

THE HEARTBEAT

The Official Magazine of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division



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Sgt. 1st Class Richard Lamonica of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, stands guard in front of the Gander Memorial at Fort Campbell, Dec. 12.



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Words from the Top



STRIKE Soldiers,

I would like to wish every STRIKE Soldier and Family a Merry Christmas and happy holiday season. Your tremendous efforts over the last several months are well deserving of our upcoming leave period. I thank each of you for your determination and daily efforts, which combined together make STRIKE a highly successful Brigade Combat Team.



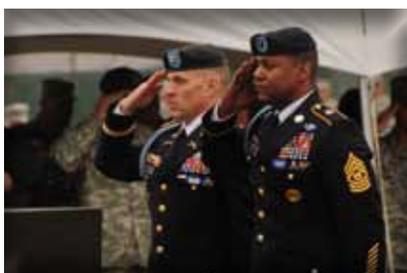
We passed the recent Division Command Inspection which confirmed all of your excellent work in resetting critical garrison systems to allow us to perform routine tasks routinely and your initial conduct of training exercises has been exemplary. We have a good start to preparing for our next rendezvous.



It is my hope that every STRIKE Soldier is able to enjoy the holiday season together with Family and friends - an opportunity that many did not have last Christmas. I also ask that we not forget those that are currently serving on the front lines away from home as well as those Families that are experiencing their first Christmas missing their Fallen STRIKE Soldier. All of you will be in my prayers.



The New Year will bring new challenges, but I am confident that together we will meet them all. Merry Christmas and all the best to you and your Family in 2012.



-Col. Dan R. Walrath



The Chaplain Says... from the STRIKE Unit Ministry Team

We are in a season of the year when families take beautiful pictures and mail them to their friends. I'm sure that you have received some of these Christmas cards. Smiles and holiday greetings abound. Houses are cleaned up. Families are visiting, or we are visiting family. Everything is neatly packaged, tied with a bow and placed perfectly under the tree, right?

Nothing reinforces this image of Christmas more than the nativity scene. It has symmetry and balance. Everything and everyone is in place. It must have been a triumphant moment for all those angels, shepherds and magi surrounding the holy family on that first Christmas.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was once asked about the traditional nativity scene. I think he was being kind when he said that the Christmas card image of the nativity was 'misleading.' In my humble opinion, not only is the common presentation of the

nativity misleading, it is just plain wrong. The picture we get from Christian scripture is less of a perfect holy family and more holy embarrassment. Can you image the looks poor Mary must have endured? "Holy Spirit..."? Yeah, right!

If it had actually been important enough to make *The Bethlehem Times*, the headline might have read: "Questionable Teen Gives Birth in Barn." This was hardly a storybook entrance into the world for Jesus. No, the holy family was not fit for Hallmark, but neither are we. Our lives are not perfectly wrapped in beautifully colored paper and tied together with a wonderful bow, and those perfect pictures we catch on our cameras only represent a mere moment of our lives.

Even if we think we have built a picture-perfect life for ourselves with a beautifully decorated house and beautifully decorated tree in our living room, in reality those things are no more permanent than

the wrapping paper on those gifts.

Perhaps you have already noticed this after a child or pet inadvertently knocked an ornament off the tree and broke it. It seems that this happened every year growing up. My sisters and I would run by the tree, knock something off and it would break. My mom would scold us, but she never threw out the decoration. She got out her hot glue or super glue and would gently put it back together.

We too have been knocked off the tree throughout the seasons of our lives. Family times like Christmas, especially, highlight how fragmented and broken we really are. Likewise, the absence of a loved one is like missing a piece of ourselves. We

do not have picture-perfect families or souls. But, in Christ, God has lovingly come to gather up those pieces and make us whole again.

So, this Christmas, forget about the pretenses. There is no need to straighten up that nativity scene before the in-laws arrive. We need not paper over the hurt and sorrow, our shortcomings and failures, or our blemishes and imperfections. The reality of Christmas is that God has come to dwell with us in spite of it all. This is the beautiful mystery of God's love that grounds and sustains our lives.

It is my fervent prayer that we will all wake up Christmas morning with our eyes wide open to God's new reality and full of great joy.



STRIKE Behavioral Health Column

By CPT Teresa Murray
2BCT Behavioral Health Officer

The Stress of the Holiday Season

The holiday season can be a joyous, yet very stressful time of year due to schedule demands, financial difficulties, family or relationship problems, and remembering those who aren't here to celebrate with us.

It is important to continue making time for relaxation, exercise, hobbies, and eating healthily despite all the other activities on the schedule. It may also be tempting to overindulge with alcohol during the holiday festivities, but please remember to celebrate responsibly and in moderation.

This time of year can also be difficult when one has suffered losses or other difficulties in the past year. It is important to stay in touch with battle buddies, family members, or your religious community during this time, and to reach out for help if you need it.

Finding a way to remember or commemorate fallen loved ones and acknowledging your feelings about them and your loss can be helpful. If you notice a friend who seems to be struggling, talk to them about what you are noticing and assist them in getting professional help if it is needed. Never leave a fallen comrade.

The 2BCT Behavioral Health Team (CPT Teresa Murray, Ms. Sharon Thompson, SPC Jonathan Mills, and PFC Brandon Stuart) has moved to Carentan Clinic, which is the small temporary building to the right of LaPointe Health Clinic. Appointments can be made by calling 270-412-0090.

If you have an emergency situation, please proceed immediately to the BACH Emergency Center, which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Happy Holidays!!

STRIKE Family Readiness Group

Dear STRIKE Families,

During the Christmas Season, as Danny and I approach with anticipation and optimism the promise of a New Year, we think it is important to remind our children during such a busy time why our family celebrates the birth of Christ and to reflect on the many blessings of the past year.

It is impossible for us to teach them about the selfless service and sacrifice of Jesus Christ without also thinking about the selfless service and sacrifice that countless military families have made since the birth of our nation. We ask our children to keep in their prayers all those families who will spend this holiday season separated from their loved ones and to give thanks for being able to celebrate Christmas together as a family this year.



With deepest gratitude, thank you to all our wonderful STRIKE Family Readiness Group Volunteers, who continue during the holiday season to look beyond their own families and take the time to help make the season bright for all STRIKE Families! The photos of all the holiday parties on the STRIKE Facebook Page are truly heartwarming, and we appreciate how much time, effort, and preparation goes on behind the scenes to make these special events a reality.

A special thank you to our 2BCT HHC FRG Leader, Elisabeth DelGesso, for also serving at the Holiday House in support of the Fort Campbell Community. Knowing that selfless service and compassion for others is a common thread among our volunteers is a constant source of inspiration, and I look forward to meeting and working with many more of our STRIKE FRG Volunteers during the new year!

Warmest wishes to all STRIKE Families for a safe, peaceful, blessed Christmas and Holiday Season!

-Christine Walrath



STRIKE's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (STRIKE BOSS) is a program that supports the overall quality of life for single STRIKE Soldiers. STRIKE BOSS identifies well-being issues and concerns by recommending improvements through the chain of command.

STRIKE BOSS is going through a makeover and starting in the new year, the call for battalion and company BOSS reps will be going out and if interested, let's make it happen. You are needed, absolutely.

The STRIKE BOSS program is also looking for more female representatives. The gender gap needs to be closed during meetings and events so if you are a female single STRIKE Soldier and want to make a positive difference, contact the brigade BOSS president.

To get involved and/or to become a representative for a battalion, squadron, battery, company, troop, contact Sgt. Joe Padula, the new STRIKE BOSS President at: joseph.padula1.mil@mail.mil

"Together, we will learn and then implement how to better ourselves and our battle buddies around us, absolutely."

-Sgt. Joe Padula

Safety Standards With Safety Charlie

Winter is upon us and it's time to relook safe driving under hazardous road conditions. Bad weather doesn't cause accidents. Weather conditions create driving hazards. It is up to you, the driver, to know how you deal with them. You are responsible for keeping your vehicle under control no matter what the road or weather.

Here are some reminders of how to drive safely in winter conditions:

- Before you start out, clear the entire windshield and all windows and mirrors. You need to be able to see as much as possible around you to avoid collisions.
- Keep brake and signal lights clear of ice and snow.
- Keep your eyes moving to be aware of the traffic situation all around you. Don't just concentrate on what is right in front of you. Scan the distance and glance frequently at your mirrors. If you receive information too late you will have to make a sudden move; watch and anticipate hazards.
- Double the following distance at least between you and the vehicle ahead of you. Maintain as much free space around your vehicle as possible. Keep the sides and rear of your vehicle as clear of other vehicles as possible.
- Maintain communication with other drivers to make sure they see you and you understand one another's intentions. Use your lights, horn, and even eye contact to communicate.
- Slow down and adjust your speed to road conditions. Allow more travel time.
- Pay attention constantly to the road conditions, which can vary even from one lane to the next.
- Build up your speed gradually before traveling uphill. As you reach the top, be ready for unseen hazards such as a sudden downhill grade or a stalled vehicle. Use lower gears instead of brakes to travel down a steep hill.
- Make sure you have the right tires for the road conditions. Even all season tires may not be enough for road conditions in your area.
- Avoid sudden steering movements. Be ready to steer smoothly as you approach a curve. Plan any lane changes well ahead of time.
- On icy roads, any driving maneuver can set off a skid. Braking, steering, accelerating and taking your foot off the accelerator can all result in a loss of control. Carry out these moves with a light touch, being continually aware of the vehicle's response.
- Brake correctly for the type of vehicle you are driving. For some braking systems, a quick, light pumping of the brakes is the way to stop on ice while maintaining steering control. Avoid locking the brakes. If you have air brakes, keep an eye on the air pressure. Anti-lock braking systems (ABS) should not be pumped. Check with the manufacturer for the correct operation of your braking system.
- Carry a winter survival kit, especially on long trips or in isolated areas. Include matches and a candle, a parka and sleeping bag or emergency blanket, food, first aid kit, jumper cables with safety goggles, gasoline antifreeze, fuel conditioner for diesel fuel, wrenches for minor repairs, a spare fan belt and radiator hose, spare spark plugs and spark plug wire.

Have a safe STRIKE Holiday!

STRIKE Legal....The Brigade Legal Office of the 2nd BCT

The holiday season is traditionally a time of parties, receptions, and exchanging gifts. However, even during the holiday season, the Standards of Conduct apply. To ensure you do not unwittingly violate the standards, a brief summary of the applicable rules is set out below. If you have any questions, please contact the Brigade Legal Office.

General Gift Rule:

DoD personnel may not accept gifts offered because of their official positions or offered by a “prohibited source,” unless an exception applies.

A prohibited source is anyone who:

-Seeks official action by DoD / Does business or seeks to do business with DoD / Has interests that may be substantially affected by the employee’s performance of duty; or / Is an organization composed of members described above.

PARTIES, OPEN-HOUSES, AND RECEPTIONS:

DoD personnel may attend events where an exclusion or exceptions applies (see below) Exceptions & Exclusions:

Gifts from Prohibited Source including DoD contractors: DoD personnel may not accept gifts, including attendance at parties, open-houses, and receptions, from contractors and contractor personnel, event unless one of the following applies:

1. De minimus Gift: DoD personnel may accept gifts (other than cash) not exceeding \$20, as long as the total amount of gifts that the personnel accepts from that source does not exceed \$50 for the year.
2. Personal Gift: DoD personnel may accept gifts, even from a contractor employee that are based on a bona fide personal relationship. (Such personal gifts are actually paid for by the contractor employee rather than the contractor.)
3. Widely-Attended Gathering: DoD personnel may generally attend an open-house or reception, and accept any gift of refreshments if it is a widely-attended gathering, and the employee’s supervisor determines that it is in the agency’s interest that the employee attend.
4. Open to the Public: DoD personnel may accept invitations (even from contractors) that are open to the public, all Government employees, or all military personnel.
5. Gifts unrelated to DoD employment: DoD personnel may accept invitations offered to a group or class that is not related to Government employment (For example, if the building owner where your office is located throws a reception for all of the tenants of the building).
6. Modest Items of Food and Refreshments: DoD personnel may food items consisting of soft drinks, coffee, pastries or similar refreshments not constituting a meal may be accepted sine they are not considered to be a gift.
7. Gifts based on Outside Business or employment relationships: DoD personnel may accept attendance at events which are solely based on outside business or other employment relationships. For example, a DoD employee’s spouse works at a Defense contractor. The DoD employee may accompany the spouse to the contractor’s holiday party since the invitation is to the spouse as an employee, and not to the DoD employee because of his or her position.

Between DoD Employees: DoD personnel may accept gifts, including attendance at parties, open-houses, and receptions, from other DoD personnel, if one of the following applies:

1. Invitation from a subordinate (who makes less): DoD personnel may accept personal hospitality at the residence of a subordinate that is customarily provided on the occasion.
2. Invitations from a supervisor or a co-worker: No restriction. Enjoy!

GIFTS AND GIFT EXCHANGES

Gifts and Gift Exchanges That Include Contractor Personnel:

1. Gifts from contractors, even during the holidays, may not exceed \$20.
2. Gifts to contractors: Check with the contractor about their restrictions on gift acceptance.

Between DoD Personnel: Supervisors may not accept gifts from subordinates or DoD personnel who receive less pay, unless one of the following exceptions applies:

1. During holidays, which occur on an occasional basis, supervisors may accept gifts (other than cash) of \$10 or less from a subordinate.
2. Supervisors may accept food and refreshments shared in the office and may share in the expenses of an office party.
3. If a subordinate is invited to a social event at the supervisor’s residence, the subordinate may give the supervisor a hospitality gift of the type and value customarily given on such an occasion.

Please note, there are no legal restrictions on gifts given to peers or subordinates, however, common sense (and good taste) should apply.

STRIKE OFFICERS WIN STRIKE IRON COMPETITION

OCTOBER



Staff officers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), hit tires with sledgehammers during the Strike Iron Competition, at Fort Campbell, Ky., Oct. 20.

Physical training is one of the cornerstones of the Army and its day-to-day activities. Every aspect of performance contains the basic principles of good physical conditioning and capabilities. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), holds a monthly combat focused competition for the brigade's Soldiers and Leaders with the Strike Iron Competition.

Each of Strike's battalions go head to head with one and other and the brigade staff officers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, won the latest Iron Strike Competition held at Strike and Johnson Field, Oct. 20.

The competition began at Johnson Field along Fort Campbell's Tennessee Ave. and consisted of sit-ups and pushups. The competitors then put on full combat gear; body armor, helmet and a water source, and flipped tires across the open field then sprinted to Strike Field, where they dragged a weighted medical litter and hit tires with sledgehammers, called pembricks. After that, they threw medicine balls to each other leading to the teams carrying weighted assault packs, running around Strike Field twice. At the final section, the teams climbed walls, conducted pull-ups, swung across monkey bars, climbed ropes and tossed ropes, called 'ropes gone wild'. At the finish, the team with the least amount of time won the competition.

The officer team had bested the Soldier teams and was awarded a 4-day pass, certificate of achievement and a brigade challenge coin. This was the first time staff officers had participated in the monthly competition. "We've set the standard for the brigade now," said Capt. Graham Rainey, a British Army exchange officer from the Royal Irish Regiment, chief of current operations and native of Bangor County Down, North Ireland. "This is a platform for staff officers to compete and perform and

show what we're capable of. We did pretty well out there today and other teams in the future have something to work for."

The team of four officers attended the September competition as spectators to familiarize themselves with the course and develop a plan of action, said Rainey.

"We trained for about a month after watching the last competition," said Maj. Ryan Kort, brigade planner and native of St. Petersburg, Fla. "We tailored our training to what we saw the last group of Soldiers do. We knew it was going to be tough, so we looked at strategies to save time and rehearsed our plan."

The temperature was much lower during this competition compared to the last one, said Capt. Travis Stutes, a brigade planner and native of Crowley, La.

"The cold weather really added to the difficulty," Stutes said. "This tested us physically, made it hard to get started. But when you run a bit you start to get warm; by the time we hit the pembricks the cold wasn't too big of a deal anymore."

Despite the challenges and cold weather conditions, the officers outperformed the other teams and proved their abilities.

"There is a perception that staff officers don't do [physical training] and hide a lot," said Capt. Paul Rhodes, provost marshal and native of Cincinnati, Ohio. "That's not the case; Regardless of the position, everyone is in the fight. We want to get out and be seen doing PT."

With another Iron Strike Competition complete, 2nd BCT adds another set of names to its history. Since the program started several years ago, every winning team has had its name added to plaques in Strike Academy, the training center for Soldiers new to the brigade. Next month brings new teams and perhaps new champions.



Staff officers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), do pushups during the Strike Iron Competition at Fort Campbell, Ky., Oct. 20.



STRIKE FORCE WINS STRIKE IRON COMPETITION -DECEMBER CHALLENGE-

Soldiers with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), alternate directions while carrying jugs of water during Strike Iron Challenge at Fort Campbell, Ky., Dec. 15. The competition focuses on physical endurance and has recently been modified with new run distances to increase the overall difficulty.

Soldiers of Strike Brigade's Company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, competed and won the latest Strike Iron Competition at Fort Campbell, Ky., Dec. 15.

The competition is a monthly event where teams from each battalion within the brigade compete in a series of physical events. The winners received a four-day pass, Certificate of Achievement and a brigade coin. Winning teams also have their name engraved on a plaque which is then displayed in Strike Academy, where new Soldiers to the unit are trained on the brigade's history.

This specific competition was slightly different than previous, said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Duquette, the operations non-commissioned officer with brigade plans in charge of the competition.

"We increased the run distance to make this a real smoke-session," said Duquette. "Instead of just running between events, the Soldiers run 800-meters several times. It comes out to about two and-a-half miles of running."

The events were also centrally located in the brigade's headquarters area instead of being spread out across the entire training area as had been the previous design.

To top off the physically-demanding competition, the Soldiers must partici-

pate while wearing full body army and other uniform requirements. Any piece missing from the uniform, such as a water source, identification tags, personal medical kit or pouches, counts against the team for additional time points. The team with the fewest uniform deficiencies and fastest overall time wins the event.

"We had good motivation," said Sgt. Adam Kimbrell, with Company D and member of the winning team. "All these guys in my team are in good shape; they've got a lot of drive in them to win and represent Strike Force."

The series of events started with a run, then moved to more training-focused events. The Soldiers climb ropes, tossed medicine balls over a wall which they then climb over, pulled a medical litter called a skedco and carried water jugs. Between each event the Soldiers would continue to run 800-meters each time.

"It was all pretty tough but the worst was pulling the skedco," said Spc. David Beadles, with Strike Force's Dog Company. "We had to spread ourselves out over each event and not get too-involved. Otherwise we would have gotten exhausted just doing one thing and fail all the others."

Much of the motivation to win came

from an internal source, but was helped out by teammates, said Spc. Karl Schirmer, also with Company D.

"Towards the end the team started to be my motivation," said Schirmer. "I became the last man running as things went on, but the team pushed me to do my best. This is definitely hard work."

The new outlay of the events increased the physical demands on the Soldiers while allowing them to perform at a better rate.

"The rope climb used to be last, but we found out most people were so exhausted by that point that they couldn't make it up at all," said Duquette.

Now the rope climb is one of the first events, allowing Soldiers to use their full upper-body strength without being limited from over exertion.

"This competition is definitely the biggest smoker so far," said Spc. Thomas Lewis, a member of the winning Strike Force team. "I've been a part of other Strike Iron Competitions, but this is definitely the hardest. The 800-meter sprint really gets you."

Strike Force has won the Iron Strike in the past and looks to gain more bragging rights in the future as they participate in an a competition preparing the Strike Soldiers for a combat environment.

BRAZILIAN STRIKE SOLDIER MEETS BRAZILIAN GENERAL



Sgt. Felipe Pereira, a squad leader with Co. A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, has a conversation in Portuguese with Brazilian Army Maj. Gen. Carlos Cesar Araujo Lima, commander of the 12th Air Assault Brigade in Cacapava-Sao Paulo, during the general's helicopter tour at Fort Campbell's Hangar 10, Oct. 14.

Brazilian Army Maj. Gen. Carlos Cesar Araujo Lima, commander of the 12th Air Assault Brigade in Cacapava-Sao Paulo, visited Fort Campbell's Hangar 10, Oct. 14, where the Screamin' Eagle's helicopters were on display for a walk-through with Araujo Lima. Greeting the commander was Strike's Distinguished Service Cross Soldier, who was born and raised in South America's largest country.

"The Brazilian army is the greatest fighting force in South America and what a great honor meeting one of the leaders of that fighting force," said Sgt. Felipe Pereira, a squad leader with Co. A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "Today was a proud day for me."

Their ten minute greeting began after Araujo Lima was given a tour of the flight line and Pereira said in his native tongue of Portuguese, "Hello sir, it is a pleasure to meet you."

Araujo Lima's eyes lit up in excitement followed by a large smile, as he was surprised to hear his language being spoken from a Soldier wearing the Army Combat Uniform.

"Where are you from originally," asked Araujo Lima in Portuguese while shaking Pereira's hand.

Pereira is from Brazil's capital city of Brasilia and his family lives in Rio. Pereira came to the United States in 2001 to learn English then to attend Union

College in Nebraska. He told Araujo Lima when he joined the Army in 2008 and that is when the general was informed by one of the brigade's staff of Pereira's DSC award.

"I had no idea a Brazilian had been awarded such a medal," said Araujo Lima. "I want to tell Brazil about this and post all of the information on our websites."

Pereira was awarded the military's second highest honor for his actions during Operation Enduring Freedom 10-11 on Nov. 1, 2010, when his unit was attacked with a suicide motorcycle-borne explosive device and small arms fire in southern Afghanistan



Araujo Lima and Pereira, spoke to each other in Portuguese and discussed the Strike Soldier's actions from southern Afghanistan.

outside of Combat Outpost Senjary; two Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers were fatally wounded and four others were severely hurt. Pereira, with shrapnel wounds to his spleen, liver and left lung, grabbed a John Deere Gator from the base, fired upon the enemy and evacuated two casualties to the base and went back out for his other battle buddies, while the gunfight continued.

“Hearing this and meeting you is an honor and the honor is all ours,” said Araujo Lima.

Pereira told the general his feelings on being a part of the Strike Brigade and the famous 101st Airborne Division.

“I want you to know sir, what an honor it is to be in this division and everyone knows I’m from Brazil and respects that incredibly,” said Pereira. “I always try to represent Brazil as best as I can.”

Their discussion ended and they posed for pictures on the flight line. They shook each other’s hand once again and with his arm on Pereira’s shoulder, Araujo Lima thanked the Brazilian Strike Soldier.

“Thank you for the honor and stay in contact so Brazil can see all the good you have done,” said Araujo Lima.

Pereira was given the generals contact information and smiled at the business card. The Brazilians connecting at Fort Campbell left a strong impression with the DSC Soldier.

“My family and my cousins in the Brazil army will be so excited to hear about my meeting Maj. Gen. Araujo Lima,” said Pereira. “I know I will not forget this day.”



Col. William B. Hickman, Deputy Commander (Operations), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), shakes hands with Pereira during the tour of a Fort Campbell flight line.



Araujo Lima examines the aviation assets of the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade during his tour of Ft. Campbell, Ky. He commands Brazil’s air assault division.



The Brazilian army currently has 235,978 active troops and 1,740,000 on reserve status. They have stood on the side of the U.S. during both World Wars and the Cold War.



Araujo Lima and Pereira, shake hands and plan to stay in contact. After speaking with the general, Pereira stated he would not forget this day.

STRIKE SOLDIERS COMPETE FOR EXPERT FIELD MEDICAL BADGE

Soldiers train daily to perform to the best of their abilities and sometimes compete for special badges and professional recognition. These challenges present an opportunity for a Soldier to practice their skills and prove their competence in their line of work.

Medics from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), participated in the division's Expert Field Medical Badge qualification Oct. 5.

The badge challenge began Sept. 24, and ended Oct. 6 at the Division Parade Field following a 12 mile road march. Of the 38 Soldiers from Strike Brigade participating in the event, 12 met the qualifications and received the prestigious badge.

The EFMB is a small piece of metal with significant meaning to those who earn the privilege to wear it. The badge's history began in 1965 to recognize the proficiency of medics through a series of hands-on tests, casualty simulations and a written test, all designed to push the medic's abilities to the maximum possible performance.

Medics attempt the tests and simulations under the observation of previous EFMB recipients acting as judges for the event. This ensures everything the medic does is conducted according to Army standard and is properly documented.



Medics throughout the division competed together to earn the prestigious badge which represents their abilities and knowledge in combat medical care.



Sgt. Matthew Baumann, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, participated in the division's Expert Field Medical Badge qualification Oct. 5. Baumann and 11 other Soldiers from Strike Brigade received their EFMB's the next day.

"It's challenging," said Sgt. 1st Class Gersom Jimenez, non-commissioned officer in charge of the EFMB event, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, Strike Brigade, and native of Kansas City, Kan. "There's a lot the medics have to do properly to qualify. Some of the tests involve treating simulated casualties while under fire with simulated explosions and gunfire. This is similar to what would be happening to them while in a combat situation; they have to stay focused at all times. It's an adventure to earn the badge."

Earning his own badge was a way to personally prove his abilities in the medical field, said Jimenez.

"It's an accomplishment to earn the badge," said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Garcia, non-commissioned officer in charge of Strike Brigade's medical operations, and native of Roseville, Calif. and fellow EFMB badge recipient.

"It gives the medics something to be proud of. They have to study to make sure they know what they are doing. There are a lot of steps involved in giving proper combat medical care; you must complete each task to standard without bypassing the steps."

Strike Brigade prepared their medics for the competition prior to the actual events, said Spc. Andrew Six, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, Strike Brigade, and native of Bethlehem, PA.

"We started with general classes on skills and a mock test," said Six. "It's good to get an idea of what we're going up against in advance. It's not just medical knowledge; we get tested on basic warrior skills like weapons skills, land navigation and [nuclear, biological, chemical] skills. All the tests are difficult and challenging."

After passing the course and re-taking the written test, Six received his hard-earned EFMB. Those who achieved the badge are authorized to wear it on their duty uniform. The badge represents the abilities and dedication of those who worked hard to earn it.

EFMB'S AWARDED

OCTOBER 5, 2011



SAPPER BEAST SOLDIERS COMPETE IN SAPPER STAKES



Smoke from a door-breaching explosive clears as combat engineers with Company A, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), move in to 'clear' a simulated building during 'Sapper Stakes' at Fort Campbell, Ky., Oct. 26. Door breaching is a common practice among sappers and one used often during urban missions.

Training can be as simple as a manual or online Power Point presentation, or more complex, such as an extended outdoor field exercise involving all aspects of modern combat. Soldiers build new skills or perfect old skills during such training events and sometimes participate in challenges designed to both instruct and assess their abilities at the same time.

Engineers from Company A, 2nd Brigade Spe-

cial Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division challenged themselves in the 'Sapper Stakes' Competition, Oct. 24-27.

The Sapper Stakes is a four-day event hosted by brigades within the 101st and allowed engineer teams to practice their skills and compete for recognition.

On the first day of the competition, the event lanes were set up and the competitors were briefed

on upcoming events. By day two, the sappers competed in a series of events, including a non-standard physical fitness test and obstacle course. Tests for weapons qualification, weapons assembly and crew-served weapons were also conducted, followed by a land navigation test. From there the Soldiers competed in a first aid test, medical evacuation test and a "call for fire" 60 millimeter mortar test. The third day began with a 12-mile road march, where the engineers conducted reconnaissance and inspected key locations throughout the route for security purposes.

The road march presented its own set of challenges to the Soldiers of Sapper Beast.

"We reviewed roads and bridges during the march to see what materials they were made of," said Sgt. Jacob Brock, a

combat engineer with the Strike's Sapper Company. "This lets you know what the roads can handle and what kinds of vehicles you can drive on them." Once completed, the Soldiers rested briefly before continuing their day.

"After [the road march] we're going to be involved in engineer events," said Sgt. Justin Roesch, a



Sgt. Justin Roesch, a squad leader and combat engineer with Company A, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), inspects a road demolition charge during 'Sapper Stakes' at Fort Campbell, Ky., Oct. 26.



Smoke billows from a controlled detonation during 'Sapper States' at Fort Campbell, Ky., Oct. 26.



Pfc. Michael Jones and Pfc. Alexander Kornelakis, combat engineers with Company A, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), set up an anti-personnel obstacle breaching system during 'Sapper Stakes' at Fort Campbell, Ky., Oct. 26. Called 'APOBS', the system launches a line of explosive devices to trigger nearby hidden bombs to detonate, saving Soldier's lives in the field.

squad leader and combat engineer with the company. "We are really going to be 'sapping up' and doing our job."

The events included a series of time based tests involving things such as obstacle emplacement, road destruction, obstacle breaching, mine detection and clearance and basic security measures, said Roesch.

"This is a bunch of demolition events to see if we can perform well at our jobs," said Pfc. Sean Novisel, a combat engineer with Sapper Beast. "This is a training exercise and competition all-in-one." Being a sapper meant there is a lot of work to do but a lot of fun to be had as well, said Novisel.

"It's fun to blow things up," said Novisel. "A lot of what [engineers] do in-

volve explosives."

Teams conducted every task individually while graders watched and appraised the sapper team's performance.

"Most of my team de-

ployed together," said Roesch. "We have a lot of experience with demolitions; I believe we'll do very well in those events." Sapper Beasts' performance is important to the

unit as well as individual Soldiers, said Roesch.

"I just became squad leader so this is an evaluation of where I'm at as a leader as well as where my Soldiers are," said Roesch.

On Oct. 27, the final day of the competition, the teams participated in a combat run while carrying items such as water jugs, medical litters and an inflatable raft called a zodiac.

The competition closed out with personal equipment inventory, and a bar-becue get-together hosted by the Family Readiness Group, where awards were presented to the winning teams. Sapper Beast received 4th and 5th place for two of its platoons, with the ultimate 1st place award going to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Rakasans.



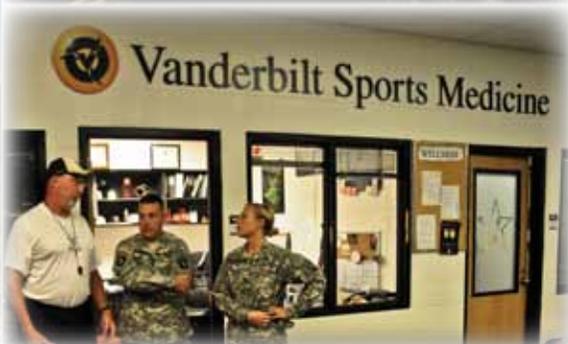
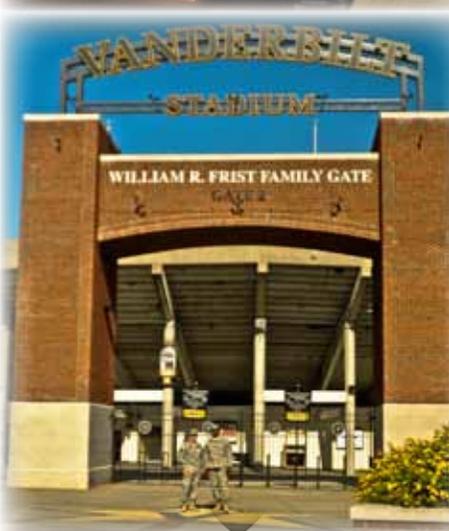
Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), return from an extended road march during 'Sapper Stakes' at Fort Campbell, Ky., Oct. 26. Along the route, the engineers identified roads and bridges for weight limits and other security concerns.

First STRIKE Physical Training





**AUGUST 4
&
OCTOBER 5**



101ST HONORS THEIR FALLEN GANDER SOLDIERS



Col. Dan Walrath, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Command Sgt. Major Alonzo Smith, command sergeant major, 2nd BCT, salute at Fort Campbell's monument to the Gander tragedy during the annual remembrance ceremony. The names of the 248 Screaming Eagle Soldiers who died in the Arrow Airlines flight 1285, December 12, 1985 are etched into the monument.

“Love is never wasted, love is never lost, love lives on and sees us through sorrow,” said President Ronald Reagan during the December 16, 1985 Fort Campbell memorial service held for the victims of Arrow Airlines flight 1285, which killed 248 Screaming Eagle Soldiers, majority being from 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). “From the moment love is born, it is always with us, keeping us aloft in the time of flooding and strong in the time of trial.”

The Strike Brigade continues the love of its Gander fallen by honoring and recognizing the importance of their accomplishments more than a quarter of a century ago.

“Twenty-six years ago in 1985, though we did not know it at the time, we were experiencing the

winning years of the Cold War,” said Col. Dan Walrath, commander of the 101st's 2nd BCT, during the Gander Memorial Service held at Ft. Campbell, Ky., Dec. 12. “This is a war that did not involve fighting or combat action and our Army was becoming involved in a new mission set, referred to as peace keeping. The United States had recently begun participation in the Multinational Force and Observers duty in Sinai, Egypt.”

The MFO monitored Egypt and Israel's compliance to the terms of the Camp David Accords, a treaty that laid out the framework for peace between the two enemies. Since 1982, many nations have provided units from its military branches, the United States contributing the majority of forces. Even today these forces are deployed to the Sinai, a large triangular peninsula connect-

ing the two nations. The Screaming Eagles sent 3rd Battalion in 1985.

“At the time, this duty was known as a real-world mission and a mission of significant importance to our country and the United Nations to maintain stability in a region that



Col. Dan Walrath, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team and Command Sgt. Major Alonzo Smith, command sergeant major, 2nd BCT, place a wreath at Fort Campbell's monument to the Gander tragedy.

had only recently known violence and conflict,” said Walrath. “Then as now, Strike Soldiers had fought where told and won where they fought.”

Today’s Strike Soldiers and leaders understand the value of the accomplishments made back then and can relate as they were the real-world mission while operating in southern Afghanistan less than a year ago.

“It’s very important to remember where we come from, where our history comes from and knowing they gave their best on a daily basis,” said 1st Sgt. David Ward, the first sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, who attended the ceremony. “They were on the front lines as we were on the front lines doing missions... I draw parallels to them... how would I feel and react to a plane full of today’s Soldiers going through a tragedy like they did? Knowing what the Soldiers of this brigade had done before us, how dare we not do our best on a daily basis.”

A ceremonial wreath was laid by Walrath and Command Sgt. Major Alonzo Smith, Strike’s command sergeant major, at the center of the memorial, which has the MFO insignia and names of the 248 fallen Soldiers etched into the monument. Strike Soldiers dressed in their formal attire to be a part of the service.

“I am honored, very much so, to be a part of this event and it’s a privilege to honor our fallen comrades,” said Sgt. 1st Class Rocio Picazarri with HHC, 2nd BSTB and a wreath holder for the ceremony. “We can never forget yesterday’s Strike Soldiers, they’re the ones who paved the way for us today.”

Upon completion of the wreath laying and the playing of taps for the heroes of Sinai, family members, Soldiers and veterans paid their re-



Former Sgt. Michael Sinko, who served with 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry and (R) Sgt. 1st Class Joe Casper, formerly with 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and who lost friends in the crash, talk with Col. Dan Walrath after a remembrance ceremony held at Hopkinsville’s Gander Memorial, Dec. 12.

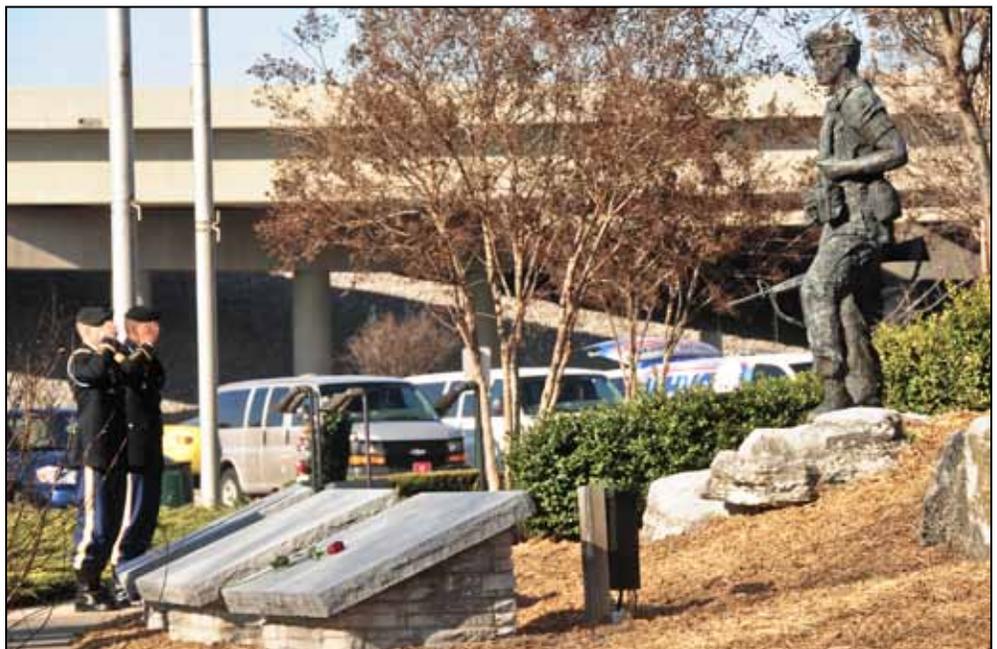
spects at the monument.

“Seeing the Soldiers here honor my brothers is real important because we can’t forget these guys and we can’t forget how hard it was on the families,” said (R) Sgt. 1st Class Joe Casper, formerly with 3rd Battalion, was a part of the MFO in Sinai and had friends who was aboard flight 1285. “It was a real tragedy losing them and a lot goes out those Soldiers, but we must also remember it was so hard for the families.”

Casper and former Sgt. Michael Sinko, who was a part of the MFO’s

first deployment to Sinai in 1982 and also served with 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, have attended the Fort Campbell ceremony for the last four-years and are pleased with the job the 101st does in honoring the Gander fallen.

“When we first started coming here for the memorial, there were very few people, but recently the attendance has really picked up and it warms my heart to see so many people with an understanding of who these 248 troops were,” said Sinko. “This is so valuable to so many.”



Strike 6 and Strike 7 salute at Hopkinsville’s Gander Memorial, Dec. 12. Every year Hopkinsville, the neighboring town of Fort Campbell, honors the 248 Screaming Eagle Soldiers who died in the December 12, 1985 crash.

STRIKE'S TRUNK OR TREAT

When the thought of Halloween comes around, usually its images of ghosts, ghouls, and goblins lurking around dark corners, graveyards, or old abandoned homes where bad spirits of the dead are awaiting to take the innocent. This was not the intent of a Halloween event held by 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Family, unit cohesion, and single Soldier representation were the main objectives to their successful Trunk or Treat held at Strike, Oct. 21. The battalion, known as Raptor, kicked off its Halloween celebration with an array of costumes that ranged from children, junior Soldiers, and the key leaders. Selected Trunk or Treat's participants also decorated their privately owned vehicles and were

later judged in a contest for diverse unit prizes. "My expectation was maximum availability of families, not only families, but single Soldiers as well," said Command Sgt. Maj. Harold Reynolds, the csm for Raptor. "The single Soldiers that came out did a fantastic job."

The families and Soldiers of Strike's BSTB also provided games, assorted candies and other Halloween treats to the event. There was also Pot Luck for the participants that embraced a variety of individuals taste. Those who attended enjoyed the festivities.

"Trunk or Treat was fun and eventful," said Spc. Jerry Angton, a single Soldier with the battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company. "The children enjoyed all of the food, candy and treats that were provided



Spc. Jason Schwartz, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), dressed in a Mardi Gras costume, hands out candy to a Strike princess and other Strike family members dressed in costumes during the battalion's Trunk or Treat event held at Strike, October 21st.

for them." Angton also commented on the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Sean Williams, and his family's costumes, dressed as the cartoon characters from the movie, *The Incredibles*. "The costumes were befitting of the commander and his family and very creative."

Costumes for the Trunk or Treat ranged from creative, grotesque and adorable, which made the event festive and better enjoyable to the unit and families. Strike's area was overflowing with dragons, puppies, princesses, cartoon characters, and other mystical figures. The privately owned vehicles also depicted a graveyard and hunted house setting, which helped set the Hallow-

een mood for the smaller children.

"I brought my nephew and he really enjoyed the costumes and decorations, especially the candies that were given away," said Spc. Montalilita Ruffin, also with HHC.

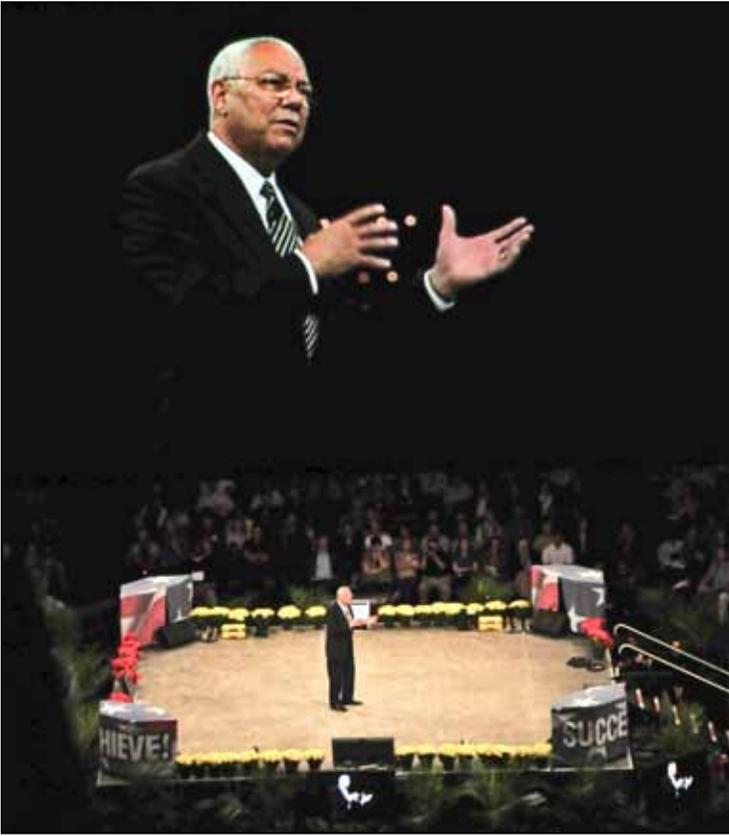
The event concluded with prizes provided by the battalion for the best costumes and best vehicle displays. Family and unit cohesion are top priorities to the leaders and Soldiers of 2nd BSTB and Raptor had accomplished their Halloween mission.

"The turnout far exceeded predicted numbers of individuals and Families at the event," said Reynolds. "It was a great turnout and great support from families and single Soldiers."



1st Lt. Daniel Collini of Company A, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), hands out candy to the Strike family members dressed in costumes during the battalion's Trunk or Treat event held at Strike, October 21st.

STRIKE GETS MOTIVATED



Gen. Colin Powell, the 65th US Secretary of State and Strike's commander in 1976, speaks on a stage and a Jumbo-Tron screen to an audience of about 17,000 on the qualities of leadership at a Get Motivated Seminar held at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, Oct. 17.

Attributes of a great leader include honesty, integrity, accountability, responsibility, trust, passion, able to inspire and having the capability to listen and communicate, stated by Howard Putnam, the former chief executive officer of Southwest Airlines and a speaker at the latest Get Motivated Seminar held at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, Oct. 17.

Get Motivated Seminar Inc. is a personal training and development company comprised of well-known leaders who speak at large venues on the topic of leadership. In the crowd of about 17,000 were 196 Strike Soldiers and Leaders of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, who learned much from the high profile motivational speakers.

"This event was good for Strike Soldiers and Leaders because we learned important leadership skills," said Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone Antley, first sergeant of Strike's Co. C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment. "We're walking away knowing how to be a better team player and how to bring motivation to Strike."

The Nashville lineup included former New York City Mayor, Rudy Giuliani, past Southwest Airlines CEO, Howard Putnam, CEO of Forbes Inc., Steve Forbes, famed football coach Lou Holtz, comedian Bill Cosby and the 65th US Secretary of State and Strike's commander in

1976, Gen. Colin Powell. Powell gave specific guidelines on being a better leader, which apply to the military and civilian sectors.

"Take care of your troops by recognizing them; recognize good performance," said Powell. "Sometimes it's with a promotion or a medal, a bonus of some kind, but very often it's that human connection; put your arm around somebody and say, 'hey man, you're doing a great job, I'm so glad you're a part of my team.' If you want them to believe in your purpose, mission and goals, you have to take care of them."

Today's Strike Soldiers connected with the general's words and enjoyed hearing what the former Screaming Eagle had to say.

"My definition of leadership was described by Gen. Colin Powell and I liked when he said 'no matter what somebody's title is you should treat people with respect,'" said Capt. Michael Gold, commander, Co. C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment. "I enjoyed this seminar and it is good for Soldiers because you learn different techniques of being a good leader."

Some of the Strike Soldiers attending did not expect to relate to all of the speakers, but learned more from the unforeseen motivators.

"I learned the most from Coach Holtz," said Sgt. 1st Class Geraldine Hall, the brigade's legal noncommissioned officer in charge. "It surprised me because I was not expecting anything he was going to say would be relevant to me. He said, 'either you are growing or dying; grass is either growing or dying...even your marriage is growing or dying; nothing stays in the middle, so what are you doing, growing or dying?' I've been saying that quote everyday since the seminar, it makes so much sense."

The day long seminar provided guidance to those in attendance while encouraging the civilians and Strike Soldiers listening. Powell, a leader in the Army and as a statesman, made closing remarks that lifted people's heads and instilled a sense of pride, confirmed by the standing ovation he received.

"We're still the inspiration for the rest of the world, we're still the ones they come to when they need a problem solved, we're still a unique nation...and as long as we never forget that's who we are...a nation of nations...we'll continue to be the leader of this world that truly wants to be free."

IRON STRIKE COMBAT PHYSICAL FITNESS TEST



Capt. Michael Gold, commander, Company C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pulls a loaded medical litter in full combat gear across Strike Field while taking the Iron Strike Combat Physical Fitness Test, Nov. 10. The ISCPFT is designed to better prepare Strike Soldiers for future combat operations.

Bob Dylan sang, “The times are a changing” and so is the Army’s Physical Fitness Test. It’s assured the singer/songwriter was not talking about push-ups, sit-ups and a two-mile run, but the time is near where the Army will test its Soldiers in a more combat focused fashion. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), will be ready for that change.

“The APFT provides a baseline measure of general physical fitness, but it does not sufficiently evaluate all of the physical aptitudes required to perform duties in combat,” said Col. Dan Walrath, Strike commander. “So we developed the Iron Strike Combat Physical Fitness Test to provide an additional metric for leaders to use to assess Soldier strength, endurance and anaerobic fitness under combat conditions. The test requires Soldiers to wear combat gear and conduct physically demanding yet function-

al tasks that more closely replicate physical activities in combat.”

For the past month, Strike has been pulling its leaders during the early physical training hours, better known as morning PT, and has been conducting the trials for its ISCPFT. Company commanders,

brigade staffers and leaders put on their heavy gear and perform the exercises that better prepare for a combat environment. Running for a total of one mile and a half, dragging weighted medical litters, carrying full water jugs for a total of 300-meters, sprinting in a zig-zag pattern, climbing up an air assault rope and jumping a 6-foot wall, are the events completed by the test takers on ISCPFT-Nov. 10.

“It definitely pushed me and I had to dig deep,” said Capt. Michael Gold, commander of Strike Cav’s infantry company, Company C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment. “This is going to give us something to focus on for our own company combat PT and the company can do well when it is time to test. We got to be prepared,” said Gold, still breathing hard after completing his test. Gold finished under the 30-minute time marker.

The ISCPFT is in it’s beginning



Col. Dan Walrath, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), climbs Strike’s air assault ropes in full combat gear while taking the Iron Strike Combat Physical Fitness Test, Nov. 10.

stages and a finalized version is soon to be implemented throughout the brigade and the medical side of Strike welcomes the change.

“The Army is changing their focus on physical training all together, more focused on injury prevention and combat,” said Capt. Patrick Glass, commander of Strike’s medical company, Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion and an ISCPFT taker on Nov. 10. “Changing the focus of today’s PT with the combination of events like this new Strike PT definitely helps prevent injuries as we get ready for our deployment.”

Strike’s time of deployment back to Afghanistan is on the table and the brigade plans to be physically ready both at the Army’s standard and at the Strike standard.

“We all know the Army Physical Fitness Test has minimal carryover, crossover to physical fitness skills that a Strike Soldier needs to be successful in combat,” said Walrath. “The Combat Physical Fitness Test and the APFT will be the two evaluations we have in Strike.”



Capt. Patrick Glass, commander, Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, runs on Fort Campbell’s Tennessee Ave. in full combat gear for a total of one-mile and a half while taking the Iron Strike Combat Physical Fitness Test.



The final obstacle to overcome was to climb over the Strike Wall. During Strike’s last deployment to southern Afghanistan, Soldiers climbed countless of grape walls while on dismantled patrols.



The full water jugs were carried for a total of 300-meters and may have allowed the participants to catch their breath from the running portion of the test, but drained needed energy for the obstacles to follow.

STRIKE'S EXPERT INFANTRYMEN

The Expert Infantryman Badge is defined as a military badge presented for completion of a course of testing designed to demonstrate proficiency in infantry skills and the 11 series Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), battled harsh weather conditions and demanding challenges to obtain the significant EIB badge.

“The EIB is an important badge for the Soldiers’ skill levels and really lays out the foundation for them to be a master at all of their trades, be able to perform at their job, not only here in garrison, but also downrange in combat,” said 1st Sgt. William Wilson, first sergeant of Strike’s Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment. “It’s a tough competition, so the guys who paid attention, trained and understand the task, they will walk away with their Expert Infantryman Badge and be able to hold their heads high knowing they’ve accomplished a great task.”

A total of 612 Soldiers started the assessments on Monday, Oct. 24 and after five days of physical fitness tests, weapon qualifications, land navigations, combat focused lanes and a 12-mile road march in near freezing rainfall, 107 Soldiers about walked away Oct. 28 with the sought-after blue badge above their US Army nametapes.

“For me to have this badge is very important and means a lot to me and my team,” said Spc. Matthew Wilson, a team leader with Co. D, 2nd Btn., 502nd Inf. Regt. and one of the recent EIB awardees. “The 12-miler was the roughest day; it was hard getting through the lanes, but that march was relentless. It may be an individual event, but we definitely trained up as team.”



Second Lt. Kevin Butler, Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, returns fire on an advancing enemy before tending to a wounded Soldier during Strike’s Expert Infantryman Badge test Oct. 28.



Infantrymen in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team stride closer to the finish line of a 12-mile road march during Strike’s Expert Infantryman Badge test at Fort Campbell, Oct. 28. Throughout the five-day event, 612 Soldiers competed and 106 Soldiers earned the badge.

The way Strike set up the testing lanes was innovative, by having each competitor go through the course as if in combat with an enemy presence and wounded Soldiers.

“The way you run through these lanes is better, instead of just going to station to station to station, you’re having to do them all in succession, make decisions and think on the fly, which is as important of a combat skill as being able to correctly complete a series of performance measures... you’re not just memorizing your task, you’re showing that you know it,” said Capt. Steven Morse, the executive officer with Strike Force’s (2nd Btn., 502nd Inf. Regt.) Headquarters and Headquarters Company and a new owner of the badge. The lanes were specific combat scenarios, like an urban environment, a traffic control point or a patrol in the woods and the courses would then include the more traditional tasks like the basic timing on weapons, first-aid tasks such as treating an abdominal wound or calling for fire, stated Morse. Instead of just a stand-alone station the competitors crawled through the mud and got dirty to complete the mission.

Earning the EIB for the Strike Infantrymen honors a tradition dating back to 1943 and the newly pinned on Soldiers are grateful to don such an important badge.

“I am so proud and it’s important for me to have this badge,” said Spc. Wilson, right after his completion of the road march, still drenched from the Friday rainfall. “Not everybody can go out and get this and it really establishes yourself as an infantryman.”



DANCING WITH THE STARS WINNER REVISITS 101st



J.R. Martinez, ABC's 'Dancing With The Stars' winner and former 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Soldier, speaks to 101st Soldiers and their families about overcoming great challenges while visiting Fort Campbell, Ky., Dec. 4. Martinez revisited his old unit, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

J.R. Martinez, ABC's "Dancing With The Stars" Season 13 winner and former Soldier with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), came back to Fort Campbell and met with today's Screaming Eagles and their families, Dec. 4.

Martinez was an infantryman with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team back in 2003 and the 19-year-old deployed with the Strike Brigade to Iraq that year in February. About two months later, the HMMWV, better known as a Humvee, he was driving rolled over a land mine and Martinez suffered smoke inhalation and severe burns to more than 40 percent of his body. Since his life-altering injuries, Martinez has become a motivational speaker, an actor on the soap opera "All My Children" and most recently the winner of DWTS. He came to Fort Campbell with a message about overcoming harsh conditions.

"We all face some kind of adversity...whether you're wounded or not, the one thing that connects all of us is that thing adversity," said Martinez to a crowd of about 100 Soldiers and family members. "We're

all equipped to overcome the adversity that we face and I'm here to tell you, you have what it takes and it does get better."

Martinez toured his old base and recalled memories from the post's education center outside of Gate 4 and the SKIES Unlimited building, where in 2003, he received his pre-deployment brief. He returned to the Strike footprint and met with the Strike Force leaders and Soldiers. There he stopped and paid his respects at Strike's OEF 10-11 Fallen Soldier Memorial.

"It gave him an understanding on how hard our last deployment was; it was critical for him to see the memorial," said Sgt. Maj. John White, the command sergeant major of Strike Force.

White briefed Martinez on the operations of Combined Task Force Strike and its fallen Soldiers, whose names are etched into the memorial.

A display of today's weapons and troop vehicles were shown to Martinez at his old company's headquarters. He talked about his time spent there more than eight years ago.

"I did a lot of push-ups in here," said Martinez while laughing. "I

was a private when I got here and I used to do push-ups all the time."

Awaiting the Screaming Eagle dancing star at the Strike Dining Facility were 101st Soldiers and families. They gathered on the rainy Sunday morning to hear his motivating words on overcoming obstacles.

"It's hard, but all of you are winners and have what it takes to make this the winning Army that it is," said Martinez. "You fight that fight overseas and fight that fight in other parts of the world, you can fight this fight when you come back home and you can win."

The Soldiers there to hear his words appreciated his time spent with them. J.R.'s words hit the mark.

"He brings the message to stay strong and you can do anything in this life," said Sgt. Charles Reagan with Strike Force's Headquarters and Headquarters Company. "His brief was awesome and I'm walking away with a much better understanding of adversity."



J.R. Martinez, ABC's 'Dancing With The Stars' winner and former 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Soldier, pays respect to the fallen Soldiers of his old unit at the Strike OEF 10-11 Memorial at Fort Campbell, Dec. 4. Martinez revisited Fort Campbell and spoke to Screaming Eagle Soldiers and their families about overcoming great challenges.

After an hour of signing autographs and sharing stories with his audience, Martinez moved to a lunch with wounded Soldiers at the Fort Campbell Fisher House.

“I got hit pretty early in the deployment while in our vehicle on the Personal Security Detachment team in Zharay,” said Sgt. Joshua Peters who at the time of his injuries was a team leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment. Martinez was also injured in a vehicle early into his deployment, about two months in. “It’s comforting to see J.R. come here and tell us he is doing well, especially after all of the tough times he had to go through. I’m glad he’s here and I am glad I’m here.” Peters attended the lunch with his wife and son.

The ‘Dancing With The Stars’ winner showed his rhythm to the youth of Ft. Campbell at the MWR’s SKIES Unlimited building with a dance routine taught to him by the children there taking after-school dance lessons. After learning the new routine from the tiny dancers, Martinez continued sharing his message.

“The biggest thing I can pass



J.R. Martinez, ABC’s ‘Dancing With The Stars’ winner and former 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Soldier, signs personalized autographs for Sgt. Dan Horton of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team and Horton’s two sons David and Andrew at Fort Campbell’s Strike Dining Facility.

along to you is you’re young, dream big, have goals and whatever it is you want to do, believe that you can do it,” Martinez said in a dance room filled with kids. “It doesn’t matter what your situation is, no matter what potentially you feel is holding you back, you can still accomplish it.”

Martinez left Fort Campbell after the dancing portion of his visit and even though he no longer wears the ‘Old Abe’ patch on his sleeve he still remains one that serves the 101st Airborne Division.

“As they say, in order to know where you’re going, you got to know where you have been and to be able to share with all of the troops and families and meet with them was more of an honor for me than maybe it was for them,” said Martinez. “I’ve come back here to reflect, remember how far I’ve come and pass on what I’ve learned in the eight-years since being here onto these troops and families and give them inspiration to get through these times.”



J.R. Martinez, ABC’s ‘Dancing With The Stars’ winner and former 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Soldier, performs a dance routine with Fort Campbell’s youth at the SKIES Unlimited building, Dec. 4. Martinez received his pre-deployment brief in the same building in 2003.

STRIKE'S THANKSGIVING - 2011



Command Sgt. Major Scott Schroeder, command sergeant major, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), serves Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team at the Strike Dining Facility, Nov. 22nd. Schroeder and Maj. Gen. James McConville, commander of the 101st Abn. Div.(AA) also ate with the Strike Soldiers and their family members.

A year ago the Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), celebrated the holiday season in southern Afghanistan, 7,741 miles away from Fort Campbell, friends and family. For this year in garrison, Strike Brigade celebrates the season at home with its Soldiers and family members together.

Soldiers of Strike Brigade were served Thanksgiving Dinner by the brigade's command staff at Strike's dining facility, at Fort Campbell, Ky., Nov. 22. The tradition of the command staff serving the Soldiers shows the respect the leaders have for the Soldiers under their command.

"It's important that the command staff serve Soldiers today because the Soldiers serve us every day," said Capt. Jonathan Fredericks, commander of Troop D, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment. "I'm glad to be here on this day."

Soldiers and family members lined up and were greeted by the friendly cooks of the DFAC, who worked long hours to provide a special meal for the Soldiers. Festive decorations such as pumpkins, orange ribbons and other trimmings combined with seasonal favorite foods like turkey, dressing and pumpkin pie helped add to the scene. Outside, a live turkey in a cage was granted pardon by the brigade from becoming this year's main course. To complete the ambiance, a live band made of Soldiers played music for the dinner crowd's entertainment.

"Knowing Soldiers would be enjoying the meal felt good," said Pvt. Jordan Duquette, a cook with the brigade's Company E, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry

Regiment. "I worked from 5:30 every morning until 7 or 8 o'clock every night for the last two weeks. It's a lot of work. Every detail has to be perfect. Just like when we were in Afghanistan; a lot of effort went into it."

For many Soldiers this is an opportunity to spend time with family and loved ones. A year ago, most were patrolling places called Arghandab, Zharay, Maiwand and Panjwa'i.



The leaders of Strike's Top Guns carve a turkey to serve to the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, at Strike Dining Facility, Nov. 22.

“My family is more important than anything else,” said Sgt. Taylor Wellendorf, a squad leader with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, who brought his children with him to the dinner. “I haven’t eaten at the DFAC in awhile and I’m looking forward to it.”

Wellendorf spent Thanksgiving last year patrolling in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

“Spending time with family is very important to Soldiers,” said Staff Sgt. Charles Phillips, chaplain’s assistant with Strike, whose wife and children accompanied him to the DFAC. “Later we’re probably going to watch some movies and play some video games together.”

During deployment, Soldiers face hardships such as separation from loved-ones, daily risks from enemy fire and other challenges. The stresses of being in a combat-zone may be felt especially around the holiday season, a time when normally individuals would be gathering together with friends and family in a home.

During Strike’s last deployment, the DFACs served a wide variety of holiday foods combined with decorations to help bring the brigade together as a family of Soldiers. For Soldiers who were operating at combat outposts and checkpoints away from a main dining facility, special visits by command staff helped strengthen bonds and boost morale. Strike Brigade worked to include everyone in the holiday celebrations, the brigade’s tradition continues.

Also serving the Strike Soldiers was Maj. Gen. James C. McConville, 101st Airborne Division’s commander and Command Sgt. Major Scott Schroeder, the 101st’s csm.

“I enjoyed my Thanksgiving Eve with our Screaming Eagles by serving lunch made by our cooking professionals,” said McConville.

“Thanksgiving is always important and all about being around family,” said Schroeder. “Last year you were around your Strike family and this year you get to spend it with your home family.”

From the sand and dust of Afghanistan to the woods and gravel of Fort Campbell, Strike Brigade understands the importance of giving thanks. This year allowed the Soldiers and their families to come together with good food, good company and good atmosphere in the spirit of the holiday.

“It’s a pleasure to see Soldiers celebrating the day with their families and friends,” said Col. Daniel Walrath, the Strike Brigade’s commander. “The Strike Soldiers were deployed last year and away from their families; I’m glad they have the opportunity to celebrate the holiday together this year.”



Maj. Gen. James McConville, commander of the 101st, served and then ate a Thanksgiving Day meal with the Strike Soldiers and their family members.



Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) eat Thanksgiving Dinner together at the brigade’s dining facility at Fort Campbell, Ky., Nov. 22. The dinner brought Soldiers and participating family members together to share a festive holiday meal in a welcoming atmosphere.



The Strike Dining Facility was decorated with ice sculptures, cakes in the shapes of units’ insignia, traditional Thanksgiving streamers and other assorted festive trinkets.

2nd Brigade Soldiers Surprise Fellow Soldier with Motorcycle

A ClarksvilleNow.com Contribution written by Lee Erwin

The camaraderie between soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) was front and center Friday as members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team "Strike" surprised a fellow soldier with the gift of a motorcycle.

The story began in February of this year when Corporal Donald Hole, while deployed to Afghanistan received the tragic news that his daughter, Megan had been the victim of a murder-suicide incident in Indiana.

Hole quickly returned to his family back in the U.S. as a group of his fellow soldiers rallied to do what they could to show their support for the grieving family. One idea that came out of their desire to help was to take up a collection and buy Hole a motorcycle.

"As much as America

when we go overseas is worrying about us, at the same time we are worrying about our family back home. When one such event happens to one of us it affects all of us," said Specialist Joseph Catlin, one of Hole's fellow soldiers who helped put together the purchase, customizing and presentation of the motorcycle.

Catlin said the motorcycle a 1992 Harley Davidson 1200 Sportster was bought in New York. The motorcycle apparently had set outside for its entire life and was in need of some work because his friends didn't feel comfortable giving the bike to him in the condition it was in.

A paint scheme and fabrication kit was put together and the motorcycle was taken to BO's Cycle Shop in Clarksville

who donated the work that went into the motorcycle. "They protect us and if it wasn't for our military we wouldn't be able to do what we do and we wouldn't have the freedom to do it so we really think a lot of our military," said Carl Barber of Bo's Cycle Shop.

The motorcycle was presented in a brief ceremony that was a complete surprise to Hole, members of his family that were there as well as many of the hundreds of soldiers who were present. Hole was brought forward and the bike was brought out to him out of a large garage at the motor pool. It was obviously very emotional for him as he could be seen wiping his eyes as everyone at the ceremony broke into applause.

Hole took some time to thank the soldiers in his unit as each came forward to shake his hand or as in most cases get a hug.

Hole was then encouraged to sit on the motorcycle while members of

the media and others took photos and video. The top of the gas tank on the bike carries a custom painting of a winged cross with the name Megan along the bottom and the POW-MIA symbol is also on the engine of the motorcycle.

Even though a number of soldiers were involved in the project, Hole apparently had no idea of what was actually going on.

"It surprised me a lot, I was shocked, but I don't put it by them guys because they are like my brothers and sisters it's good to have them, everyone in this unit is my family,"

Hole said when asked about what his fellow soldiers had done.



Cpl. Donald Hole is presented a 1992 Harley Davidson 1200 Sportster with custom painting honoring his fallen daughter at Strike's motorpool, Nov. 18.



The 1992 Harley Davidson 1200 Sportster was bought in New York and Bo's Cycle Shop custom painted the bike with the name Megan along the bottom.

FIRST STRIKE / STRIKE BLITZ



Soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, conduct a key leadership engagement with ‘village elders’ played by other Strike Soldiers during the latest Strike Blitz at Fort Campbell, Dec. 1.

Soldiers train daily to meet the requirements of the Army standards and become familiarized with what maybe faced on deployments. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), trains in a unique way, putting its units in a combat-like environment right here inside the gates of Fort Campbell and call the training ‘Strike Blitz.’

The Strike Soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, were the most recent Strike Blitz participant held deep into the training lands of Ft. Campbell, from Nov. 28 – Dec. 2.

The exercise began with three days of setup where computer systems, food and other necessary supplies were brought into position at a forward operating base at Range 63, one of Fort Campbell’s training facilities. After setup, the company conducted a foot march to their base camp on Wednesday, and trained until Friday, for a total of 72-hours in field.

“The Soldiers patrol through fields toward predetermined locations,” said Sgt. 1st Class Korey Hinkle, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT and part of the team running the event. “Today they have a key leadership engagement, where they will encounter small arms fire and possibly IEDs; after they’ll patrol to another location and find a weapons cache.”

The Soldiers were only told of their patrol and KLE, not knowing if and where attacks would come from.

“The events besides their main mission, like IEDs and small arms fire, are scripted but the Soldiers don’t know when or what is going to happen,” said Hinkle.

The training gives commanders a chance to assess their Soldiers abilities while they respond to the sudden scenarios.

“This is good training for Afghanistan,” said Spc. An-

thony Euganeo, a rifleman with Co. D, who patrolled southern Afghanistan less than a year ago. “The only main difference is the terrain is easier here compared to Afghanistan; we walk farther to represent the distances we have to cover and its difficulties. And when we get where we’re going, we’re going to interact with local nationals just like we did when we were deployed.”

The Soldiers left their FOB and moved through fields, dense brush and light woods to their objective, roughly 1500-meters away at a town made of cargo-sized storage containers. Once there, the Soldiers encountered their first small arms fire from ‘insurgents’, other Strike Soldiers playing the role of Taliban fighters. Once the enemy threat was defeated, they moved into the small village and met with the village elders, also comprised of Soldiers acting the roles of local nationals.

During the KLE, Soldiers sat down with village elders and introduced themselves to each other. After initial introductions, Soldiers asked questions and gave answers to concerns presented by the elders concerning their village.

“This is bit different from what we would do in Afghanistan since we didn’t always know we’d be conducting a KLE,” said Sgt. Justin Golder, a squad leader with Co. D. “But it’s the same as how we would conduct this kind of mission; we did a lot of patrols when we were deployed and got in a lot of fire-fights.”

The Strike Blitz training pushes Soldiers to see how far they have come since returning from their last deployment, said 1st Sgt. Jeffery Bond, first sergeant, of Co. D

“This is a beans and bullets mission; this is training on things we do on a normal basis,” said Bond. “This gives junior leadership a chance to show what they and their Soldiers can do when on mission.”

Despite limited sleep, patrolling open ground and cold, rainy weather conditions, Company D pushed through and accomplished their mission. Other companies are scheduled to conduct similar training scenarios in future Strike Blitz exercises, as the Strike Brigade trains for whatever mission lay ahead.



First Strike Soldiers patrol towards a village with the cover of air support.

STRIKE FORCE, HABITAT FOR HUMANITY GIVES BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

On a cold Saturday morning, Soldiers gathered together to help a family in need of assistance. With tools in hand, they began to erect the walls on a concrete foundation for a house, which will one day become a home.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), worked with Habitat for Humanity to construct a house for a family in need, in Hopkinsville, Ky., Dec. 10.

This volunteer opportunity was a way for Soldiers to give back to the communities that support Fort Campbell, said 2nd Lt. Mark Patton, an officer who helped coordinate the project with Strike Force.

“We’re bringing Soldiers out from the battalion that wanted to volunteer and help put up the Habitat for Humanity house,” said Patton. “When I went to them for opportunities to volunteer, they were just in the beginning stages of the house.”

The project began with cleaning up a piece of land nestled in a



Sgt. Justin Higgason with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, cuts wood braces for use while installing walls at a Habitat For Humanity project in Hopkinsville, Ky., Dec. 10. Strike Force Soldiers assisted with the foundation installation and floor bracing.

residential section in downtown Hopkinsville. Debris was cleared and a foundation laid down to provide the basis for a house. On Dec. 10, the first walls were erected to begin the process of construction.

On Dec. 3, a group of 12 Soldiers came out to install floor beams and joists, said Patton.

“It’s great to see Soldiers come out and volunteer,” said Patton. “Especially since they come out of field training and still want to help out here.”

The project will benefit a family trying to overcome medical issues and housing problems, said Jessie Quarles, executive director of the Habitat for Humanity, Hopkinsville branch.

“It’s for a young man who is a very sick,” said Quarles. “We are trying to do the best we can to give him a home that’s healthier and safer than the one he was in.”

Trevin Bell, a teacher and Hopkinsville local and his family were forced to move out of their residence due to mold, rotting floors and other severe conditions. While dealing with those conditions, Bell has also been fighting heart conditions which have caused him to be placed first on the Kentucky Organ Transplant list to receive a donated heart.

“I think it is great to have Soldiers helping work on the house,” said Bell. “[The Soldiers] take their own time to do something like this; it’s awesome and I really appreciate it. I can’t explain how much this will improve my family’s life.”

Previous heart complications and sickness had required hospitalization from October until late Novem-



2nd Lt. Mark Patton and Pvt. 1st Class Shammah Nasheed, both with 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, carry pre-made walls to be installed at a house under construction in Hopkinsville, Ky., Dec. 10.

ber, Bell said.

“I was in the hospital for almost two months,” Bell said. “I didn’t get to make it home for Thanksgiving.”

Habitat for Humanity stepped in to offer Bell and his family assistance and provided a better place for them to live. For the Soldiers volunteering at the site, this aid was their mission and purpose to be here.

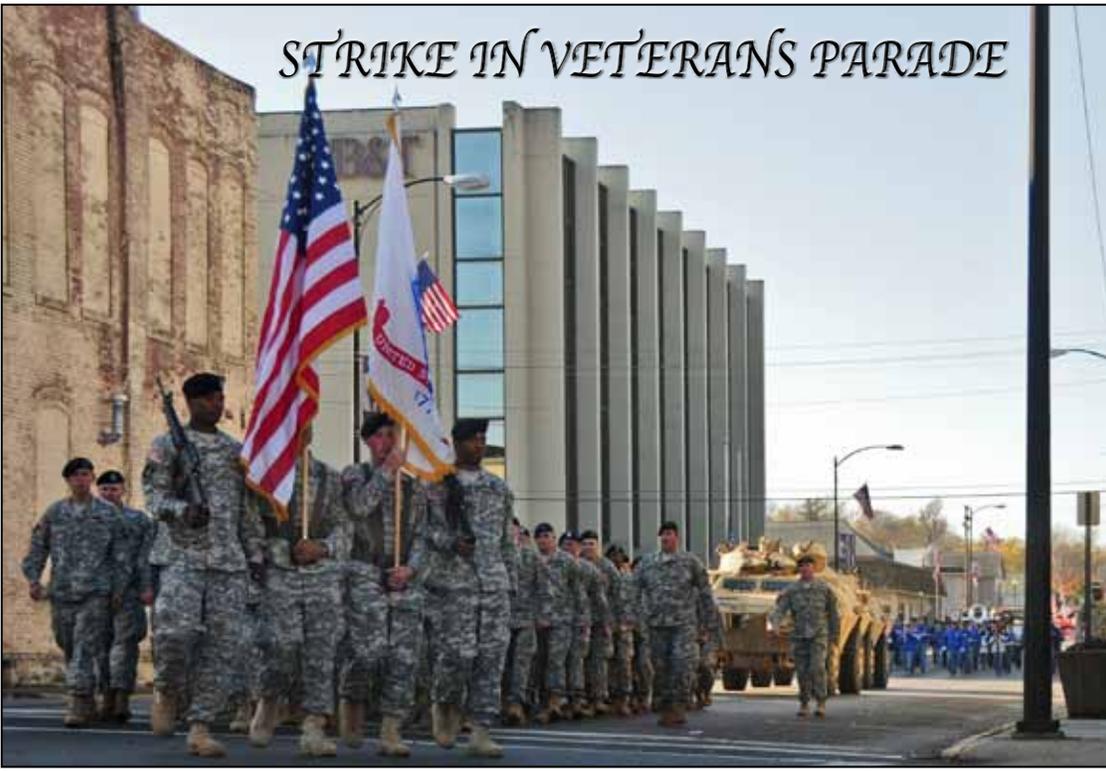
“I came to help build a house for someone,” said Pvt. 1st Class Shammah Nasheed, with Company B, 2-502nd. “If it was my family in that position, I would want help if we needed it.”

This was the first time being on site and a new experience, said Nasheed.

“I have never built a house before but this is pretty fun,” said Nasheed. Partnering with Habitat for Humanity is just one of several volunteer efforts the Soldiers of Strike Force are working on and future selfless acts are scheduled as Strike Force continues to give back to the surrounding communities.

“We have some Soldiers volunteering to work at a soup kitchen in a couple of weeks,” Patton said. “It’s really great to see Soldiers come out and volunteer and give time away from their Saturdays; it’s pretty amazing.”

STRIKE IN VETERANS PARADE



Strike Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), march in a parade honoring veterans past and present in downtown Hopkinsville, Ky., Nov. 5. The 68 Soldiers volunteered their Saturday morning to say thanks to the community and the area's veterans.

World War II baseball caps, Vietnam POW vests and Desert Combat Uniforms filled the streets of downtown Hopkinsville, Nov. 5, for a parade to honor those who served their nation. Leading the parade were some of the men and women, who a few months ago were on the front lines of the War on Terror in southern Afghanistan, the Strike Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

"It's very important for us to be here today and the mission we just did in Afghanistan, confirms that importance," said Sgt. 1st Class Norris Kennedy, the one who organized Strike's representation in

the parade. "You're also honoring the warriors who preceded you and they need to know that we appreciate them."

The 68 Strike Soldiers who volunteered their Saturday morning to march, arrived at the town's War Memorial Building at 7am on South Virginia Street, where The Jaycees Club provided a hot breakfast for them. They then formed up at 10am and led the parade, marched to cadence calls, to the Justice Center on East 9th Street. The route was only a half a mile in distance, but the Soldiers' presences went a long way.

"I appreciate each one of them and it's great that you are all here and we also appreciate the job you did and are still doing

over there," said John Mason, a Hopkinsville resident and a World War II veteran who served with the 6th Infantry Division in the South Pacific. "Today is a good day to celebrate and we're glad we can do it together."

Veterans from all military branches who served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East, lined the streets and some also marched behind the Strike Soldiers. The Strike Soldiers appreciated their presence.

"We're here, just like the community, to say

thank you to all of our veterans," said Staff Sgt. Christopher Bill, from the battalion's military police and was operating one of Strike's two M1117 Armored Security Vehicles in the parade. "I really am looking forward to honoring our veterans and it's a good thing we are here, it's giving support to those who have served, absolutely."

The towns bordering Fort Campbell support the 101st Soldiers often and in various ways. Strike used this opportunity to show their appreciation towards the community as well as the veterans.

"The communities that wrap its arms around the 101st, Hopkinsville, Clarksville, we support and this is just another way to pay them back," said Command Sgt. Maj. Harold Reynolds, the battalion's csm, who was on location supporting his parading Soldiers. "When you look at where we came from and where we are today, we have to honor our veterans and the Soldiers who volunteered to be here this morning are doing just that."



STRIKE FALLEN HONORED AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY



First Strike Soldiers of the Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and cadets of the Western Kentucky University's Reserve Officers' Training Corps, stand in a formation at the base of Guthrie Tower during a Veteran's Day ceremony held at Bowling Green, Ky., honoring fallen First Strike Soldier, 1st Lt. Eric Yates, Nov. 11. Yates, a fire support officer and a 2008 Western Kentucky University Reserve Officers' Training Corps graduate, was killed on Sept. 18, 2010 and was honored by his alma mater for his heroic actions on the battlefield.

Spearheading the troop surge into southern Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom 10-11, were the Soldiers and leaders of Combined Task Force Strike's Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), also known as the Bulldogs of Bravo.

They Air Assaulted into Zharay, the birthplace of Taliban and immediately battled Improvised Explosive Devices, Rocket Propelled Grenades, enemy corruption and Taliban intimidation. The Bulldogs won their fights and left Kandahar a year later more secure and less kinetic; to the levels not seen since Russian boots were sent marching home in the late 1980's.

With their success came great exertion and six Bulldogs made the ultimate sacrifice for their cause. One of the fallen heroes, 1st Lt. Eric Yates, the company's fire support officer and a 2008 Western Kentucky University Reserve Officers' Training Corps graduate, was killed on Sept. 18, 2010 and was honored by his alma mater for his heroic actions on the battlefield during a Vet-

eran's Day ceremony held at WKU, Nov. 11.

"Obviously any Veteran's Day is a day you look back on and reflect all those who serve," said Sgt. John Morris, an infantryman who served along side Yates in Afghanistan during the deployment. "But when you see a friend up there it means quite a lot to you."

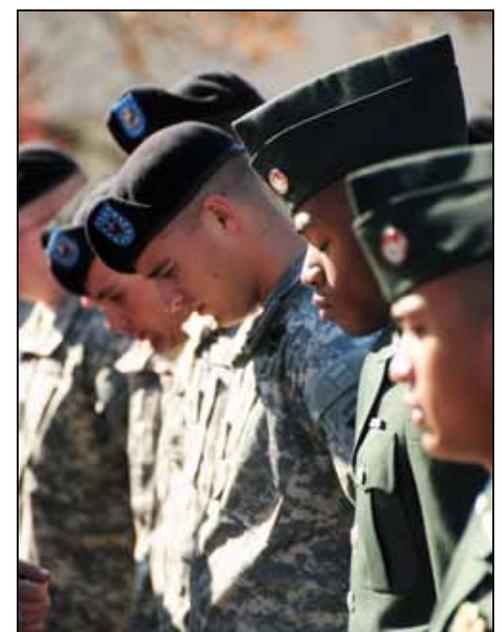
The day of honor began with the school's ROTC program and First Strike conducting a tribute run throughout the Bowling Green campus, then a wreath laying ceremony at the base of Guthrie Tower, then unveiling of a large mural with etched images of Yates and finally inducting him into the WKU ROTC Hall of Fame at the Kentucky Museum. Yates' parents Cathy and David unveiled the granite mural.

"Eric loved this school and he loved the Army and these two just melted together," said Cathy, who also helped with the design of the mural. "They have not forgotten Eric, his cadet friends and his Soldier friends, they still remember Eric and that gives me much comfort."

The Veteran's Day ceremony

honoring Yates brought tears as well as smiles to people's faces, as they reflected and remembered their fallen comrade.

"He was an outstanding officer and a high professional that was the best at his job," said Capt. Brandon Prisock, commander, Company B. "He unfortunately died doing what he wanted to do, helping other Soldiers.....I think that speaks enough."



First Strike Soldiers of the Company B, the cadets of the Western Kentucky University's ROTC, share a moment of silence in honor of fallen First Strike Soldier, 1st Lt. Eric Yates, Nov. 11.

STRIKE BUILDS STRONGER TIES WITH FRG AT FRC

The Soldiers and families of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), are no rookies when it comes to experiencing the lifestyle of a deployment. The Strike Brigade has been in Iraq and Afghanistan four out of the last eight years and through that time, learned how vital it is to the mission to have a strong bond with their loved ones, whether on the front lines of the War on Terror or within the gates of Fort Campbell.

To ensure a strong bond is made between Soldier and family, the Strike command teams and the Strike Family Readiness Groups leaders held a leadership conference at Fort Campbell's Family Resource Center, Nov. 29-30.

"We believe overall to have a cohesive team, you must have a cohesive and positive environment and the only way to do that is to come together and hear the same message, so we can function as a unit that understands the mission and goal," said Christine Walrath, Strike FRG leader/advisor and wife of Col. Dan Walrath, Strike commander. "This is going to be critical for our next deployment because this is going to provide the tools and confidence to handle difficult situations."

The two-day event provided close to 100 leaders of Strike with guidance, seminars and exercises to promote a functioning FRG/unit team. The topics focused on personalities, leadership and crucial conversations.

"The three main focus areas we touched upon is going to strengthen our families," said Chap. (Maj.) Megan Hodge, the brigade chaplain and a spokesperson for the two days. "Soldiers are stronger when families are stronger. When they're not worrying about what's going on at home they can focus on training and mission, so we want to make strong families and readiness groups...this will make exactly what the FRG is intended to be."

The exercises and lessons learned were well received by the two groups and can now be passed along down the chain.

"You learn a lot about yourself and that's what part of this conference is about," said Capt. Jenny Grier, wife of Capt. Patrick Glass, commander of Strike's medical company, Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion. "I talk a lot and fast, but now I'm going to



Strike Command teams and leaders of the Strike Family Readiness Group perform a team building exercise during a leadership conference at the Family Resource Center, Nov. 30. About 100 leaders of Strike performed exercises, learned techniques and were provided guidance in creating unit cohesion during the two-day conference.

slow down and that way more people will understand my message, the company's message, better and more clearly. I'm walking away a better communicator."

"There is a lot of good information we can use, like the crucial conversations portion of the seminar and it is going to benefit how Jenny and I communicate with the FRGs," said Glass. "We now have more tools in our kit bag to express our intent and direction." Company C, better known as "Charlie Med," has about 40-families involved within its FRG.

The seminar brought under one roof two-groups that makes one team as the move forward a stronger unit.

"We really bonded here and what we learned is going to help us grow," said Lora Devarona, FRG leader/advisor for 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and wife of Lt. Col. Jose Devarona, Strike Force commander. "It's extremely important to have an effective FRG and a good relationship with your military family because we truly know what each one of us is going through; the conference is making that happen."

"During deployments as well as here at home, we all have to be on the same page and reading from the same sheet of music and the leadership conference showed how it can be accomplished," said Lt. Col. Devarona. "Transmitting facts and providing support to the Soldier's family is needed to accomplish the mission and without the FRG, we do not accomplish our mission."

TOP GUNS SOLDIERS PARTICIPATE IN BLITZ PHYSICAL TRAINING

From searing heat in summer to freezing winter conditions, The Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) continue to train for best performance in any climate. This was proven by the Strike Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd BCT, as they conducted the latest ‘Top Guns Blitz’ training event at Fort Campbell, Ky., Dec. 7.

The blitz is a new training event that started in August and continues into the future to include more participation throughout the battalion. Platoon level leadership in the battalion put on full combat gear and divide into five teams, race to six stations spread throughout the Top Gun area, each with a different event, as the groups race against time.

The first station involved climbing a rope to the top of its mount. Some Soldiers opted to do the alternate event of pull-ups due to the slickness of the wet ropes. Afterward they ran to the next station at Olive Gym and continued to face similar challenges. With cold rain mixed with some light snow fall, the Soldiers started and despite the atmospheric conditions, they remained upbeat and positive, focused



The Strike Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), push a disabled military vehicle during the ‘Top Guns Blitz’ at Fort Campbell, Ky., Dec. 7. Soldiers had to push the vehicle about 50-meters to complete this portion of the event.

on the task at hand.

“This is a lot of fun,” said Staff Sgt. Steven Liddle, a platoon leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery. “We’re doing urban land navigation and other things that go along with our job, but it’s fun.”

Other stations hosted group activities such as medical litter carry, buddy carry, where one Soldier carried another on his back and radio checks. The Soldiers also called in a nine-line medical evacuation request, pushed a disabled military vehicle and four-man square push-ups. Between each location the Soldiers carried heavy items, such as weighted boxes, ammunition containers, water

jug and equipment bags, all while running through rain-soaked fields and streets.

“This is a lot about esprit de corps,” said Sgt. 1st Class Randy Serna, a platoon sergeant with Battery B. “It’s also about promoting physical fitness and see where we are at on a performance level. This helps build up the morale for our leadership. This is hard, but it is fun and will help us get prepared for wherever we go next.”

By the end of the final event, the Soldiers were cold, soaked and tired, but they were smiling and joking among themselves while still maintaining focus on their situation.

“By design [the blitz] will

get increasingly more difficult every time we conduct one,” said Lt. Col. Tarpon Wiseman, Top Guns’ commander. “This event is designed to be physically challenging as well as testing and exercising our mental agility. I want [the participants] to be physically drained and smoked, but have the wherewithal to still think.”

Strike Brigade hosts many such training events and always pushes its Soldiers to the limits of physical and mental endurance. The Top Guns’ Soldiers carry on this tradition of hard work and dedication as they train for tomorrow.

HOLIDAYS AT HOME WITH STRIKE'S LITTLE BULLDOGS



The Soldiers and family members of Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, the Bulldog Family Readiness Group and the Occupational Therapy Group from Milligan College created a Christmas Giving Tree for the children of the unit and handed out an array of presents at Strike Academy Dec. 15. The Milligan College campus and its surrounding communities in eastern Tennessee provided the gifts for the little Bulldogs.

A year ago during the holidays, the Soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, were 7,440 miles away from Ft. Campbell and partnered with the Afghan National Army, climbing six-foot grape walls made of mud and patrolling the villages of Kandahar. This year, they are partnered with their families and enjoying a rare holiday season at home.

Company B, known as the Bulldogs, know the importance of spending time with their families and made this year memorable. The Soldiers, the Bulldog Family Readiness Group and the Occupational Therapy Group from Milligan College partnered in created a Christmas Giving Tree for the children of the unit and handed out an array of presents at Strike Academy Dec. 15.

"Milligan College wanted to do us a service and give out Christmas gifts to our little Bulldogs," said Capt. James Small, the commander of Company B. "A lot of people say they support the troops and are pro-American, but not many do anything to this extent to help us and our families, so for these ladies to come here and drive four-hours to do this for us is amazing. They started Christmas."

The presents wrapped and displayed were handed out accordingly to age and gender. The Milligan College campus and its surrounding communities in eastern Tennessee provided the gifts for the little Bulldogs.

"Our biggest mission is the community outreach and we really wanted to get involved in particularly with the Bulldog Company," said Morgan Melzer, the leader of the Occupational Therapy Group while speaking to the Soldiers and families. "We are so grateful and thankful for all that you do and with the help of our classmates, friends and family we have sponsored all 89 kids."

As the presents were opened, smiles and laughs filled

the large conference room usually held for mission briefs.

"The turnout was amongst the best a Bulldog FRG meeting has ever seen," said 1st Lt. Jonathan Rezendes, the company's executive officer. "The Strike Academy was busting at the seams with Soldiers and family members. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive and they were extremely grateful for the gifts and the work done by the citizens supporting their troops."

The unforeseen connection between Bulldog and Melzer began years ago as 1st Lt. Anthony Kramer, a platoon leader in the company, attended high school and undergraduate college with the Milligan student. Recently Melzer approached Kramer inquiring how she could help the unit during the holiday season. The families enjoyed the Milligan College contributions.

"Everyone is smiling and this is really bringing the holiday spirit to the Bulldog family," said Hope Main, wife of Staff Sgt. Isom Main, a supply sergeant for the company. "The stuffed animal, a tiger, is really nice and this was really great."

The holiday mission was a success with Milligan College, the Soldiers of Bulldog Company, their family members and the Bulldog FRG coming together making the night memorable for the First Strike youth.

"There was a lot of hard work put in and they were afraid they weren't going to get all the gifts done, but they did and it was a big success," said Brandi Ramirez, Bulldog FRG co-leader and wife of the company's Staff Sgt. Jose Ramirez. "It means so much to know that people care about the little bulldogs and luckily we have everybody home for Christmas, because a lot of years, we don't, so we are thankful for it all."



Thea Wendel, wife of Spc. Jason Wendel of Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and their children Mason, Audrey and Christian receive presents for Christmas donated by the Occupational Therapy Group from Milligan College at Strike Academy Dec. 15. The Milligan College campus and its surrounding communities in eastern Tennessee provided the gifts for 89 little Bulldogs.

First Strike Goes..... 'Back to the Woods'



The First Strike mortar teams of 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), fire for effect during team and squad live-fire exercises in Fort Campbell's training area, Nov. 17. The battalion trained in the field from Nov. 1 - Dec. 14, calling it Back to the Woods.

Operation Enduring Freedom 10-11 ended for the men and women of 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in May of 2011. During their yearlong deployment, the battalion known as First Strike, defeated an insurgency, established a secure Zharay district and reconnected the local Afghans back to its government; they accomplished what couldn't be done prior and returned home as heroes. Since May, they have completed a full redeployment and began their reset phase of training. Soldiers moved to other units and bases, commanders handed over their reigns and First Strike reintegrated with a new look. Reset is over and now it is time to go back to the woods.

"The new Soldiers have come in and the units have finished reset; it's been five to six months since the units redeployed and had leave and now it's important to get back to the basics to establish the foundation," said Lt. Col. Joe Power, First Strike commander. "That's what Back to the Woods is, it's

getting back to the basics. If you get your basics right, your basic Soldier discipline, fundamentals and standards at the lowest level, that will continually build success from the individual to the team, through the squad, platoon and then company."

The companies of First Strike recently prepared their units for future operations and got back to the Soldiering basics by deploying its Soldiers to the distant training areas of Fort Campbell's 'back 40' Nov. 1 - Dec. 14. Effective team and squad level movements and live-fire exercises was the focus throughout the in-garrison deployment.

"We got out here bright and early,

set up and focused on battle movements, specifically squad and team attack, reacting to contact, breaking contact and how to move through an objective as a unit," said Pfc. Robert Green, a new team leader in First Strike's Company C. "Our training here has been really important in making our team function well together, accomplish our mission and take care of business. Being out here has been good to us."

All units were involved in lengthy training to include the mortar teams and scouts of the battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, to the Soldier chefs of Company E. The Soldiers conducted day-to-day



missions that involved teams coordinating, communicating and moving together. The intent was to form cohesion between the small level units.

“The team training lanes to the team live fires and the squad lanes to the squad live fires, is getting the teams to work effectively together as squads, as whole units,” said 1st Lt. Michael McConaghy, the new incoming executive officer for Company C. “Cohesion is so important; everybody needs know what their job is and what everybody else’s job is and the only way to do that is by being out here and doing it.”

The weather conditions in Ft. Campbell for the last two months have been cold and wet. Below freezing temperatures mixed with heavy rain may have made the training more effective for the First Strike Soldiers.

“It takes a lot of heart and these guys have been ‘driving-on’ the whole time,” said McConaghy, talking about the muddied Soldiers just walking in from a mission. “They’re out there walking through creeks, toes frozen, but they push each other and that, no doubt, builds cohesion.”

Each team and squad would begin their missions with a walk-through accompanied by their leaders. The units were taught the how and why things are done on the battlefield. The operations would then lead into live-fire action with live ammunition.

“Live-fire is one of the key components of this training out here,” said Staff Sgt. Blaine Lashelle, a weapons squad leader with Company C and was training his teams during their live-fire missions. “Live-fire makes the guys pay attention to the training, they take all measures very seriously and it puts a realistic perspective on what’s going on. The Soldiers can’t learn it all if

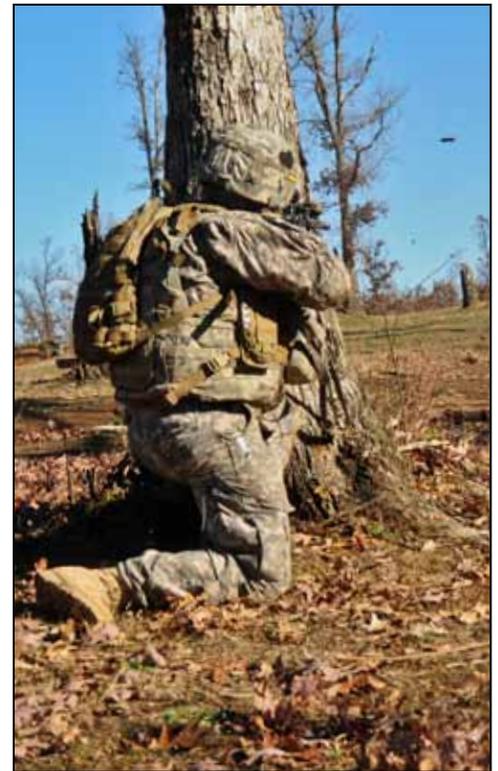
they’re not shooting real bullets and throwing live-grenades.”

Movement techniques, dismounted formations, team leaders controlling their fire teams, moving as a single unit and basic patrol base activities were some of the lessons and missions of performed by the Soldiers while out in the woods. Some of First Strike’s new faces have never conducted such training with their teams.

“We have a new guy on our team and this was his first time maneuvering and firing live rounds with us. He did great, we did great,” said Spc. Matthew Chaney, a rifleman with First Strike’s Company D. “You got to build trust with your guys and that’s what we did, not only built trust, but also confidence.”

Going back to the woods of Fort Campbell provided the First Strike Soldiers a better understanding of their basic infantryman skills and allowed the Soldiers, who a year ago was operating in one of Afghanistan’s most kinetic areas, to remove their rust.

“The battalion hasn’t been out in the field since the deployment and going



Live-fire exercises was part of the training and offers Soldiers more than just using blank rounds.

back to the woods is literally going back to the basics of patrol base activities, team and squad skill level training and they did great,” said Power. “Their progression from day one to the finish was remarkable and they got better every time they went out there. I’m proud of them.”



The First Strike Soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, advance on their targets during a team live-fire exercise in Fort Campbell’s training area, Nov. 17.

'Tis the Season to be STRIKE!

The Strike Brigade celebrates the 2011 holiday season





STRIKE CAV SPOUSES PARTICIPATE IN SPOUSE SPUR RIDE



Amanda Henry, wife of Capt. Devin Henry with 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), tosses ropes in an obstacle course challenge during the 'Spouse Spur Ride' at Fort Campbell, Ky., Nov. 18. Strike CAV hosted the event to bring Soldiers and families together, building camaraderie.

The Army encourages its Soldiers and family members to bond together through activities and events designed to promote camaraderie and understanding within each family. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) also promotes family bonds throughout its battalions and squadron.

Spouses of Soldiers from Strike Brigade's 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, attended a 'Spouse Spur Ride' at Fort Campbell, Nov. 18.

"Army spouses have many ways they show their support for their husbands," said Sasha Stone, a native of Griffin, Ind. and wife of 1st Sgt. Nathan Stone, with Troop A. "This is my way of showing support to my husband and Apache Troop."

"The events were designed to simulate the Spur Ride that Strike-Cav Soldiers go through to earn their prestigious silver spurs," said Spc. Kolton Spicer, a Cavalry Scout with Troop A, 1-75th and a native of Somerville, Tenn., helping setup and run the event. "This is a good way to build bonds between families and the unit. Everything has been toned down a bit compared to what the Soldiers go through, but it will still give their wives a good idea of what our job

is like."

Activities such as an informal physical training session, obstacle course and rope climb got the group of about 40-wives warmed up for the challenges ahead. From there they split into several groups of smaller size to rotate through stations where Soldiers presented them with training missions. At one station, a group of wives went over the basic operations of the Browning M2 .50 caliber machine gun. There, the spouses cooperated together to work the heavy machinery and pass the functions test.

"This is a harder than it looks," said Molli Igou, Family Readiness Group co-leader and native of Clarksville, Tenn., and wife of Spc. Eduardo Mendez of Troop B. "I didn't expect it to be so hard to charge a gun."

The spouses also conducted functions tests on the M-240B machine gun and pushed a military vehicle several meters as if on a recovery mission.

Other stations included a trip to the Electronic Skills Trainer, where the spouses fired simulated weapons during a video training session. Later, Spouses low-crawled through grass and pine needles to an over-watch position to radio a report on the activities of Soldiers posing as enemy combatants. Through-

out each event the spouses of Strike-Cav worked together, encouraged each other and achieved their goals.

"We had a great turnout today," said Maj. Diogo Tavares, the operations officer with the squadron's Headquarters and Headquarters Troop and a native of Hillside, N.J., and coordinator for the spur ride. "It's great that these wives have come out to show their support."

This event was modeled after a previous 'Spouse Spur Ride' held before Strike Brigade's last deployment, which focused on bringing the Strike-Cav family closer together.

"Today represents team building; the husbands are already close because of their camaraderie and combat and working with each other every day," said Tavares. "This is an opportunity to extend that to the spouses and allow them to do the same thing and work together to get to know each other. This is definitely successful and I hope to see more like it."



Sasha Stone, wife of 1st Sgt. Nathan Stone, with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), climbs a rope during the squadron's 'Spouse Spur Ride' at Fort Campbell, Ky., Nov. 18. Spouses went through multiple challenges such as an obstacle course and weapons familiarization to build bonds between themselves and their husbands.

FACES OF STRIKE





STRIKE ZONE AFGHANISTAN



STRIKE Zone Afghanistan is the brigade's Tv show dedicated to keeping its viewers up to date with unit's events and missions during its deployment to Kandahar Afghanistan.

Learn about each company, battery and troop and be a part of their high-speed missions by checking out the STRIKE Zone Afghanistan. Look for it on the Brigade Facebook Page.

STRIKE HONORS



*A weekly look
at STRIKE's History*

The Brigade Facebook Page

The STRIKE Brigade is in the social networking world with the Brigade Facebook Page. On it are images and videos of the great missions and actions involving the 2nd Brigade Combat Team. Join to start conversations and leave comments about everything the Team is doing. Watch the Brigade's Tv show, the 'Strike Zone' with monthly updates of our time in Afghanistan, read about the illustrious history of 2nd Brigade in the weekly edition of 'Strike Honors'. The page is an awesome way to stay close your Soldiers, even while they are far away.

To be a part of the STRIKE Brigade via the internet; log onto your Facebook page, click in the search box and type 2nd Brigade Strike. When the 502nd  comes up click on it and then click 'like'. Join the already thousands of viewers keeping up with the STRIKE Brigade!

