without considering what it will cost them in the future.

Columbia University did an interesting experiment a number of years ago to test the self-control of four-year-olds. Children were seated at a table with two pieces of candy in front of them and were told to wait ten minutes for the teacher to return. They were also told that if they didn't eat the candy during those ten minutes, when the teacher returned, they would be given five pieces of candy. During the ten-minute wait, some of the children touched the candy, some looked anxious and frustrated, and some gave in and ate the two pieces, even though it meant they wouldn't be given the five pieces later.

The children were followed over the next thirty years, and interesting facts emerged. Those who demonstrated the greatest self-control had higher SAT scores, the boys had fewer run-ins with the law, and the girls were more likely to become pregnant in their twenties. What was the difference with the children? They learned self-control at an early age from their parents or guardians.

Most of the world's major faiths teach that one of the greatest traits we can attain is self-control. For example, Christianity encourages fasting to instill discipline. This month is Islam's holiest month, and it is observed with fasting during the daylight hours. Fasting in both of these religions is intended to make a person stronger to resist temptation. Resisting eating when one's body is saying "eat" takes self-control.

Life will always offer things to us that can be tempting. The other day, for example, I saw a picture of a new car that caught my eye. After a few minutes of research I had convinced myself I not only wanted that car, but I needed that car. Later that day, the stock market crashed and I was reminded that I really don't know what the financial future holds and I should save as much as I can. All of sudden, I no longer needed that car. All of sudden, I realized that car could cost me more than I really wanted to pay. Temptation is like that - it can look good at first, before we really consider the cost.

I don't know the temptations you face every day, but saying "no" or "wait" to them is a good practice. Saying "yes" to every temptation that comes your way can cost you more than you often want to pay. Try it for a change, and see if the world looks a little calmer to you. Who knows, you might just bring a little balance back into your life through self-control.

Blessings !

CH (MAJ) Brian Curry



TF Thunder welcomes Alaskan assets

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

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (July 27, 2011) – The 100-degree heat of Afghanistan differed drastically from what the Soldiers of Team Denali (1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment) left behind at Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

They joined Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade) at three forward operating bases to bolster aviation assets in southern Afghanistan, beginning in June.

While they are attached to Task Force Lift (7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), Team Denali, composed of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and Companies B (The Sugar Bears) and D, is technically self-sustaining.

“We came out here with Delta Company,” said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Davis of St. Augustine, Fla., the first sergeant for B/1-52. “We brought maintenance with us. We brought shops personnel, to include (human resources), (movement operations) and some back shops personnel to help out.”

A CH-47D Chinook helicopter unit is always in demand, he said.

“Generators, trucks, whatever you need – we can carry it all,” he said. “It is the workhorse of the Army. Everybody says (Chinooks are) the one thing they wish they could get more of in Afghanistan because of the altitude, the heat and the distances you

have to fly.”

In August 2010, the Sugar Bears deployed as part of Task Force Denali for four months on a humanitarian assistance assignment to earthquake-stricken Pakistan. They transported more than 40,000 people and 10 million tons of life-sustainment supplies.

In May 2011, the American Helicopter Society-International awarded the unit the Capt. William J. Kossler Award for the year’s greatest achievement in worldwide operation of rotary-wing aircraft for their role in the Pakistan relief effort.

They returned to Alaska in December, just in time for the coldest of the sub-zero degree weather Alaska offers.

Only weeks upon return from Pakistan they learned they were being deployed – 95 days later – to southern Afghanistan in response to a request for additional forces.

But rather than deploying them for the typical 12 months, the Army honored the time in Pakistan as a part of their one-year tour.

Not only were they to prepare their own company for predeployment training, they were responsible for



SpC. David Rydel (right) of Inver Grove Heights, Minn., hands a wrench to SpC. Kenneth Jones of Nelson, Mo., as they attach a part to a CH-47D Chinook helicopter here July 23. Both Soldiers are maintainers for Company B, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, which is a new asset to Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade).



Sgt. Daniel Scott (left) of Denton, Texas, and Sgt. William Rose of Ormand Beach, Fla., flight engineers for Company B, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, organize necessities for flights in their first week in Afghanistan July 23.

training crews from other units and incorporate those units into their night-vision goggles and air assault training.

“We also had to train 36 additional CH-47D Chinook flight crews from all over the place – Korea, Honduras, and two National Guard units from Maryland and New York,” said Maj. Rick Sweet of Detroit, the Team Denali commander. “They flew out here with us, but went on to (Regional Command) – East.”

They spent 61 of those days doing their flight training in Seattle.

“It’s not like we could do (night vision goggles) training when the sun is up 24 hours,” said Capt. Robert Bender, the detachment commander for B/1-52 at FOB Tarin Kowt.

“With such a short notice, trying to get everybody trained while packing for the deployment along with training at Fort Lewis was pretty tricky,” he said.

But these Soldiers are professionals. Despite the challenges, they were able to pull together and deploy quickly.

Due to their deployment cycle, it seems Team Denali is the polar

opposite of snowbirds – they winter in Alaska and summer in the desert.

“It took about two weeks to get adjusted to the heat here,” Davis said. “We were already used to the sunlight because, when we were leaving, it was almost 24 hours of sunlight a day.”

Despite the difference in climate, the majority of Team Denali was up, running and ready for their first mission within a week and a half of arrival, Davis said.

“It takes about three or four days to get the airplane built up. Then we test-fly them, check all the systems, make sure everything’s good and they’re ready to run,” said Staff Sgt. Billy Kennedy of Austell, Ga., a CH-47 Chinook flight engineer for the Sugar Bears.

Most units will do a relief-in-place before a transfer of authority. Since Team Denali is not replacing another unit – they are simply an additional asset to TF Thunder – there is no RIP to be done.

“It makes this easier,” Davis said. “We’re falling in on a unit that’s already established here. We’re just adding to your team, so we just plus up what you already have.”

For the most part, Alaska and Afghanistan share very similar topographical features, including altitude, said Sgt. William Rose of Ormand Beach, Fla., a flight engineer for the Sugar Bears.

“We’re used to mountainous terrain in Alaska,” he said. “We’re used to turbulence coming off different ridgelines. It’s normal for us. Without even seeing any references, we know there is going to be turbulence over there because it’s right next to that ridgeline.”

“There is a difference, though, between landing in snow and landing in the dust,” said Davis. “It’s harder to land in the snow because you have no visual reference – it’s complete whiteout – there are no shadows. (Landing here) uses different techniques.”

Whether Alaska or Afghanistan, home is where the heart is, and Team Denali quickly warmed up to Task Force Thunder’s climate.

“At each of the FOB locations, we have been welcomed with open arms, and immediately felt like part of the group,” Davis said.



The wartime mission of Team Denali, composed mostly of Company B, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, is “Be prepared to deploy worldwide to provide heavy-lift helicopter support.” And that they are.

The Sugar Bears, nicknamed after the cereal character, have hauled hundreds of thousands of troops and millions of tons of cargo during tactical training operations and community support missions. B/1-52 has fought millions of acres of burning timber with 1000-gallon water buckets, performed emergency airlifts of native Alaskan villagers from rising flood waters and delivered tons of Christmas gifts to remote orphanages.

They perform one of the most unique peace-time missions in the history of Army helicopter lift operations: high altitude rescue operations in Denali National Park in Talkeetna, Alaska.




Photo by Sgt. Steve R. Paga,
Task Force Palehorse

Every month we will have a contest to select the photo for the back page. We're looking specifically for photos taken by Soldiers from the task force while they are deployed. Photos for consideration should be emailed to 159cabpao@gmail.com by the first of each month. Please do not send photos that violate OPSEC.

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