



159TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

THUNDER *ENLIGHTENING*

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Afghan soldiers graduate Air Assault Leaders Course
Soldier's sacrifice leads chaplain back to Army service
Ammo supply thrives on accountability

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The 159th CAB TF Thunder Enlightening

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Commander's Corner

Col. Kenneth T. Royar

Brigade Commander

The seasons are definitely changing.

Here in Afghanistan during the first week of November we saw the first significant rainfall. The weather is turning colder, and by the end of the month we expect to see the first snow at some of the higher elevations near FOB Wolverine and Tarin Kowt. While on leave during the end of October you could also see the changes occurring back at Fort Campbell as the leaves were falling.

The changes in the weather are not the only changes though. The differences here in southern Afghanistan are equally noticeable. Insurgent attacks are down, the overall security situation continues to improve, and our Afghan partners continue to assume more of the leadership in providing that security. Soldiers of the Brigade are making a difference in not only supporting troops on the ground, but also by improving the lives of countless Afghan civilians. What they do on a daily basis is truly impressive.

One thing that has not changed, though, is the support we receive from home. I truly believe it is our Families who have the harder job during deployments. Spouses, parents, children, and loved ones not only assume the responsibility of virtually everything at home, but they also support those of us deployed. You can't imagine the smile on a Soldier's face as they receive an e-mail, card or package from home. All of us deployed cannot begin to say thank you enough.

Equally impressive is the continued support we receive from the local community. We could not have better support than what we do from Clarksville, Hopkinsville, Oak Grove and the other communities in the vicinity of Fort Campbell. Of all the posts that I have been assigned to, I am confident that we are blessed with the best support our Nation has to offer.

I'm grateful that the seasons are changing, as it means we are getting that much closer to coming home. However, I'm even more grateful for what does not change - the support from our Families and the Fort Campbell community.



Brigade Command Sergeant Major

Eric C. Thom

November already.

A lot of things have happened since the last edition of Thunder Enlightening.

The highly anticipated FY 11 NCO/Soldier of the year board was held. The NCO and Soldier of the quarter board winners competed in a grueling two-day board to see who walked away with the bragging rights to say they were the best of the best. The participants completed an APFT, and then marched all over Kandahar Airfield to get to the warrior task stations and a stress shoot. After that there was a written test, and it all culminated in the formal board in front of the brigade's senior enlisted leaders. All the competitors were already BDE board winners, and the competition was great. Everyone did well, and I was impressed with the representatives assembled.

When it was all said and done SGT Crisp from HHC BDE was the NCO of the year, and SPC Renduchintala from TF Fighting was the Soldier of the year. They both received an Army Commendation Medal, \$200 gift certificates for AAFES and, probably the most coveted of all, the ability to choose their own redeployment date. That's right; they could choose from any of the 13 flights we have scheduled or to depart on the 18th of December, allowing them to be back at Fort Campbell before Christmas.

As long as we are on the subject of competition, we had two other NCOs compete and be accepted for nomination into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club. Only six were selected across all of Regional Command South, and two were from the Thunder brigade. SFC Carl, the Brigade PAO, and SSG Buckley, the TF Wings S-2 NCOIC, made it through an APFT (having to score 290 or above), hands-on Warrior Task Training, and battalion, brigade, and division level boards.

Please congratulate all four of these outstanding NCOs, as they represent the best the Army has to offer.

As you all know, COL Royar and I will be on the last flight out of here, and even we only have double digits left. I ask you all to remain vigilant, remember we are not done until all of us get home. We will do everything we can not only to accomplish our mission but to set the 25th CAB up for success in their mission as well.

As always, I am proud to serve as your
Command Sergeant Major.

A large, bold, handwritten signature in black ink, reading "EC THOM".

From the Command Chief Warrant Officer

Joe Roberts

Complacency.

The Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines complacency as "self-satisfaction, especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies."

Okay, you knew that already. I'm sure you also remember that meeting at the back at Fort Campbell when then MG Wiercenski had you repeat after him, "complacency kills." The point I want to make is this: as we enter the last few months of the deployment, this period of time is the most dangerous point of the deployment and mostly because of complacency.

Simply put, this is the time when Soldiers begin to believe they have made it through the deployment and complacency sets in. It's easy to see how this can happen when we have been at it now for more than eight months, and we are in our comfort zone. We see the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, and believe we're home free.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. There is still a determined enemy, as well as all the environmental dangers that we must remain vigilant against.

How do we do that? We do it by focusing on the basics, setting and enforcing high standards, continuing to live the Army Values, and by providing engaged leadership. Most importantly, we must become more focused not only on our own actions but also those of our battle buddies. Taking care of each other is an Army tradition, and one that cannot be taken lightly even if it means discussing performance issues with your buddy that you know he doesn't want to hear.

Complacency isn't only about Soldiers in theater. We must remind our Families to fight the urge of becoming complacent at home. During the upcoming holidays it is an especially difficult time with all the activities that are on-going and thoughts of missed loved ones so far away. Increased traffic during the holidays is another danger that cannot be overlooked. At this special time, nothing is more important than taking the extra time to think through everything you do, be careful, live the Army Values, maintain standards, and don't become complacent.

As we approach Thanksgiving, I want to say thank you to all of our great Soldiers and their Families in the Thunder Brigade. You have truly given of yourselves in a most selfless manner and many of you have done so numerous times on multiple deployments. You are a part of the modern greatest generation, and in all my years I have never served with better men and women who are absolutely America's finest. Thank you for who you are, thank you for what you stand for, thank you for what you've done, and what you continue to do for our Army and our Nation.

God Bless each and every one of you!



Afghan soldiers graduate Air Assault Leaders Course

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

ZABUL PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Approximately 15 soldiers from the 4th Kandak, 205th Corps, of the Afghan National Army graduated a five-day Air Assault Leaders Course here Nov. 23 that focused on the fundamentals of leadership.

The course, which was taught by the Pathfinders from Task Force Wings (4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), focused on teaching the soldiers how to load and unload helicopters, provide security at helicopter landing zones, and conduct troop leading procedures, battle drills, combat lifesaving techniques and improvised explosive device detection.

One of the most important things the training taught was how to carry the injured, said 21-year-old Pvt. Abdul Maten after he received his certificate and airborne tab for completing the course.

"We never want to leave our buddy," he said. "We're like a brotherhood."

The 4th Kandak primarily operates in the Surrie District region of Zabul, where insurgent threats hinder the free movement of Afghans transporting goods.

"We are ready to serve our country ... to serve our people," said 32-year-old Pvt. Shamsulrahman, a graduate of the course.

The training is teaching the soldiers to be more proficient, he said. With this proficiency, the newer soldiers like Shamsulrahman can progress to become leaders themselves.

"One of the things we're trying to do is strengthen our partnership with the ANA and to help develop their leadership," said Sgt. 1st Class James M.



Afghan soldiers from the 4th Kandak, 205th Corps, in Zabul Province practice loading and unloading procedures aboard a UH-60 Blackhawk Nov. 19 as part of a five-day air assault leaders course. The course is designed to enhance the skills and proficiency of the unit as it assumes a more active role in providing security and battling insurgency throughout Zabul Province.

Poston, a Pathfinder platoon sergeant who was responsible for the training. "It's important that as we do this, we remember that their culture is entwined in everything they do."

Poston explained that the core of leadership is about taking care of soldiers and accomplishing the mission.

"A leader is in front and does what he tasks junior leaders to do," he said. "He gives the soldiers quality time when they need it, even if it means sacrificing personal time."

This message wasn't lost on the Afghan soldiers, who Poston said were definitely squared away and disciplined.

"Our leaders pave the way for us to learn," Shamsulrahman explained, "and we hope to become NCOs and officers too."



Afghan soldiers from the 4th Kandak, 205th Corps, in Zabul Province practice applying tourniquets during first aid training Nov. 21 as part of a five-day air assault leaders course designed to increase their proficiency.

Afghan religious cultural advisors partner with U.S. religious support teams

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

Religious cultural advisors from the Afghan Air Force and the Afghan National Army met with U.S. Army religious support teams from the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade at Kandahar Airfield Nov. 15 to further expand an evolving partnership.

Chaplains have been a part of the U.S. Army for 236 years, explained U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Curry, the brigade chaplain for the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, which is partnered with the Kandahar Air Wing of the Afghan Air Force. In the U.S. Army, chaplains help Soldiers to keep their faith and morale, similarly to their Afghan partners.

There have been many miscommunications about what American Soldiers do, said Afghan Lt. Col. Sayed Balkishah, the religious and cultural advisor for the Kandahar Air Wing.

"We have three main missions," Curry said of the chaplains. "We nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the dead."

To demonstrate how the chaplains nurture the living, Curry and his team showed the Afghan RCAs a coffee shop that was built and is operated by the religious support teams. The shop is run primarily off of donations, many of which come from schools and churches in the



Afghan National Army religious cultural advisor Col. Khalilullah (right) blesses a Holy Quran that U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Curry (center) presented to him during a partnership visit at Kandahar Airfield Nov. 15.

United States. It provides a place for Soldiers to take a break from their work, watch movies, read books, play games, or use computers or phones to talk to their families in the United States.

"This is very good for the Soldiers' brains," said ANA RCA Col. Khalilullah as he looked around the computer room in the coffee shop. "This makes morale high."

After the advisors toured the different U.S. facilities, they showed the Soldiers around their area.

"Our officers teach classes twice a month, and our sergeants teach classes twice a week," Balkishah said as he showed the Americans their classrooms. The classes focus on cultural and religious training that is guided by the Quran.

The RCAs also run a literacy program and a language program to

teach their Soldiers how to read and write, and how to speak English. More than 200 Afghan soldiers participated in the last iteration of the training.

"The Quran tells us that education is important, and so we try to teach our Soldiers," said Balkishah.

To help the soldiers learn, the unit has a library where they can sit and read different books.

"Our library is small right now, but we hope for it to grow bigger," said Khalilullah.

That is also how the two groups hope their new partnership will be.

"We are happy to have met you, and we look forward to continuing to work with you," said Balkishah. "We learn that we have to be related to our God and talk to our God for help, and we are both the same in this way."

Army or Family First?

About 10 percent of today's Soldiers are single parents. They face the challenges of finding day care providers, maintaining family care plans that actually work, trading off parent-teacher conferences for field exercises, and begging off from PT formations to get their children to doctor's appointments. These same parents often have to explain their way out of important events like school performances, sporting events, and class trips, hoping that someday their children will understand.

After eight years in the Army, Spc. Betty Y. Boomer, a water treatment specialist with Task Force Fighting (563rd Aviation Support Battalion, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division) decided it was time to put her son first.

Spc. Betty Y. Boomer (right) served in the Army for eight years before she made the decision to rejoin the civilian sector and provide more stability for her son. As her son neared the end of his high school career, Boomer rejoined the Army, and her command selected her to be recognized by Maj. Gen. Jim Huggins (left), the commander of Regional Command South, for her outstanding contributions to the unit.

By Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie L. Carl





In 2009, Boomer, with the support of her son, made the decision to come back in the Army after a 12-year break in service. She'd planned to wait until Tre graduated high school, but the likelihood of military cutbacks moved up her plans.

"I had to make a choice," she said.

Boomer, who originally enlisted as a food service specialist in 1992, chose to put her uniform away in order to provide a more stable home life for her son, Tre.

"I understand how hard it was for (her) to raise

me as a single parent," he said. "Even when (she was) working, paying bills, and going to school getting (her) degree, (she) still made time for me to have a great life."

Boomer remained in Savannah, Ga., where she'd separated from the Army, for a few years, before

she moved back to North Carolina to be closer to family. She completed her associate degree with a concentration in English, and then transferred to the University of North Carolina – Charlotte to begin working on her bachelor degree. During all this, she was working at a bank, where

she eventually became a branch manager.

Despite the stability in her life, Boomer's love for the Army didn't fade. As her son grew older and more independent, the opportunity to fulfill the dreams she'd put on hold moved closer within her grasp.

"(Tre) was going to be

starting his own life," she said.

So she decided to come back to finish out the career she had started. Originally, Boomer planned to come back in this year, after Tre graduated. Having watched the Army go through many changes in the past though, she had the foresight to keep in touch with recruiters throughout her break in service.

"In 2009, I spoke with a recruiter (who said) that

with the downsizing in Iraq and because of the budget, the Army was about to stop taking prior service," she said.

She was once again faced with making a difficult decision – the Army or family.

This time she didn't have to

"I thought the Army had changed. It took me awhile to realize that the Army hadn't really changed, it was me who had changed."

make the decision on her own though. Boomer talked to Tre about her desire to come back in the Army, and he was completely supportive, even though it meant she would miss some of the most important moments in his life.

"The hardest part about having my mom come back in the military ... was knowing that I couldn't walk into the next room and talk to her," Tre said. "But when she asked me what I thought about her going

back in, I said 'Mom, if this is what you want to do, you do it. You've raised me and taught me everything I need to know about life.'"

In 2009, Boomer started her packet to come back in the Army, and in January 2010 she was officially

a Soldier again. She completed the Warrior

Transition Course, and then she completed her advanced individual training. In the meantime, she missed Tre's senior prom. She did get to take leave to be there for his graduation.

"I cried, of course, because I lived to see my son walk across the stage, and I did it all by myself," she said.

At 38 years old, Boomer is now one of the oldest Soldiers in her unit. That in itself presents its own challenges.

“You have to respect yourself before anyone else can.”

“I thought the Army had changed,” she said. “It took me awhile to realize that the Army hadn’t really changed, it was me who had changed.”

Now, she uses her life experience, maturity and military experience to help mentor the younger Soldiers around her.

“A lot of the Soldiers are close to my son’s age,” she said. She tries to teach them some of the same lessons she’s taught her son.

“Say what you mean, and mean what you say. If you don’t want to do the time, don’t do the crime,” she said. And, “You have to respect yourself first before anyone else can.”

Perhaps the biggest lesson Boomer taught her



In the spring of 2011, Boomer was able to take leave to see her son graduate high school. He left home Nov. 13 to begin Air Force Basic Training.

son is to give 100 percent of himself to everything he does, the same as she does for the Army today.

“(My mom) has inspired me to excel in my ideas and to pursue my goals,” Tre said.

Now, he’s following in his mom’s footsteps, commit-

ting himself to the military. Tre left for Air Force Basic Training Nov. 13, and he will be serving as a supply specialist.

Boomer will soon be back in training too. She is scheduled to become a public affairs specialist, which will give her the op-

Soldier's sacrifice leads chaplain back to Army service

After about eight years as a medic in the Army Reserves, Todd Cheney traded his BDUs for a minister's robe in 1997.

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

Cheney joined the Army in September 1989 with a friend, hoping to get some help paying for college.

"We were bored and not going anywhere, so we thought, 'Let's do something worthwhile,'" Cheney said.

Throughout his time in the Reserves, Cheney served within the ministry. He taught a bible study, worked with the youth ministry, and held various other positions. But in 1995, he committed whole-heartedly to the church.

Cheney attended bible college at Masters College in southern California, and in 1998 he completed seminary through Masters.

His path led him to northern California, where he began serving in a Baptist church. Here, he met Adam Kinser, a high school senior in Rio Vista. Cheney served as the senior pastor and youth minister at the church, and he worked with Adam's father, John.

In June 2001, Adam joined the Army after he graduated. He continued to stay in touch with Cheney, even receiving pre-marital counseling from the pastor after deciding to get married. Then, in 2002, Adam came down on deployment orders. He and his fiancé, Tiffany, decided to have a small, private ceremony before



he deployed, and they planned to have a larger, more formal ceremony after the deployment.

As fate would have it, Tiffany became pregnant before Adam's deployment in June 2003. Sadly, Adam only saw his son once – in an ultrasound while he was on leave from Afghanistan during Thanksgiving.

"I got the phone call shortly after midnight. 'Pastor Todd, come quickly; we've lost Adam,'" Cheney recalled. It was January 29, 2004, and John had called him for support. The whole family had gathered, pulling together to digest the tragic news. Cheney and his family were quickly enveloped in the situation.

"I've never seen anyone grieve like that," he said. "It was palpable."

When Adam's flag-draped casket returned to its final resting place, the entire 6,000-person town lined the streets, waving American flags as the funeral procession passed.

"I was so touched by this young man's service," Cheney said. Adam was one of the first California reservists killed in action since Vietnam.

This was when Cheney first began to contemplate a life in camouflaged cloth.

Military chaplains were assigned to coordinate the

"Whenever I'm kicking back in my wheelchair, I'm going to remember there's a cost, but free people are willing to sacrifice."

memorial services and to help the family as they grieved. During a rehearsal, one of the reserve chaplains approached Cheney and asked him to consider joining the military as a chaplain.

"I was out of shape," he said, and he wasn't so sure about coming back in the military.

A year later, he was reminded by an active-duty chaplain that he was still young, but he had 12 years of ministry experience to offer Soldiers. He and his wife, Kristin, began discussing the idea in earnest.

At first the idea was that he would do reserve, Kristin said.

"I thought, 'OK, once in a while he will be gone for a weekend; I can handle that,'" she said. "When we did more investigating we found out that reserve chaplains are deployed just as much as active."

After more research and a lot of prayer, the couple decided together that active was the way to go.

In June 2006, Cheney went to Fort Jackson, S.C., for school.

"I already knew what it was like," Cheney said.

For his family though, it would be an adjustment.

Kristin said she excited about starting a new "life" as an Army family, and Cheney said she has thrown herself into the role of a chaplain's wife. In fact, they often work together to serve the unit.

Today, Cheney is a captain and the chaplain for Task Force Attack (3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment), serving at Tarin Kowt in southern Afghanistan.

"It's been a real blessing to help Soldiers or Families work through the challenges (of deployment)," he said.

He's deployed before, to Iraq, which presented its own challenges as he learned to work with people who had a different approach to things.

"I've learned so much about my ability to adapt," Cheney said.

Meanwhile, Kristin has learned ways to stay strong for her family and the families that rely on her during deployment, knowing full well the risks associated with deployment.

"I don't ever want to live in fear, so I choose to be hopeful that he will return home to the kids and (me)," she said.

She also runs a monthly luncheon back at Fort Campbell for the spouses of the deployed Soldiers, while managing the family.

"Not having Daddy home makes me a single mom for a while," Kristin said. "Todd is greatly missed, especially (during) play time with the kids – nothing can fill that void."

But the two look for ways to keep the family connected, depending on their faith and each other to make it through. With three children ranging in age from 4 to 12, this presents its own obstacles.

"(We) face challenges with scripture that can help guide us through," Kristin said. "We pray with each other and share honestly what is happening in our lives."

They also hold strong to their belief in the greater good of their sacrifices.

"Whenever I'm kicking back in my wheelchair, I'm going to remember there's a cost, but free people are willing to sacrifice," Cheney said.

Task Force Thunder rocks Chicago half-marathon



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

About 150 anxious runners lined up at the Boardwalk on Kandahar Airfield Oct. 29, stretching and shivering as they awaited the start of Task Force Thunder's 2011 Rock N' Roll Chicago half-marathon shadow run.

Before the race, Staff Sgt. Char Fick, the coordinator for the event, called several first sergeants onto the stage, where she passed out 12 foot-long inflatable guitars. Guitars were also given to the communications shop for their support to the event and to Spcs. Jazmin Hamilton and Jared Gunn, who traveled from Forward Operating Bases Wolverine and Tarin Kowt, respectively.

"On your mark, get set, go!" she yelled. Each of the first sergeants rushed to be the first to blow up their guitar, but 1st Sgt. Adam Barber, the first sergeant for Blackwidows (Company C, 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment) was the victor.

Each of the first sergeants started the 13.1 mile race around Kandahar Airfield carrying their guitars, but as individuals passed them, those individuals could take the guitar. Whoever finished the race with the guitars got to keep them as mementos of the event.

The first person to finish the race was Jamie Turner, a contractor with Task Force Thunder. Turner had a slight advantage over some of the other runners though.

"I normally run 50 to 70 miles per week in the morn-



ings before work," he said. "(But this was) an opportunity to run a half marathon and best my personal record."

Ironically, one of Turner's running partners was the first female participant to reach the finish line.

"Running has become part of my daily activities," said Peace Iyamah, another Task Force Thunder contractor. "Being in Kandahar, where there are very limited things to do during our spare time, running has fulfilled that time."

As the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation coordinator for Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade), that was one of the main reasons Fick began coordinating the shadow half marathon in the first place.

"MWR events such as fitness competitions and shadow runs help keep our Soldiers fit, reduce stress, and also boost self confidence and morale," Fick said. "We have a lot of runners in our formation, many who requested that we do either a half marathon or a full marathon during the deployment, so I looked on the run calendar in the States and saw this one."

Fick worked with the coordinators of the Chicago event to ensure the Kandahar shadow run was a success. In fact, she even received signs and banners from

the Chicago event that were used to motivate the runners here.

"I thought that was awesome," Capt. Brent Habley, the brigade trial counsel, said of the Soldiers holding up the motivational signs toward the end of the run. "It really helped me get through those last two laps."

With limited space, Fick had to get creative with the route.

Participants ran a loop around the actual airfield, and then turned down a five-mile loop that took them past housing areas, motorpools and supply yards. When they came upon the Task Force Thunder headquarters, many thought they were finished, but they still had one more small loop to run before they got to the finish line, where a post-run breakfast of croissants, pizza, lunchmeats and cheeses, and vegetables awaited them.

That's also where each of the runners received their medallions, courtesy of the Chicago crew, recognizing their participation in the event.

"I will have to say my love for running (inspired me to participate in this event)," said Iyamah. "The fact that I have never participated in a half marathon before was also my motivation."



159th Combat Aviation Brigade Reintegration Training for Families

Our Soldiers are returning! Let's get ready!

Where: Family Resource Center (FRC inside Gate 1)

When: 5 Dec @ 9am **OR** 5 Dec @ 6pm

OR 6 Dec @ 9am **OR** 6 Dec @ 6pm

Great Information

**"Where will I pick up
my Soldier?"**

Childcare: Is available on a first come first serve basis, must be CYS registered. **Last date to request childcare is Nov 27th!** *To reserve a slot please email your Task Force FRSA at the email below and include Soldier's Name/Rank, phone number, children's names, ages, and if they have any special needs:*

HHC BDE = pamela.l.mcfarland4.civ@mail.mil

3-101 Attack = jennifer.l.cornelius.civ@mail.mil

4-101 Wings = debra.l.bush4.civ@mail.mil

563D Fighting = crystal.a.jones52.civ@mail.mil

7-101 Lift = julie.d.franklin.civ@mail.mil

7-17 Palehorse = deidra.d.davis.civ@mail.mil



**"How will I find out
when my Soldier is
returning?"**

Door Prizes

Part 2 of 3 **Operation Homefront**

Let the re-integration process begin!

Story by Spc. Nicole Newton
230th Signal Company Public Affairs



KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN – Many deployed Soldiers look forward to the day they can descend the steps of an aircraft and take their first steps on U.S. soil. Task Force Thunder’s missions in Afghanistan are winding down, and that day, beginning their re-integration into Army life at Fort Campbell, is fast approaching.

With anticipation building for the return trip home, the process of settling in will take time, patience and a little bit of flexibility. Remember SRP before deployment? The process of re-integration will be SRP times seven, and every bit of time added to that pre-deployment SRP processes indicates the level of importance when returning to life in the States.

>> Getting Prepared

Maj. La Rue Meehan, brigade personnel officer, has been through multiple deployments and said that preparing oneself mentally now for the process will make for a smoother re-integration later.

“It’s going to be a change of pace, slower than usual,” he said. “Expect it to (seem) boring, and expect each day to be a full day.” Every dark cloud has its silver lining though, and

schedules have been determined by flight schedules. Day Zero begins the moment Soldiers arrive at Fort Campbell. There will be enough ‘hurrying up to wait’ in the next few days, so those on the first chinks will get a little head start on the process. No matter the order of arrival, the schedule of events will be the same.

>> What to Expect

The full seven-day re-integration process begins the day after Soldiers arrive home, but allows for plenty of time to re-connect with loved ones – time that is just as important as the paperwork and briefings to be completed.

“Your families will have changed too, not just you,” said Sgt. David Ojeda, Pathfinder with Task Force Palehorse.

Family, friends and senior leadership will all be lined up waiting with arms outstretched to welcome their heroes home. In military fashion, one by one, Soldiers will make their way to the reception ceremony. Unlike basic training, this reception will be a real celebration - complete with refreshments, live music performed by the Army band, and the most important part, family members.

After a short formation and welcome home speeches, each Soldier will be released for 15 minutes to say hello and reconnect with family members briefly. At minute 16, it’s back into formation and then onto buses to turn in sensitive items, a process that should only take a couple of hours, before being released for the evening.

Re-integration day one begins bright and early with a formation in the company area, with no exceptions, except a few major holidays. Soldiers will be assigned one of the seven stations and will need to be prepared with their SRP packets in hand, and pens holstered in the pockets of their jacket sleeves. Each SRP packet should include SGLV paperwork,

a DD93 form, and all leave forms, to include mid-tour leave.

When given a choice, most people prefer to hear the bad news before the good news, and that is exactly the approach taken with the schedule. Day one is going to be a bear of a day, so have a good breakfast in your belly and a full cup of coffee in your hand. It includes Suicide Prevention, Post Deployment Stress, and Drug and Alcohol Briefings. To add a little variety, information on the retrieval of stored personal items and POV’s are mixed into the day’s schedule. Transportation will be handled solely by bus for the duration of the re-integration period, but POV’s will be available for retrieval on day two.

Days two through seven will also begin bright and early, but Soldiers will be split into groups and cycle through the remaining six stations at different times, ensuring wait times are cut down as much as possible. Expect a thorough medical and financial review, the two most important areas to Soldiers’ health and welfare. The lines may be long, but the days will be filled with friendly faces who are there to help Soldiers transition from deployment and back into life in the States.

>> Remember What’s Important

Coming home from a deployment takes a toll on Soldiers that many don’t expect until they arrive. Ojeda can speak from experience and says it’s important to take it slow during this adjustment period. “It takes a week or so to get back to a normal schedule,” he said.

During that period, it’s important to be mindful of activities once the training day comes to an end. The stress of returning from deployment can increase the risk for atypical behavior. Meehan mirrored the importance of taking it slow during the first few weeks at home.

“Statistically it’s safer to be here in theater deployed, than to bring you home,” Meehan said.



“Here you have leaders looking at you every day, but once home Soldiers are left to their own accord when the duty day is over.”

Although the first seven duty days back home will run on the re-integration station schedule, units may have additional training scheduled for each day. Meehan expressed how important it is to take advantage of the programs available and the help given to each Soldier, ensuring things are done correctly instead of hastily.

“You are going back (through the re-integration process) to reset and make sure you are OK,” Meehan said. “Rather than rush through this process, take the time to get what you need.”

“It’s going to be a change of pace, slower than usual,”

Ammo supply thrives on accountability

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

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Being held accountable for high-dollar items estimated at more than billions of dollars daily can be challenging for the average Soldier, but it's a normal day for ammunition specialists.

“3-5” Platoon, Alpha Company, Task Force Fighting’s (563rd Aviation Support Battalion) ammunition specialist sustain ammo for Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade) here. “3-5” is an internal nickname the ammunition specialists along with the petroleum supply specialists came up with based on the classifications of the material they work with, class III is petroleum, oil and lubricants, and class V is ammunition and explosives.

Ammunition specialists do not only provide ammo for the assets they have here, they also provide ammunition to the companies that are in forward locations.

It doesn't matter if the units are spread throughout Regional Command South, ammunition specialists will provide the ammo needed to the perspective locations, said Pfc. Malcolm Cook, a Chicago, Ill., native with TF Fighting.

A request must be made in order for the ammunition specialists to break out the ammo a company needs.

“A request is processed through the chain, and we are tasked to provide the ammo by the number next to the different types of ammunition,” said Cook. “If the company requesting the ammunition is out at one of the forward locations, we send it on a bird to that location, where the individual asking for the ammo will be in order to receive it, as soon as the bird lands.”



Pvt. Marquis Knight (left), an ammunition specialist for Task Force Fighting (563rd Aviation Support Battalion), and Sgt. Nicole Siazon, an ammunition specialist for TF Fighting, carry ammunition residue for proper disposal at the ammunition supply point on Kandahar Airfield.

Providing the unit with the ammunition they need to complete its mission is not the only thing ammunition specialist supply, they also restock, inventory and receive the ammunition, collect residue from all forward locations for their brigade, as well as conduct range details.

“Normally when we are back in the rear, range detail is usually our main job,” said Sgt. Nicole Siazon, an ammunition specialist with TF Fighting, “but because we are deployed and there are several missions that different companies are tasked with, we are required to work more in depth within our (career) field.”

“Many people out here do not have the opportunity to work in their job, so I am grateful that I made the right decision when I came into the Army,” said Knight. “I know that by doing the smallest thing affects the bigger picture, and that drives me every day to continue to learn and master my craft.”

Many people on the outside looking in see ammunition specialist as personnel who provide the units with help at the range, but ammunition specialists say there is more to their job than meets the eye.

“It is sad when people think of 89Bs, they think we only count bullets, but little do they know it is not that simple,” said Cook. “Ammunition is a sensitive item and everyone does not have access to it. Hell fires, (a type of missile), are an expensive item, (that averages approximately \$58, 000.00 each according to red-stone.army.mil); if one goes missing, the entire platoon will be under investigation.”

There are several types of ammunition stored in the basic load ammunition holding area.

“In our inventory we have 30mm, 5.56mm and 7.25mm rounds, flachetes and white phosphorus rockets, flares, and grenades,” said Cook. “We conduct an inventory two times a week to ensure the count is correct compared to the last inventory we (conducted).”

“When the inventory is conducted, we check and recheck to ensure the inventory is correct,” said Siazon. “The inventory process is only required once a month, but since we have new Soldiers directly out of (Advanced Individual Training) we ensure the process is engraved in their minds.”

WHAT'S UP WITH JAG ?



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



Time for this month's...

ASK LEGAL:

Do I have to revoke my POA once we redeploy?

Absolutely not. You may leave your Power of Attorney in effect until the expiration date that you initially selected. If you wish to revoke your POA upon redeployment, the Legal Office may assist you with that, but it is not mandatory.

ASK LEGAL:

What does the Self-Reporting Army Directive say ?

The directive states that all United States Army commissioned officers, warrant officers, and enlisted members E7 and above who are on active duty or in an active duty status in the Reserve Component shall report in writing via DA Form 4187 or memorandum, any conviction of such member for violation of a criminal law of the United States -whether or not the member is on active duty or in an active status at the time of the conduct that provides the basis for the conviction. This policy applies to any criminal convictions announced on or after March 1, 2008, and is effective immediately. If you have any questions about this policy please contact the Legal Office.



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

Reintegration Strong Bonds events

Four months from now we will arrive back at Fort Campbell, Ky. Your Task Force Thunder (159th Combat Aviation Brigade) chaplains are already planning our Strong Bonds events. The Strong Bonds events are designed to help make our Families stronger and more resilient, marriages stronger through better communication and single Soldiers wiser about relationships. Below are dates for the reintegration Strong Bonds events after we return.

We will open registration for these events in December. We will send more information on hotels, location and how to register through your family readiness support assistance and family readiness group in December.

3-101

May 18-20 - Couples Retreat (Childcare will be provided.)

May 22-24 - Singles Retreat

May 25-27 - Family Retreat (This includes single parents.)

7-17

May 11-13 – Family Retreat

May 15-16 – Couples Retreat

May 18-20 – Singles Retreat

HHC BDE

May 13-15 – Family Retreat

May 17-18 – Singles Retreat

Mar 18-20 - Caregiver Family Retreat

7-101

Apr 1-3 - Family Retreat

Apr 5-7 - Couples Retreat

Apr 9-11 - Singles Retreat

563D

March 19-20 – Singles Retreat

March 23-25 – Family Retreat

4-101

May 4-6 – Marriage Retreat

May 8-9 – Single Retreat

May 18-20 – Couples Retreat

~I look forward to seeing you at one of these events.

CH (Maj.) Brian D. Curry



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159cabpao@gmail.com

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www.dvidshub.net/publication/373/thunder-enlightening