

The CONDOR



Official Magazine of the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, Camp Taji, Iraq

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2011

TIME TO GO!

*The 40th CAB is
Homeward Bound*



TRAINING IRAQI FUELERS

640th ASB partners with Iraqis on HEMMT operations

PARTNERS IN AIR SECURITY

6-17th CAV trains with Iraqis

EXPERIENCE MAKES THE MISSION

1-151st ARB gears up for the drawdown

The CONDOR

OCT/NOV
'11

ISSUE #5



ON THE COVER
UH-60 Blackhawk
Photographer:
Spc. Matthew Wright
HSC, 640th ASB



ON THE BACK
UH-60 Blackhawk and
Iraqi Huey 2
Photographer:
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HHC, 1-171st GSAB

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Commander's letter



Soldiers,

The story of our deployment is in its final chapter. It has been one for the history books.

Over the past nine months, Task Force Condor has racked up an impressive list of accomplishments. Our brigade has had the largest combat aviation footprint in the history of the Iraq conflict, with more than 259 rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft under our command that collectively performed more than 19,000 missions. We transported more than 177,000 passengers in theater, keeping them safe and off the roads. We moved more than 7 million pounds of cargo. Our helicopters flew more than 16,000 VIP missions, transporting general officers, ambassadors, and other distinguished guests around the country including Vice President Joe Biden, Speaker of the

House John Boehner, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and his successor Leon Panetta, and celebrity personalities as Toby Keith and Katie Couric. We provided security to U.S. and Iraqi ground forces by escorting convoys, conducting route and aerial reconnaissance. Our aircraft flew an astounding 126,000 accident free flight hours.

By any measure, these are accomplishments to be proud of.

Task Force Condor was given the demanding mission of conducting full-spectrum aviation operations in Iraq during this critical drawdown year. With our deployment nearly complete, our Iraqi partners will soon be responsible for their own destiny. The final chapter of this conflict is now being written. Task Force Condor has played an important role in this historic moment. As our story here ends, a new story begins—one to be written by the Iraqi people. While it is impossible to know what lies in their future, our mission has been an unqualified success.

Throughout this challenging year, each of you has contributed to mission success, further developed your skills and grown into stronger leaders. It has been my pleasure to see many of you promoted based on your past performance and potential for future service. It has been my honor to review and approve over 6,500 awards processed by the brigade; each and every award was well deserved.

This year has not been easy on most of us. We have made personal sacrifices to be here by leaving behind our families, friends and jobs. Our employers and our families have sacrificed. Soon, we will be home in time to enjoy the holidays. I thank all the family members and employers at home who have given us so much support over the past year.

Look back on this year with pride. I know I will. You have done a tremendous job. Thank you all for your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mitch Medigovich".

Col. Mitchell K. Medigovich
Commander, 40th CAB

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Command Sgt. Maj.'s letter

Soldiers,

I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all the Soldiers of the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade for a job well done!

Over the past several weeks, Soldiers have asked me if I was ready to go home. I kept my reply subdued in an attempt to keep Soldiers thoughts on completing the mission, not on home. I am told that we are considered to be one of the finest combat aviation brigades in the U.S. Army.

Everything we have accomplished during this deployment will go into the history books as a success, and all of you played a big role in making that happen. This could only be achieved by a well-focused force.

By the time this final edition of **The CONDOR** Magazine goes to print, the majority of the Soldiers of the 40th CAB Soldiers will have redeployed out of theater and will have begun their transition from active duty to being Citizen Soldiers once again. But, never forget our time here and the many contributions you have made to the CAB's mission here in Iraq. Also, never forget your own service and sacrifice to our great nation that we all serve. I will never forget your service.

To those Soldiers who have deployed multiple times, you and your families have my utmost respect. Know that you all are very much appreciated and remembered for all your contributions and sacrifices. To our families, your support of our Soldiers and our units has enabled us to stay focused on our mission while staying safe. For many Soldiers, me included, you served as a lifeline in keeping the homefront strong and secure... Thank you.

It has been my honor to serve with all of you during Operation New Dawn 2011. I believe we have made a positive difference in this part of the world for generations to come. To our Soldiers who returned home early for any number of reasons, you have our continued prayers. Finally, to our Soldiers, on behalf of a grateful nation and this command, we appreciate the sacrifices that were made by all of the Soldiers assigned to the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade. You are truly great Americans! For God, Country, Honor, and Duty... Wings of the sun!

Condor 7 is off the net!

Sincerely,



CSM David McFerrin
Command Sergeant Major, 40th CAB



Condor 7



HEMMT TRAINING

The 640th ASB trains Iraqis on HEMMT fueling operations

BY SPC. MATTHEW WRIGHT

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from Alpha Company, 640th Aviation Support Battalion recently conducted a weeklong class here training Iraqi Army personnel how to operate Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks (HEMTTs) in preparation for the upcoming assumption of operations by Iraqi Security Forces at the Camp Taji airfield.

The M978M HEMTT Fuel truck is a 10-ton, eight-wheeled, fuel servicing vehicle. It is a bulk liquid transporter that holds 2,500 gallons of fuel and is equipped with a fuel resupply module for pumping fuel.

Soldiers from the 640th trained Iraqi personnel to not only operate and maintain the fuel vehicles, but also to conduct training for other Iraqis on operating and maintaining the HEMTTs.

Staff Sgt. Rory Huerta is the non-commissioned officer in charge of the training program. He explained the purpose of the training and summarized what the 640th Soldiers are teaching the Iraqis in this course:

“They will be receiving four to six of these (HEMTTs), brand new,” he said. “We need to make sure that they understand how to not just drive them, but conduct preventive maintenance and services on the vehicles as well as fuel their vehicles and aircraft.”

The training was an 80-hour block that was condensed to 40 hours. The training started



Sgt. Gilbert Britto of A Co., 640th ASB, shows a class of Iraqi Army personnel a fueling nozzle and how it connects to the fueling module on a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck (HEMTT)

with the 640th familiarizing the Iraqis on HEMTT basic preventative maintenance. As the training continued through the week, the Iraqis received training on driving the vehicles and operating the fueling system, including the fueling of other vehicles and aircraft.

As the training progressed further, 640th Soldiers taught Iraqi personnel instructional techniques for training other Iraqi troops on the HEMTTs. Captain Ali, the senior Iraqi officer in the class, was impressed with the training and its usefulness for Iraqi personnel.

“The class is providing very good information for us,” Ali said. “This experience will be good for the warrant officers and the fueling specialists that I have worked with for 25 years.”

The 640th is a California National Guard unit based in four cities in Southern California: Long Beach, Los Alamitos, Torrance and El Cajon. The battalion’s mission for the last seven months during Operation New Dawn has been to provide aviation operations support for the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade at a number of bases throughout Iraq. That support included repairing helicopters, providing security and fuel



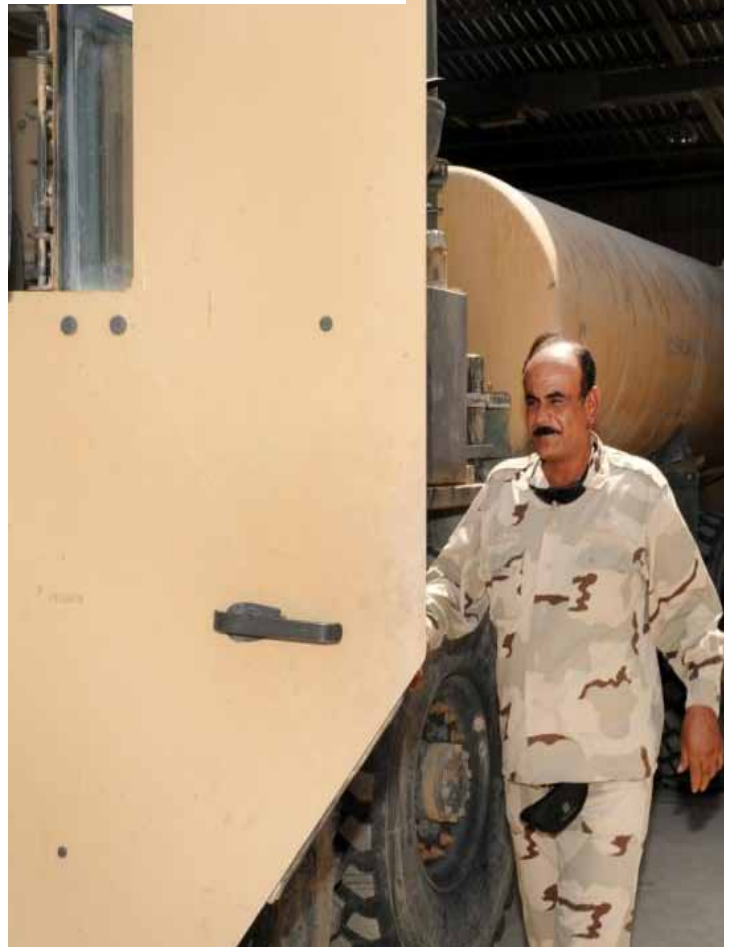


for the brigade as well as supporting tactical communications at Camp Taji and two locations in northern Iraq. The 640th is approaching the end of its deployment and will be heading back to California once it is released from its mission here.

The Iraqi personnel trained by A Co. will assume responsibility for services that American Soldiers provided while in theater; they will take over the support of operations at the Taji airfield as well as the full base operations.

Lt. Col. Lou Carmona, battalion commander of the 640th ASB, delivered a speech during the graduation ceremony at the conclusion of the training. He emphasized his pride in the outstanding manner in which A Co. accomplished its mission, as well as the importance of the training for the Iraqi Security Forces.

“At the end of the day, my Soldiers were able to connect with the Iraqis,” Carmona later said. “This equipment is an important addition to the Iraqi Army - it represents the ability to project aviation into parts of the country where little or no infrastructure exists.” ★





EXPERIENCE MAKES THE MISSION

Story & Photos by Staff Sgt. Tracci Dorgan

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment is conducting security and reconnaissance missions based out of Camp Taji and COS (contingency operating station) Warrior during the last weeks of the Iraq draw down.

The AH-64 Apache attack helicopter unit joined the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade in September after taking over operations from the 8th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 229th Aviation Regiment.

The 1-151st ARB is not new to the Iraqi theater of operations. The unit was in Iraq to support Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004-05. For this deployment, the unit brought with it many experienced Soldiers who have deployed

with the unit before.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Donny Cooley, operations sergeant for the TOC (tactical operations center) for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, “This deployment is different than our last deployment in 2005. Last time, we were covering infantry units and their missions. This time, we are patrolling and looking for people shooting indirect fire. Here in the TOC, we used to listen to the radios and could hear the calls for direct support. There is none of that this time.”

“During both deployments here, we have been part of something historical,” said Spc. Kenny Davis, operations specialist in the TOC for HHC. “Last time, we helped make it safe for the Iraqi people to hold free elections,



and this time we are part of the drawdown of the U.S. forces in Iraq.”

AH-64 Apache attack helicopter pilot and intelligence officer, Capt. Peter Wright, said, “Our mission is just as important this deployment as it was last time, even though we are doing different things. We are here to ensure the convoys have a safe departure from the theater of Iraq.”

“With our reconnaissance, and our presence in the air, we deter the use of indirect fire on our camps and improvised explosive devices left on the roads,” added Wright.

Chief Warrant Officer Harry Hynes, Apache pilot and maintenance officer for A Company, has been on five deployments with the 1-151st ARB. He said he has been in the South Carolina Army National Guard for 30 years and with the 151st aviation since their beginning 25 years ago.

“This time is very different,” said Hynes. “We’re drawing down the U.S. forces. There is no set day-to-day mission, and there have been many unknowns.”

Hynes added, “This deployment environment is totally different than the last time in 2005. Now, the majority of the population here in Iraq just wants to get back to their normal lives and not many want to cause harm to anyone else. There is only a small percentage of people who are still trying to cause any harm. The convoys appreciate our presence. Our main purpose right now is to escort everyone out of here safely.” ★





Partners in Security

Story by Capt. Justin Kelly
Photos by Spc. Darriel Swatts

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from the 6th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment recently had the opportunity to greatly affect the future of Iraqi armed reconnaissance and the greater aviation community.

The 6-17th Cav. is a scout reconnaissance helicopter squadron from Fort Wainwright, Alaska. The unit's OH-58 Kiowa helicopters have been patrolling the skies of Iraq for much of 2011 in support of Operation New Dawn.

During the week of October 17, the squadron conducted training with pilots and ground support personnel from the Iraqi Army's 21st Helicopter Squadron. The training included topics ranging from air-ground integration to rocket loading and safe armament procedures.

This training is expected to better prepare the 21st Squadron for the future as the unit nears full readiness to assume the 6-17's mission in Iraq. Currently, the mission of the 21st Squadron is training. However, as the drawdown of American forces continues, the Iraqi unit will soon be responsible for armed reconnaissance flown today by U.S. Air Cavalry assets.

The Iraqi unit is currently using the Bell T-407 training helicopter to train more than 30 pilots. The Iraqi government has purchased 27 AR-407 helicopters armed with 2.75-inch rockets and M3P .50 caliber machine guns for the Squadron's use.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jason Ganitano and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dan Hill serve as liaisons and interact daily with Iraqi personnel from the 21st Squadron. They asked the 6-17 CAV Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Michael C. Mc-

Curry, for assistance, in the belief that the American Air Cavalry Squadron would make a lasting impression on the newly formed Iraqi unit, they said.

"The Iraqis look at Kiowas flying by and wish they could fly them," Hill said. The Kiowa's accomplishments and impact on local security over the years in the region have been enormous and the Iraqi Army holds the community in high regard, he added.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Todd Mitchell, squadron standardization pilot for the 6-17 CAV, presented some of the training classes to the Iraqis of the 21st Squadron. "I am excited to be able to assist the Iraqi Army in taking the next step in their future," Mitchell said.

Armament personnel led by Staff Sgt. Jamey Hermanns instructed ground personnel in handling and loading procedures for the M3P machine gun and aerial rockets. Hermanns stated, "I hope some of the techniques and procedures we taught will assist them as they develop their own standard operating procedures."

"The training and partnership that we fostered here will have a lasting impact on the Iraqi military and the country of Iraq. Even more than teaching these brave Iraqis techniques and procedures, we have established lasting relationships and a mutual respect that will have a more permanent and strategic impact," McCurry said.

The 6-17 Cavalry Regiment will depart Iraq by the end of the year in accordance with the security agreement of 2008. ★



THE SHADOW



Sgt. Christopher Ethridge with 3rd Platoon, A Company, 21st Special Troops Battalion, conducts a pre-flight check on a Shadow unmanned aerial system.



AT WORK



Spc. Tyler Wilkins, Sgt. Christopher Ethridge and Pfc. Ian Parise with 3rd Platoon, A Company, 21st Special Troops Battalion, check a Shadow unmanned aerial system prior to launch.





The Palace Life

Story & photos by 1st Lt. Jason Sweeney

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq – A San Jose citizen soldier witnessed the final days of America’s eight-year conflict in Iraq from within the ornate halls, offices and conference rooms of the Al-Faw Palace in Baghdad.

Over much of the past year, the California Army National Guard’s 40th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) has commanded more than 259 rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft that have been performing full-spectrum aviation operations across the Iraq Joint Operations Area.

Lt. Col. Raymond Watts, a California

Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook cargo helicopter pilot, worked out of an office on the third floor of the Al Faw Palace where he served as a liaison officer for most of 2011. Watts acted as the intermediary between the 40th CAB and its higher command, called United States Forces-Iraq (USF-I).

“This has been the center of gravity for United States Forces-Iraq,” Watts said, shortly before his tenure at Al Faw Palace came to an end. “It has been interesting working here, to say the least.”

Al Faw is a massive structure that domi-



nates an island set in a manmade lake on Victory Base Complex in Baghdad. The palace was built by Saddam Hussein, but was taken over by U.S. forces in 2003 and became a headquarters building for USF-I.

// Granted, there are some luxuries and benefits working in the palace, but it's the distance that's been the challenge. //

For the past eight years, the halls of Al Faw were walked by some of the highest ranking personnel in the American military and government. Full-bird colonels could seem as numerous as sergeants on the bridge that led to Al Faw's arched entranceway. Generals were a common sight under the huge chandelier that hangs above the palace's expansive rotunda.

When units needed to move equipment and personnel across Iraq by air, Watts was the man in the middle who coordinated aviation missions with his brigade and the USF-I aviation staff at J33 Air.

"I act as a subject matter expert on the deployment and use of rotary-wing assets throughout the area of operation; and, I coordinate a lot of the lift and the movement

of those assets with the J33 air director," Watts explained.

Watts has been serving as a part-time Soldier with the National Guard for the past 31 years. For 15 years, he worked as a technology sales group manager in Silicon Valley while flying Chinooks one weekend a month and two weeks a year with the Guard.

But in 2008, the technology company he worked for eliminated his sales group, and his 15-year career in the tech industry came to a halt. He then took a full-time position in Stockton, Calif. as a National Guard CH-47 helicopter facility commander, filling in after the previous commander deployed to Iraq.

In 2011, it was Watts' turn. He said goodbye to his wife and three children and left his home in San Jose for Baghdad, arriving at the Al Faw Palace early this year.



Lt. Col. Raymond Watts is seen here with journalist Katie Couric at the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad in 2011.



Lt. Col. Raymond Watts stands in front of the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad where he worked as liaison officer for the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade for much of 2011.

Watts said his children are somewhat enamored by the idea of their dad working in a palace. "But being away is hard," he said. "Granted, there are some luxuries and benefits working in the palace, but it's the distance that's been the challenge."

Driving golf balls into the lake from palace balconies, rubbing elbows with America's most influential and powerful people, and enjoying some of the Army's best dining facilities were a few of the amenities. But incoming mortar rounds were not uncommon and served as a reminder that hostile forces were still out there.

Watts said one of the most memorable aspects of the deployment was participating in the air movements of distinguished visitors to Iraq. In 2011, the 40th CAB was responsible for transporting former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, his successor Leon Panetta, Vice President Joe Biden, Speaker of the House John Boehner, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, and others.

"Any time dignitaries come, it's always great to spend time with them and show them what's going on from an aviation perspective,"





Watts said. "We worked closely with the rotary-wing assets to get them where they need to be."

Watts said he and Panetta had a lot to talk about, both being from Northern California. Another memorable moment was driving Katie Couric to a heliport when she was in theater to interview Gates for 60 Minutes. Couric reminisced to Watts about her previous trips to Iraq, he recalled.

American forces are nearing the final stages of the drawdown in Iraq after eight years here. Watts has left Al Faw for the more austere and isolated conditions at Al Asad Airbase in Iraq's western desert where he will finish out his deployment with the 40th CAB.

"We're leaving on our own accord," Watts said, shortly before saying goodbye to his palace life. "I am truly blessed to have had this opportunity to work with such a fine group of professionals. The staff here was the best of the best." ★



Lt. Col. Raymond Watts is seen here with former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates at the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad in 2011. Watts helped coordinate the air transportation for several distinguished visitors to Iraq over the course of



Time to Head Home

Story and photo Capt. R. L. "Ed" Edwards

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – The 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 185 Aviation Regiment, called Task Force Griffin, is finishing up its yearlong mission in Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn.

The battalion's Soldiers have said their goodbyes to the sand and dust of Iraq and are headed home to greener landscapes.

The 1-185th AHB, headquartered in Jackson, Miss., has subordinate units hailing from Arkansas and Georgia.

In Iraq, the battalion headquarters was at COB Speicher where the unit assumed full responsibility for full-spectrum aviation operations in the northern half of Iraq in a Transfer of Authority (TOA) ceremony on March 4. The long hours, days and months of training that led up to the TOA were about to pay off.

During this deployment, the battalion assumed command of additional assets, nearly doubling its size. In all, it was comprised of 11 companies—five aviation support companies, five flight companies and one ground quick reaction force company. The battalion controlled 42 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and eight AH-64 Apache attack helicopters. It was responsible for air traffic control, air and ground quick reaction forces, medical evacuations, lift, attack, a forward arming and refueling point, and it served as the senior airfield authority for COB Speicher.

Associated support and maintenance operations were conducted from five bases in the northern half of Iraq. Task Force Griffin provided air movement support to units from United States Division-North (USD-N, headed by the commanding general of 4th Infantry Division), conducted medical evacuation services to move sick and injured Soldiers, and

provided aerial support assets for special operations units.

The battalion quickly settled in to the mission. As the days got longer and hotter with the approach of summer, Soldiers got the chance for some much needed rest and recuperation (R&R) leave to see loved ones back home, some lucky enough to have their leave coincide with the birth of a child, an anniversary or other special date.

When summer ended, the unit's time in Iraq began to grow short, and the time drew near to pack up and move the B, B & B's (beans, bullets and bodies) that the logisticians speak of, while precariously balancing the need to continue the mission with the operations branch and keep the aircraft flying by keeping enough spare parts and tools on hand.

The Soldiers of the 1-185 have kept good attitudes and warm thoughts of home and mission safety in their minds. Along the way the 1-185th has overcome numerous obstacles; successful to the end.

With their mission completed, the Soldiers of the 1-185th will soon be back in the great states of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Georgia. "Adopted" units that were attached to the unit for the deployment will be returning to Nebraska, Wisconsin, Arizona, and Texas.

"I cannot express the gratitude that I have for all of you for making this deployment such a success," said Lt. Col. Ronald Beckham, commander of the 1-185th. "You have made history by being a part of this deployment, and when you hear in years to come the operational name 'New Dawn,' you can express with pride that you were a part of that great mission." ★







Story and photos by Spc. Matthew Wright

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The 640th Aviation Support Battalion, a California National Guard unit deployed here in support of Operation New Dawn, is preparing to split its operations between Iraq and Kuwait before finally heading home.

The 640th ASB, the only aviation support battalion remaining in Iraq, has provided aviation support to all the Army aviation units assigned to the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade for the last nine months.

"We are responsible for all logistics, communications and scheduled aircraft maintenance for the brigade," Lt. Col. Lou Carmona, the 640th ASB's battalion commander, said.

The battalion is based in several cities in Southern California, including Torrance, El Cajon, Fresno, Stockton and Los Alamitos. It is organic to the 40th CAB and is headquartered in Long Beach, Calif. The 40th CAB arrived in Iraq last February and is





640TH ASB

now preparing to head home over the next few weeks after successfully completing its mission in Iraq.

The 640th ASB played an essential role providing aviation support during the deployment. The battalion's main base of operations has been Camp Taji, with detachments in Balad, Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) and Kirkuk. Several hundred Soldiers were assigned to four companies in the battalion, performing four different support jobs.



Spc. Robert Paduano of C Co., 640th ASB sets up a line of sight satellite dish.



Mechanics of the B Co., 640th ASB work on an engine of a UH-60 Black Hawk.



Headquarters Company, 640th ASB, consists of wheeled-vehicle mechanics, medics, cooks, as well as the command staff for the battalion. It contains the largest group of medics and cooks in the brigade, and its wheeled-vehicle and generator mechanics have been responsible for working on the vehicles and generators operated by other companies in the brigade.

Alpha Company, 640th ASB, operated Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARPs) at Camp Taji and Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) and provided security for the brigade. At Camp Taji, Alpha Company fueled all aircraft that flew missions throughout central Iraq. Its fuelers also provided gas for Iraqi Army aircraft.

Early on in the deployment, the 640th's Personnel Security Detail (PSD) provided security for supply and personnel convoys in the Baghdad area, and later, security for Camp Taji airfield.

Bravo Company, 640th ASB, is the largest company in the battalion with more than 300 personnel assigned. The company's aviation maintenance personnel ordered, tracked, warehoused

and issued parts once they arrived in theater, and made sheet metal repairs to the helicopters. Also, the company's mechanics and electricians completed phase maintenance inspections on all aircraft to ensure that the parts were replaced and met all checked functions so they could perform their missions. Company maintenance test pilots put the helicopters through the prescribed flight checks after maintenance to make sure that they were mission ready.

Charlie Company maintained and operated tactical communications and provided tactical, or mobile, communications for brigade units at Kirkuk, Taji and Speicher.

"The 640th ASB played a crucial role during OND 10-11 (Operation New Dawn year 2010-2011)," said Maj. Noland Flores, the 640th ASB's executive officer. "It is the only aviation support battalion in Iraq, providing all classes of supply to the largest aviation brigade ever assembled—the 40th CAB."

"We currently support seven aviation battalions," 640th Command Sgt. Maj. Bryon Robinson said. "Our Soldiers have pumped almost two million





gallons of JP-8 jet fuel, completed 144 aircraft phases, and in the month of September, 14 CH-47D (Chinook Helicopters) broke a record by flying more hours per airframe than ever before in the Army. They were able to do this because the 640th completed scheduled maintenance and inspections quicker than the Department of the Army standard timeline."

Another 640th accomplishment was training members of the Iraqi Army which will help the Iraq Army as American bases and military sites transition to Iraqi control after the U.S. military departs Iraq.

Soldiers from Alpha Company, 640th ASB recently conducted a week-long class training Iraqi army personnel to operate Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks in preparation for the upcoming assumption of operations by Iraqi Security Forces at the Camp Taji airfield.

From July through August, the 640th Aviation Support Battalion and the U.S. Air Force Base Transition Team trained Iraqi Army personnel on the maintenance and operation of backup generators for the airfield on Camp Taji.

Training the Iraqi Army and fueling weren't the only things that 640th excelled at during its tour.

"We do whatever needs to get done so the aviation brigade can accomplish its mission," Carmona said.

The battalion and the 549th Quartermaster Company worked in conjunction with the Mobility Redistribution Team (MRT) during Operation Clean Sweep to locate and turn in more than \$12 million of excess non-property book equipment at Camp Taji, Flores said. The battalion has collected and itemized unused or misplaced military equipment that has accumulated over the eight years the Army has been here.

The equipment found on the post that was serviceable included automotive parts, such as tires, Gator utility vehicle parts and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle parts, and other items the military can make use of, said Capt. Joseph Adams,

a planning officer with the 640th.

Carmona explained Alpha Company's PSD team rehearsed missions outside the base to maintain proficiency in case it had to recover a helicopter or transport brigade leadership outside the base.

With the deployment coming to a close, the 640th's job is far from over. To prepare for the draw-down of U.S. troops from the Iraqi theater, the 640th ASB has started split operations.

Carmona said that Bravo Company is in Kuwait to set up maintenance support for contingency aviation maintenance support of the theater due to the anticipated end of mission in Iraq.

The remainder of the 640th is currently at Camp Taji to continue its support operations there.

"In Taji, we are continuing to manage various classes of supply: Class I (food and water), Class III (fuel) and Class V (ammo)," Carmona explained. "We support the brigade with numerous sustainment missions, like fuel, airfield security, Chinook and Apache aviation maintenance, computer, signal and the Taji transportation control team."

"As units roll out, we need to ensure the logistic train follows them," Robinson said.

The 1204th Aviation Support Battalion from Kentucky assume the mission allowing the the 640th demobilize, travel home and celebrate their success with family and friends over the holiday's.

"This is a historic time and the responsibility on everyone, from me to the newest private, was immense," Carmona said. ★



SSG Zachery Babb of B Co., 640th ASB, works on the outside of a tail of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.





Flying “ALL NIGHT LONG”

Story and photos by Spc. Darriel Swatts

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Flight engineers play an integral role during CH-47 Chinook cargo helicopter flights. They are the eyes in the rear of the aircraft providing vital information to the pilots, the muscle that handles cargo, and they ensure the safety of passengers that are strapped in for the ride.

“I am a Chinook pilot and when we’re in the seat, we can’t see behind us,” said Capt. Benjamin Winborn, of the 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment, an Army National Guard unit from Minnesota and Iowa. Winborn is the commander of B Company. “The flight

engineers provide us with aircraft clearance when we’re flying. They load the passengers and cargo and are in charge of how the aircraft is loaded.”

B Company is currently deployed to Camp Taji, Iraq with the 1st General Support Aviation Battalion, 171st Aviation Regiment, a Georgia Army National Guard unit attached to the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade from the California Army National Guard. B Company is the only Chinook unit left in Iraq.

Chinooks often fly at night. As a result, the unit adopted the motto “All Night Long” from the title of a popular Lionel Richie tune.



The Chinook is a large tandem rotor helicopter with a rotor diameter of 60 feet. At more than 98 feet long, the pilots rely heavily on the flight engineers to keep them informed on what is happening around the aircraft at all times. The Chinook is the Army's go-to heavy lift helicopter and equipment transporter. It is able to transport 33 troops and their gear, or three pallets of cargo, or a sling load (cargo suspended below the aircraft), or a combination of the three up to 26,000 pounds.

"The flight engineers in the Chinooks are really valuable. The amount of crew coordination that takes place between the pilots and the flight engineers is through the roof," said Capt. John Allen, 40th CAB, a Brigade staff officer and Chinook pilot from Sutter Creek, Calif. "They have instruments in the back that we can't see, so we depend on them to know what they're looking at, then be able to articulate it to

// Last month we flew more than 1,100 hours, which is a record for our airframe according to AMCOM (U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command). //

us up in the front."

"Some of the biggest challenges we face here are loading the cargo and people into the aircraft. Things are not always the same shape and size that we'd like," said Sgt. Joe Loscheider, flight engineer with the 2-211th, and a Little Falls, Minn. native. "It can easily be compared to playing Tetris at times."



"We are kind of like a moving company," said Sgt. Andrew Anderson, flight engineer with the 211th, and a Princeton, Minn. native. "The pilots are the drivers and we are the muscle in the back getting it all done."

The Chinooks are out flying every night, moving personnel and cargo all around Iraq.

"Last month we flew more than 1,100 hours, which is a record for our airframe according to AMCOM (U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command)," Winborn said.

With so many flights going out, the crews are hardly the same for each mission and they often find themselves flying and working with different people. Every now and then the flight engineers may find themselves flying with the 40th CAB's commander, Col. Mitch Medigovich, who is a Chinook pilot.

"It's fun to be able to fly around with the brigade commander," Loscheider said. "He treats us like one of the guys. It's very informal; plus, it's



nice to be able to just talk and have fun with the colonel."

The Chinooks are providing a vital service during the Army's drawdown in Iraq.

"The Chinooks have been important any time we've had any drawdowns, repostures, or closing of bases. We move anything and everything we can to help expedite the whole process," Allen said. "Plus, we help take a load off the C-130s (cargo planes) and other fixed-wing assets, and oftentimes we are the sole provider of aerial assets to the bases that can't support fixed-wing aircraft."

As the mission in Iraq comes to an end and units start packing up to go home, the 211th continues to bring first-class service to the table until the very end. As it is stated in their motto, they'll provide coverage, "All Night Long." ★



editor's letter



It is hard to believe that this is the final issue of The CONDOR.

It was a challenge to get this issue done during these last weeks on Camp Taji. The days have been long as we've continued to conduct our daily operations while busying ourselves with all the many preparations that need to be made before we can leave for home. The days seemed long, but the past month flew by. And now, here we are releasing our last issue, which we're hoping you might read on that long plane ride back to the States.

Each battalion attached to Task Force Condor has performed incredibly over the past nine months. Our public affairs shop has been proud to work with you and see you in action.

Whether you are a CH-47 Chinook flight engineer for the 1st General Support Aviation Battalion, 171st Aviation Regiment flying "All Night Long"; or a standardization pilot with the 6th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment teaching Iraqi counterparts how to load rockets onto an OH-58 Kiowa Warrior; or a fueller from the 640th Aviation Support Battalion pumping that last gallon of gas—it's been an honor for us to feature you on the pages of The CONDOR.

Many of the Soldiers in the battalions that make up Task Force Condor have already started their journey home. Soon, we will all be back with our friends and families. Our normal day-to-day lives will resume.

DFAC meals, T-walls, gravel, dust storms, and that blistering Iraqi heat will all be in our memories.

Years from now, long after your return home to the good ol' USA, we're hoping maybe you'll pull out an old issue of **The CONDOR** and recall your time spent here in Iraq, the people, and all the work you did during Operation New Dawn.

Thank you for your service. Good luck in all you do. The PAO is signing out.

Wings of the sun!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J B Sweeney".

1st Lt. Jason Sweeney
Editor-in-Chief
The CONDOR Magazine



