



THUNDER EAGLE MAGAZINE

Publication for the Soldiers and Family Members of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade

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Keep Them Fighting!

**563rd successfully handles
port operations**

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Australian Captain is unique part of 563rd ASB, Thunder Brigade mission.

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159th Combat Aviation Brigade Units:

HHC 159th CAB

3-101 AVN REGT



4-101 AVN REGT



7-101 AVN REGT



50th MED



563rd ASB



1-17 AIR CAV

C 1-58 ATC





Thunder Brigade Soldiers 'ZERO' in on mission.....



*Photos by Sgt. Susan Redwine
159th CAB Public Affairs*

Thunder Brigade continues to make transition



Left: A Thunder Brigade Soldier hauls in bags as he arrives in Kuwait. Above, bottom left: Port operations in Kuwait included downloading and preparing aircraft for movement to Iraq. Bottom right: An airfield tower set against the hazy Kuwaiti sky.

*By Sgt. Susan Redwine
159th CAB Public Affairs*

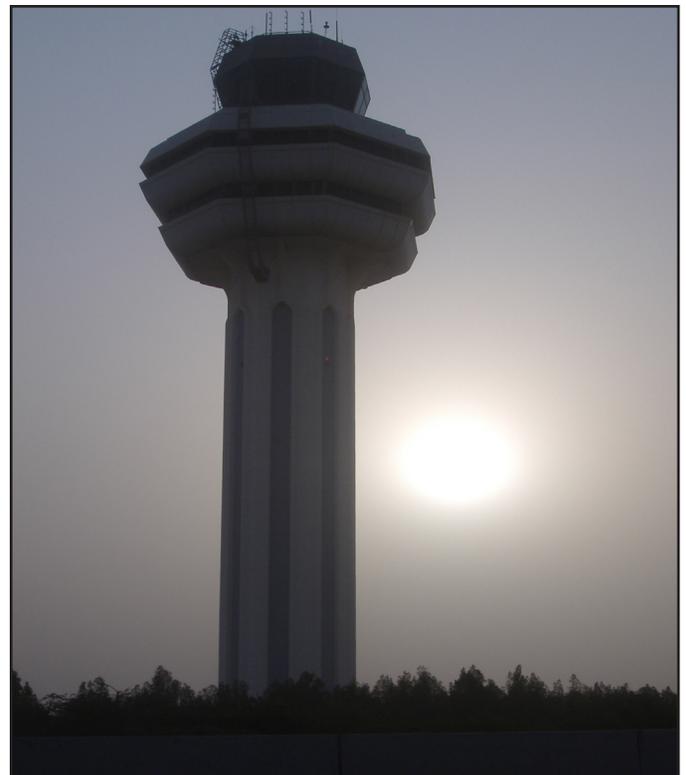
The first main body of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade arrived in Kuwait Oct. 5 and settled in at Camp Buehring on the initial movement for deployment to Iraq.

The mission in Kuwait consisted of three basic stages, said Capt. Jeff Baird, brigade training officer in charge in Kuwait. The first was reception, or getting people and equipment from Fort Campbell to Kuwait. The second was the staging process, which consists of training and building up combat power including passing on the latest information from the Iraqi theater of operations. The last stage is onward movement into Iraq, Baird said.

While in Kuwait, Soldiers also acclimated to desert conditions and the change in time zones while training. Small arms test fire, improvised explosive device

familiarization, entry control point training and convoy live fire were all training events for various units in Kuwait, Baird said. Additionally, aviators conducted aerial test fires and environmental training, he added.

“Everything’s been going very smoothly,” Baird said. “I credit the Soldiers in the units for the way they executed the training plan that set the stage for success as we transition into Task Force Thunder. “It’s the main building block. Without a good reception, staging and onward movement, we can’t expect Soldiers and leaders to do their mission up north.”



MOH Recipients:

“We truly appreciate, from the bottom of our hearts, what you’re doing over here.”

*By Sgt. Susan Redwine
159th CAB Public Affairs*

Two Congressional Medal of Honor recipients visited LSA Anaconda Oct. 31 to meet and talk with Soldiers during a luncheon at Dining Facility 4.

Gary Littrell was a sergeant first class in the Army and John McGinty III was a staff sergeant in the Marine Corps when they each displayed heroism in battle that earned them the nation’s highest honor for valor. Both earned the honor while serving in Vietnam and both have taken



Soldiers at the luncheon were able to see the Medal of Honor firsthand. Littrell estimates that his medal has passed through thousands of hands over the years.

time to travel through the Middle East to share their experiences with Soldiers deployed in the fight against terrorism.

The men regaled troops from the 18th and 159th Aviation Brigades with a variety of colorful stories from their years of military service and combat experiences.

The most junior Soldiers present, privates first class Chad Hamm and Carolyn Stene, 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, were chosen to sit at the head table next to the guests of honor.

Both Soldiers said it was an honor to be chosen to sit next to the medal recipients.

“He was so down-to-earth I couldn’t believe it,” Hamm said of his conversations with McGinty.

When asked about the combat situations the men were in when they earned the awards, neither said they felt like that had done anything extraordinary.

“I found myself in a situation I wasn’t expecting,” Littrell said of the four days in Vietnam when he helped lead a battalion against a fierce mortar attack. “Things didn’t feel right. You develop a sixth sense.

“I never felt like I was doing anything other than my job,” he



Redwine/159th PAO

Medal of Honor recipient Gary Littrell has toured Iraq and Afghanistan visiting with Soldiers deployed in the Global War on Terrorism. He offers stories and advice to today’s servicemembers.

said. “I wasn’t thinking of medals. I wasn’t thinking of heroics.”

“The medal I wear, I wear for 3rd Battalion, K Company,” McGinty said. “Those are the guys that did all the work; I was just on the radio most.”

“Vietnam was a combat war,” McGinty said. “Your rules of engagement are very difficult. Mentally, it’s a lot tougher. I’ve been around here twice now and it’s a tougher war.”

“We truly appreciate, from the bottom of our hearts, what you’re doing over here,” Littrell told the assembled Soldiers.

“I truly believe if you were not here doing the job you’re doing, we’d have more incidents in the states [like Sept. 11, 2001]. You’re fighting terrorism on their turf.”



Port operations



(Above): A UH-60 Blackhawk gets test flown as Soldiers from the 563rd Aviation Support Battalion piece together another Blackhawk during port operations in Kuwait. (Left): A Soldier works to attach a cable to a Chinook for hauling out of the ship.

563rd ASB keeps brigade fighting

*Story and photos by Sgt. Susan Redwine
159th CAB Public Affairs*

Battles are won by having the right fire-power at the front line, and getting that fire-power forward is key to a mission's success.

In October, elements of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade successfully downloaded its equipment from a naval vessel at port in Kuwait. Hundreds of containers, land vehicles and aircraft were organized and transferred in the preparation for movement to Iraq.

Port operations have a lot of moving pieces and require a lot of coordination, said Capt. Jesse Holmes, support operations officer and ground maintenance officer in charge. He added that transportation of all the individual pieces of equipment was the largest part of the operation. He likened the operation to "organized chaos," saying that it would look disorganized if you don't understand the details of the operation.

"We're not even in a combat zone yet, but it's a difficult task, a difficult undertaking," he said.

The brigade's stock-in-trade, and perhaps the most visible and comprehensive part of the operation is getting the unit's aircraft unloaded and in operation.

"Logistically it's a challenge trying to coordinate the right people and equipment to be where I need them when I need them and coordinate with assets outside my company," said Capt. Ryan Hedberg, executive officer for Company B, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion and OIC of aircraft operations at the port.

"We're trying to accomplish the mission in a timely manner and do it safely," he said. "We are under a schedule and are afforded X number of days to get off port.

"The environment definitely works against us," he went on. "Heat is a very big factor. We have to be very careful in how hard we work our people in order to prevent heat casualties."

However, the importance of getting the aircraft

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A UH-60 Blackhawk is downloaded from a vessel after traveling for nearly a month from the port at Jacksonville, Fla., to make it to the Kuwaiti port.

***PORT* continued from Page 4**

ready to go is key to the unit's overall success for the deployment.

"The division and Army depend heavily on rotary-winged assets to accomplish the mission," Hedberg said. "The proper download, assembly and staging of these aircraft is vital."

Staff Sgt. Adam Barber, maintenance platoon sergeant for Company B, said that despite some minor setbacks, the operation was going pretty well.

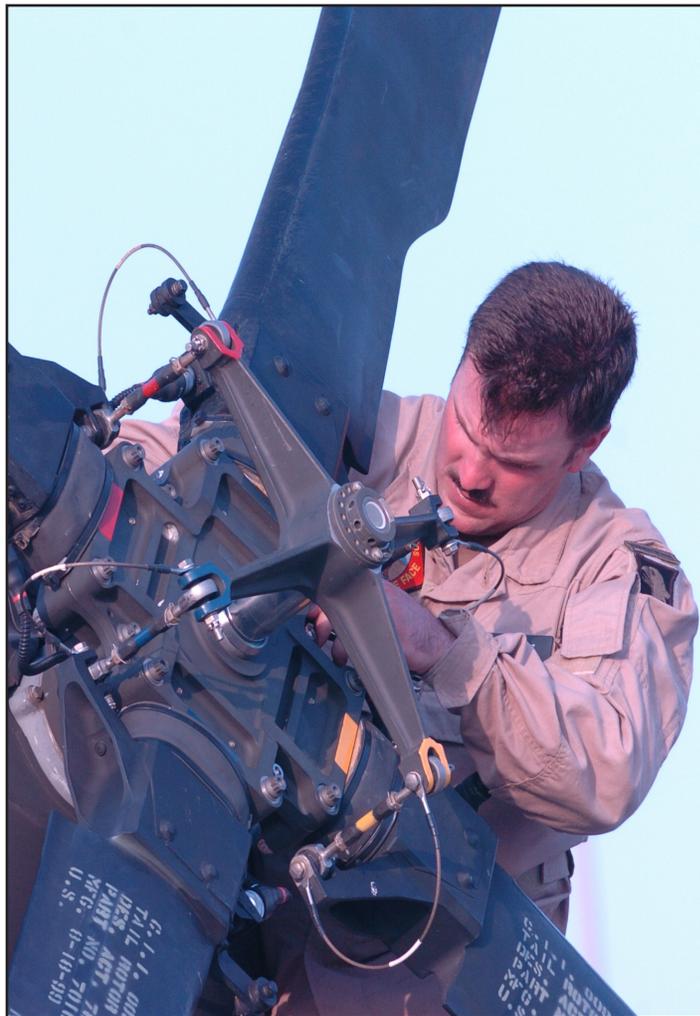
Barber and many of his Soldiers have previous experience with port operations because they deployed with the 101st in 2003. Barber said the operation was running more smoothly this time because of better planning and lessons learned from the last time.

"The Soldiers are motivated," he said. "They're happy to be doing some work after sitting around for awhile back at Campbell [while the aircraft were in transit]."

"The troops are doing a great job."

(Top Right): A Thunder Brigade Soldier concentrates on mechanisms in the tail rotor of a Blackhawk during port operations in Kuwait. A large part of the mission at port was successfully downloading and reassembling aircraft and making sure all systems are functioning properly to ensure successful missions in Iraq.

(Center Right): It takes a group of Soldiers to handle and download the blades to Chinook helicopters. The blades weigh approximately 400 pounds and are constructed with fiberglass, and therefore must be handled with care. (Bottom Right): Maneuvering aircraft out of the hull of a large ship takes patience, skill and a little horsepower from an assisting tractor.



Aussie captain brings a little Down Under to Thunder Brigade

*By Sgt. Susan Redwine
159th CAB Public Affairs*

Most Soldiers join the military to fight for their country, but it's a rare few who are willing to take their Soldiering skills beyond their own borders and serve in an exchange program with another country's military.

Capt. Brett Nelson, production officer in charge for Company B, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, has brought his skills as an officer in the Australian Army as well as his expertise in aerospace engineering to the U.S. Army for the last two years.

Candidates for the program are chosen from Soldiers with particular job skill sets, he said. Captains with two years of experience are eligible for the exchange and are ultimately selected by senior officers. Nelson said this is about the 12th year the exchange program has gone on.

"It's a highly sought-after and competitive position," Nelson said.

He said he was very happy when he found out he had been selected for the exchange program because it was something he'd set his sights on two years prior.

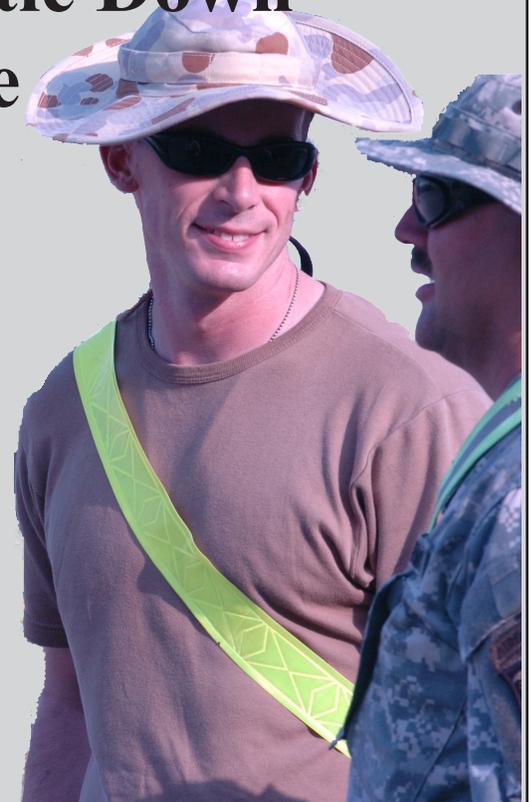
"The 101st has a reputation and the opportunity to work with them was something to look forward to," he said.

Thoughtful and outwardly mild-mannered, Nelson's experience and educational background brings a formidable amount of talent to his position with the 101st.

Nelson is qualified as an aerospace engineer and serves with the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

"He brings a diverse set of skills and attributes to our logistical fight," said Maj. Robert Wegner, commander, Company B, 563rd ASB. "The Soldiers appreciate having a different vantage point and I think the command benefits from his unique way of solving problems.

"The essence of what he brought to us besides a great deal of aircraft systems knowledge and management



techniques is the manner in which he applies them," Wegner said. "The style in which he uses his skills is what benefits us."

One of the main differences between the United States and Australia is the size of the Armies. Nelson said the Australian Army just about as many aircraft as the 159th CAB. "To see what equates to our entire aviation fleet deploy to JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La.], then deploy again to Iraq is an experience I'll never get again," he said.

The exchange program is not only an educational opportunity for the officer, but also for the gaining unit. Nelson said he was able to expose the Soldiers of the 563rd to the Australian Army's outlook on aviation maintenance, which is to treat aircraft maintainers as Soldiers with highly specialized skills.

"It stems from our limited fleet assets," Nelson explained. "We require our guys to be highly specialized and the quality of work to be without question."

In addition to being a part of the world-renowned Screaming Eagles, Nelson said he has enjoyed traveling through the United States with his fiancé and has seen most major cities in the country, taking four-day weekends as chances for sight seeing.

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AUSSIE continued from Page 8

Nelson also was surprised by the melting pot of the U.S. Army, saying he was “floored” by the diversity of the backgrounds and ethnicities of American Soldiers, from velour track suits to cowboys.

“It was definitely an experience,” he said. “Australia has a much tighter spectrum of styles.”

However, he lent his own flavor to the diverse mix of people in the unit and said he gave the Soldiers a crash course in Australian humor, sarcasm and catchphrases, as well as being constantly conspicuous in his Australian uniform.

Wegner said he would recommend the exchange

program for any organization and he’s excited to be hosting another Australian officer after Nelson leaves.

“It’s great to have a different approach,” Wegner said. “It makes you ask harder questions about why you’re doing things a certain way. It makes you think of a better way to do it and not just once in awhile, but all the time.”

When Nelson returns to Australia at the end of the year, he said he’ll be moving into a similar job with the 5th Aviation Regiment in Townsville and hopes to take command of one of the maintenance squadrons as a major.

“Do your best to keep the Soldiers busy working in their MOS,” Nelson said. “It greatly improves morale and reduces discipline problems.”

‘Wings of the Eagle’ aircraft arrive in Iraq



Photos by Sgt. Susan Redwine
159th CAB Public Affairs

