

# WINGS OF DESTINY

MAGAZINE **01F05-07**

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 101<sup>ST</sup> COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

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## From the Editor...



**Hello, Screaming Eagles!**  
You are looking at the third issue of *Wings of Destiny*, covering the brigade's deployment in support of OIF 01-07. November was a time for many significant events within the brigade, including the move of 2-17 to Forward Operating Base Warrior from FOB McKenzie, stories on 2<sup>nd</sup> BN's year here, as they prepare to return home, a 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Air Assault mission, a repair of a 6<sup>th</sup> BN Chinook while the helicopter hovered overhead, morale visits from country singer Aaron Tippin and the Purrfect Angelz, and the

brigade-wide awarding of combat patches on Veteran's Day. Also included are stories on missions to local schools, human interest and other news. Our team of stringers worked very hard to do their best to keep you informed on what's happening in their battalions, as well as the rest of the brigade. As you will see in next months *Wings of Destiny*, many of them will have been promoted from 2LT to LT, as well.

The mission of *Wings of Destiny* magazine is to cover the brigade as a whole. These stories have also been sent out to newspapers and magazines throughout Tennessee, and in some cases, the country.

Below you will see the contact information for myself, SFC Antony Joseph, the brigade's Public Affairs Officer, and our stringer team in the event you have any questions, suggestions, or story ideas. Enjoy the magazine, Air Assault!

**SGT Ryan Matson**  
*Wings of Destiny* editor/brigade military journalist

## WINGS OF DESTINY MAGAZINE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 101<sup>ST</sup> AVIATION BRIGADE

COMMANDER, 101 AVN BDE.....COL WARREN E. PHIPPS, JR  
CSM, 101 AVN BDE.....CSM TOD L. GLIDEWELL  
101 AVN BDE BRIGADE PAO.....SFC ANTONY JOSEPH  
[tony.joseph@us.army.mil](mailto:tony.joseph@us.army.mil)  
EDITOR, BDE MILITARY JOURNALIST .....SGT RYAN MATSON  
[ryan.c.matson@us.army.mil](mailto:ryan.c.matson@us.army.mil)  
CONTRIBUTING UNIT PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPRESENTATIVES  
1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION - 1LT ELIZABETH CASEBEER, [elizabeth.casebeer@us.army.mil](mailto:elizabeth.casebeer@us.army.mil) 6<sup>TH</sup> BATTALION -  
1LT MARGARET NENCHECK, [margaret.j.nencheck@us.army.mil](mailto:margaret.j.nencheck@us.army.mil) CPT MATT GRAESSLE,  
[matt.graessle@us.army.mil](mailto:matt.graessle@us.army.mil) 96<sup>TH</sup> ASB - 2LT VIVIANA PULIDO, [yiviana.pulido@us.army.mil](mailto:yiviana.pulido@us.army.mil) 1LT  
BRIDGET DEUTER, [bridget.deuter@us.army.mil](mailto:bridget.deuter@us.army.mil) 2-17<sup>TH</sup> CAVALRY - 1LT NICHOLAS ANHUT,  
[nick.anhut@us.army.mil](mailto:nick.anhut@us.army.mil)

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# NEWS

## Like father, like son

Story by SGT Ryan Matson and 2LT Elizabeth Casebeer, photos by SGT Matson  
*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*



### Two of a kind

CW5 Phillip Marston (left), Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, and his son, 1LT Anthony Marston (right), 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> CAB, share some lighter moments during an interview in front of an AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter. The father and son pair both are Apache attack helicopter pilots with the 101<sup>st</sup> CAB, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) deployed together to Forward Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, IRAQ -- It all started with a flight jacket.

That's one of the things 1LT Anthony Marston, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion ("Expect No Mercy"), 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), sometimes wore when he was a child. That's because his father, Phillip, was an attack pilot. In fact, all these years later, Phillip is still flying attack helicopters. And now, so is Anthony.

LT Marston has followed his father's footsteps into the Army, flight school, the same division and aviation brigade, and now, the two have caught up with each other at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. In fact, it seems like CW5 Phillip Marston just can't get away from his son.

It was over 23 years ago that Chief Marston, then an infantry Soldier shivering from a cold day on the range, looked up and saw an Army UH1 (utility helicopter), a Cobra attack helicopter, and a scout helicopter fly overhead.

"I thought to myself, 'Those guys will be going to the warm areas here shortly, so there must be a better way,'" he said.

On that day, Chief Marston decided he would fly. After 5 years as an infantryman he left Fort Carson, Colo., and became a warrant officer. He graduated from flight school at Fort Rucker, Ala., in 1982.



### **Climbing Aboard**

**1LT Anthony Marston (right), 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, climbs into the cockpit of an AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopter, while his father, CW5 Phillip Marston (left), Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101<sup>st</sup> CAB, lends a watchful eye.**

Chief Marston began his aviation career as a Cobra pilot. At the time, that was the Army's attack helicopter.

"Part of getting the Cobra was luck of the draw," Chief Marston said. "You can volunteer for the aircraft you want to fly, but it is based on terms of slots available as to whether you'll get it or not. What I liked about the Cobra was somebody said to me, 'Wouldn't you like to be in an aircraft that, if it were shot at, you could shoot back and protect yourself?' That made a lot of sense to me, and once I started flying it, I realized it was a lot of fun, too."

After a stint as an instructor pilot back at Fort Rucker, Chief Marston picked up his qualification to fly the Army's new attack aircraft, the Apache, which he has flown since 1987. He has flown both the Alpha and Delta Longbow model of the aircraft at locations around the world, including during the first Gulf War.

Back then, the idea of being deployed to Iraq with his son, both as Apache pilots, seemed like it may be something of a stretch.

"I knew he was over here for Operation Desert Storm but I didn't exactly know what all that entailed," said 1LT Marston, who was in elementary school at the time. "We can relate with each other on a whole different level now."

Even though his father is a career warrant officer, 1LT Marston did not even decide to join the army until he was in high school.

"It's not like he sat me down at the dinner table and made me read the Dash Ten [the AH-64D Longbow Apache handbook]," said 1LT Marston with a laugh.

Something Chief Marston and his wife, Donna, wanted to ensure was that their son would receive a good education. He decided he could pursue both his Army career and academic goals by becoming a commissioned officer.

Perhaps 1LT Marston's tougher decision was deciding where he would get his commission from. He carefully weighed the pros and cons of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and The United States Military Academy at West Point and ultimately decided on West Point. Marston said he chose it "for its great lineage and the great officers it has produced over the years."



#### Check it Out

**CW5 Phillip Marston, HHC, 101<sup>st</sup> CAB, conducts pre-flight inspections on an AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter. Chief Marston has been an attack helicopter pilot for more than 20 years.**

"Everything was all-encompassing. I matured a lot there and decided who I am, and what kind of person I am. I also made lifelong friends," said Lt. Marston.

Then the time came for 1LT Marston to fill out his "wish list" – the area, or branch, of the military he would like to base his career on.

"When he [Lt. Marston] first went up to West Point and he was talking about what he wanted to do when he graduated, he was always talking infantry, and things like that, and I said, 'OK, OK, no problem,'" Chief Marston recalled. "I told him it's a hard lifestyle, but if that's what you want to do, it's a worthy one. Somewhere along the line, I must have come to influence him, because he said he wanted to try aviation and see how it worked. I'm thinking that growing up around it, it's kind of like your hometown; you don't think of it until you leave it and do other things."

After his son earned his commission from West Point in 2003, he graduated flight school in 2004. He has since grown to share the same passion for flying attack helicopters that his father has held throughout the years.

1LT Marston decided to fly Apaches because of what they can do. Unlike most other helicopters, Apaches are equipped with guns, rockets and missiles that intimidate the enemy and provide protection for its crew.

“Flying Apaches is a thrill,” 1LT Marston said. “There’s nothing like going fast and low over a local area.”

Now that the two are together in Iraq, Chief Marston is not only a father, but a mentor as a senior aviator, as well.

“Even growing up, when I would help him with his homework, he’d ask me things and I’d show him how to do the basics step-by-step,” Chief Marston said. “I’d tell him, if you can do the basics, then the complex problems are just broken down into those. Flying is like that. If you can fly the helicopter and break it down into the essentials, then when you go into a complex mission, things are less difficult.”

“My dad and I have spent tons of hours together, with questions on how to accomplish the universe, drills, or basic army questions. He’s always there for me,” said 1LT Marston.

“He is a great role model for Soldiers and an overall great guy; people who work with him are always telling me stories of what he has done for them.”

The two remain professional yet still show a good sense of humor. “I call him ‘Mr. Marston,’ and all the pilots keep telling me to call him ‘Dad,’ said 1LT Marston, who refuses to do so in order to keep professional around other Soldiers.

Most of the time, Chief Marston calls his son “L.T.,” the nickname often given to lieutenants. “When I’m a little upset with him, I just call him ‘Lieutenant,’” he said.

Though it may not be in ideal conditions, the Marston family has managed to remain together, stateside or at war. In fact, 1LT Marston’s wife, Aricel is a battalion chemical officer serving at another Forward Operating Base in Iraq. Meanwhile, back at Fort Campbell, Donna is waiting patiently for her two aviators to return home.

“I’m sure she worries about us,” Chief Marston said. “But she deals with it and doesn’t ‘Oh-me, oh-my,’ it.”

And she will have to endure plenty of pilot talk when they get back.

“I think she kind of gets a kick out of it,” Chief Marston said. “I mean, normally when you’re at home talking with relatives, you don’t use your Army slang, your Army jargon, but we get home and we’ll be talking about stuff like that and she’ll just shake her head and walk off.”



Chief and his son walk off the flight line together.

# NEWS

## Same place, different story

*2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers wind up back at Q-West, but fighting a very different war*

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson

*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*



### Been there, done that

SPC Matthew Spence, Company D, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, works on an Apache rotorhead in a hanger at Forward Operating Base Key West, Iraq. The battalion will be wrapping up a year-long deployment to Iraq shortly, their second in three years time.

MOSUL, IRAQ -- As members of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade prepare to return to Fort Campbell in the near future, they can look forward to getting into a steady work routine at their home station before the battalion leaves the brigade for Fort Riley, Kansas. They will take with them a year of memories from this deployment –

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memories of a very different war than the war they deployed to fight just two years ago. Both times, the battalion ended up at Forward Operating Base Q West (outside Mosul, Iraq), but other than the location, not much else was similar between the two deployments, members of the battalion said.

“Probably the biggest difference between OIF 1 and this deployment for this battalion is that the operational tempo (OPTEMPO) is pretty much two and a half to three times as fast in terms of how much we’re flying,” CW4 Charles Miller, an Apache pilot with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and veteran of both deployments, said.

The battalion estimates by the end of this deployment, it will have logged well over 16,000 Apache flight hours, which is more than four times the amount of hours the battalion would log in a year at Fort Campbell, and three times as many as last deployment. The battalion is averaging about 1,600 flight hours a month, which does not include the hours the Kiowas and Blackhawks will have logged as part of Task Force Eagle Warrior. The Task Force will probably log about 25,000 combined flight hours, the battalion estimates.

With all this time in the air, the battalion also had another unfortunate change between this deployment and last one: the number of aircraft hit by small arms fire.

“Some aircraft were hit more than once,” MAJ Ted LeBlow, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Executive Officer, said. “Luckily, the Apache is a very durable aircraft, and all of them made it back safe, none of them had to land outside the gate due to small arms fire.”

Leblow gave credit to Company D, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the maintenance company, for their work in keeping the aircraft in the sky for all the hours logged, as well for repairing the battle damaged aircraft and getting them back in the air. Once the battalion had five helicopters sustain small arms battle damage within two hours time.

“The OPTEMPO we’ve been flying is extremely high, so those guys are amazing just to keep up with that,” he said. “Repairing battle damage is also something you normally don’t have to deal with in the rear; you don’t have bullets hitting your helicopters there. The third thing they did very well is managing the maintenance on three different airframes (Apaches, Kiowas and Blackhawks.)”

“We do 24-hour operations seven days a week and there’s no break,” Miller said. “Those guys are constantly working on aircraft and they’ve done an unbelievable, great job.”

Another difference 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion pilots encountered was the way they flew missions. Last time, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion carried out their missions solely using Apache attack helicopters. This time, Apaches operated around Mosul in what is known as “pink teams.” Pink teams is an old term from the Vietnam War area where red and white and blue teams designated teams of certain aircraft, and pink teams signified teams of mixed aircraft. In the Vietnam War, the aircraft were Hueys and Cobras and in Mosul, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion used Kiowa Warrior helicopters flying between 150 and 250 feet off the ground with Apaches flying higher, providing overhead cover.

“Mosul was a high threat for aircraft being shot at,” LeBlow said. “Before we came up, OH 58D Kiowa-pure teams and AH 64D Apache Longbow-pure teams were getting shot at, engaged and hit fairly frequently. So over the urban areas of the city of Mosul South, we went to a mixed team where the Apaches provide overhead fire and cover for the 58s as they would go through the city.”

“You’d have the Kiowa down low, doing reconnaissance and the Apache providing immediate security for the Kiowa. It worked well because the 58 down low could see everything in detail and the Apache could see the big picture and everything the 58

couldn't. The Kiowa, because he's so low, could see a guy in the street, what's in his hands, what's in his car, but he can't see what's on the next block over. The Apache watches the scout, so he can protect him, but he can also look further away and give the scout directions to any threats in the distance."

LeBlow said this technique has been done in the past, but not with the frequency it is being used in Mosul now, which is on a daily basis. The pilots of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion adjusted well to their new mission, he said.

"It's a lot different, you're flying a lot slower, especially over the city," Miller said. "But it's also a little more challenging as a pilot because of the fact that the Kiowa has a lot steeper turning radius. They're really yanking and banking down there, and we're really yanking and banking just to keep your eye on them, but I like it."

Miller said he did do some pink team flying training as a Cobra pilot with Kiowa scout weapons teams about 10 to 12 years ago.

This time around, instead of supporting a brigade combat team, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion ended up supporting a Stryker Brigade. The pilots all said they were impressed with the capability of the Army's new vehicle.

"The Strykers are pretty neat vehicles; they move pretty quick through the city," Miller said. "It's a nice vehicle. It's a big vehicle that you can see from the air both day and night and I've been real impressed with the Stryker from what I've seen."

Additionally, LeBlow said the Strykers are even more quiet than a High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV), meaning it is able to quickly sneak up on the enemy.

"In the 101<sup>st</sup> we're used to working with light infantry and HMMWVs," he said. "From that aspect, the Stryker is faster, more agile, when they get to the fight they've got a lot more Infantrymen in the back, and it's a tough, survivable vehicle."

With all the changes they faced this deployment, Soldiers from the battalion said one thing remained the same.

"Going home to your families and re-adjusting to family life is always the best part," CSM Lawrence Mione, the battalion's command sergeant major said.



A 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter takes off on a test flight at Forward Operating Base Key West.

# NEWS

## Adapt and Overcome

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade concluding an unpredictable year in Iraq*

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson  
*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*

MOSUL, IRAQ -- Adapt and overcome.

As their second deployment to Iraq in less than three years winds down, this has been a motto the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade has had to live by.

The battalion left Fort Campbell for Iraq in January, less than a year after it had returned from deploying to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom I. In fact, the last Apache in the AH 64D Longbow Apache attack helicopter battalion had just finished being reset from the wear and tear of the desert environment only a week before the unit left. From the time the battalion left Fort Campbell, only one thing was constant: that nothing at all was constant.

“Initially we anticipated the whole battalion would go to Balad, replace the 18<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade, and support the ground units in and around Balad,” MAJ Ted LeBlow, Executive Officer of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, recalled. “We also thought we would provide assistance in operation Safe Skies over Balad to help deter any indirect fire attacks or Improvised Explosive Devices on the route in and out of Balad.”

The deployment started smoothly enough. The battalion hit the port in Ashyuaiba Jan. 26, and within 24 hours had flown all 24 of their Apaches and convoyed all rolling stock to Camp Beuhring Kuwait. However, after only four days at Buehring, as the battalion was completing its prerequisite training there, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion’s mission took the first of several unpredictable turns.

The battalion received a change of mission in Kuwait sending one company of attack aircraft to Forward Operating Base Kalsu in support of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Expeditionary Marines there. This would take place while the rest of the battalion would move to Balad



Pilots from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade, look over their aircraft before a test flight at Forward Operating Base Key West, Iraq.

and conduct Operation Safe Skies. All of this would happen very quickly.

“Normally, you get a 14-day minimal training plan when you get into theater at Kuwait,” LeBlow said. “That doesn’t count unloading the boat and all that, so usually you’re there between 14 and 20 days, closer to three weeks. From the time the boat hit the ground at port to the time the first aircraft arrived in Balad, were there between five and six days, while still doing all the required training and gunneries, including a convoy live fire, in Kuwait.”

The first aircraft touched down in Balad Feb. 1 and then others headed to Kalsu, providing cover for a convoy of troops and supplies below. Then the split operations would begin. In Balad, the battalion conducted Operations Safe Skies. This was known as a CM2RI mission, which stands for Counter-mortar, Manpad and Rocket Intervention.

“The aircraft would fly to known points of origin that the enemy had used in the past for both mortars and manpads, the most likely coordinates where they would shoot mortars, rockets or manpads,” LeBlow explained. “For the time we were there, we drastically reduced the number of rocket and mortar attacks from previous months, and there were no manpad attacks during that time. We even incorporated IED patrols on the main route in and out of the FOB, and the ground units there also tracked the number of these type of attacks were drastically reduced.”

The battalion used aircraft to deter and eliminate these threats, as well as to support ground forces in Balad. Meanwhile, in Kalsu, the battalion focused on providing direct support, reconnaissance and a quick reactionary force in support of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Expeditionary Marines aligned with the Army’s 1-55<sup>th</sup> Enhanced Separate Brigade. They conducted counter-IED missions, the recon missions as well as maintaining a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week QRF coverage.

After a couple months running missions in Balad and Kalsu, the battalion received another surprise. They were issued orders moving them to FOB Q-West, the same place they had been deployed during their last deployment to Iraq.

“The news we would move came right as we had just got settled in,” LeBlow said. “But once we saw the conditions up here and what the place was like, I think everyone was happy to return here versus staying there. Balad is very crowded and this place is a lot more spaced out with some nice accommodations.”

The battalion arrived at Q-West at the end of March. There the aircraft would be split between Q-West and Mosul Air Field. One advantage the pilots had from last time was knowledge of their area of operations. The battalion would have to once again adapt as this time they were part of Task Force Eagle Warrior, meaning they would be performing their missions with Kiowa and Blackhawk helicopters in a concerted effort. The task force was comprised of a total of 40 aircraft, which patrolled the majority of Northern Iraq.

“We needed everybody to not treat it like last time,” LeBlow said. “Because although the terrain might be the same, the enemy is completely different. If we would have kept the mindset of ‘I’ve been here, I’ve done this before,’ we would have set ourselves up for trouble. Things have changed, where the enemy’s at, the whole situation is completely different, so we told people to treat it that way.”

Pilots noticed the differences in the enemy they were facing.

“I think the first time there wasn’t as much going on for us,” CW4 Charles Miller, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion attack pilot said. “The insurgency wasn’t as organized as it is now. There’s a lot more going on for us this time than after the ground war portion of OIF 1. That’s reflected

by the fact that this time over half of our aircraft received battle damage. We didn't have any that received battle damage in OIF 1."

The battalion conducted missions in Mosul, Key West and Balad, and also set up a Forward Ammunitions and Refueling Point in Talafar. At one time, as they moved to their new location, the battalion's limited assets were split between all these locations and in charge of a task force. They were doing a brigade's job in Northern Iraq with a battalion's resources.

"People just stepped up to the challenge," LeBlow said. "We had junior Noncommissioned officers serving as battle captains, they just made it happen. In every instance they learned everything, and answered the challenge."

At one time, the battalion was running four FARPs while running split operations, in addition to running the Task Force. People were pulled, out of necessity, from their regular jobs to fill in where needed. Some of the cooks and other Soldiers throughout the battalion stepped in as radio telephone operators and were also trained as fuelers at the FARP. The FARPs filled up various types of aircraft, both military and civilian helicopters and airplanes.

"Some of our fuelers had never even seen some of these aircraft, but we were filling up everything," CSM Lawrence Mione, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's command sergeant major said. "If they called in from the air and it needed fuel, we filled them."

Soldiers from the battalion even convoyed with Stryker Brigade infantrymen and built a complete FARP in the desert outside Rawah from scratch. They endured harsh desert conditions with very few amenities in so doing.

"Everyone took on much more responsibilities than might be expected of their ranks, and with no issues, other than learning a new job," LeBlow said. "They ran 12-hour shifts seven days a week; we had no extra people."

One of the reasons the battalion handled the twists and turns of this deployment so well was because of its high rate of combat veterans, Mione said.

"We came over, from the Noncommissioned Officer side of the house, with almost 80-percent combat veterans," he said. "Having that amount of combat veterans in a unit makes a huge difference."

Despite all the adapting and unpredictability of their latest deployment to Iraq, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion looks to end their deployment on a very positive note. The battalion who is spending it's final days as part of the 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade (they will re-align as part of a Fort Riley unit shortly after returning home to Fort Campbell), has been through two dangerous deployments and to date has not lost any Soldiers in combat during either mission. The battalion is slated to return to Campbell in the near future, and despite the fact that about half of the battalion's aircraft have suffered battle damage, everyone in the battalion is hoping they can once again bring everyone home they left with.

"That's been our goal and our prayer and our biggest concern," LeBlow said. "We've been very fortunate to have done what we've done so far and hopefully we can continue this for the next month, and return with everybody. Yeah, we flew a lot of hours, so you're going to have accidents, it's just realistically going to happen, but to be able to walk away with nobody seriously injured and bring everybody home is the most important thing."

# NEWS

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## 5<sup>TH</sup> Battalion Air Assault mission nabs suspected terrorists in Palowado

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson

*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*

PALOWADO, IRAQ -- Pilots from 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade Air Assaulted two teams of Iraqi Army Soldiers to Palowado, Iraq Nov. 9.

Each Iraqi team was led by a U.S. Special Forces Soldier. The coalition forces apprehended three people suspected of emplacing Improvised Explosive Devices throughout the area of operations.



**Walk this way**

An Iraqi Army Soldier (left) and a U.S. Special Forces Soldier (right) with a freshly detained suspect.

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## More 5<sup>th</sup> BN Air Assault photos...



5<sup>th</sup> BN crew gets ready for the mission...



(Above) A 5<sup>th</sup> BN crew chief (left) familiarizes Iraqi Army troops with the Blackhawk helicopter prior to the mission...



(Left) Iraqi Army troops practice getting on and off the helicopter quickly shortly before they execute the mission.

# NEWS

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## Chinook crew makes three-wheeled landing at night

Story by CPT Matt Graessle and 1LT Margaret Nencheck  
*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*



**This 32,000-pound CH-47D Chinook helicopter lost a wheel at a refueling point, causing pilots and crewmembers to work together to land the massive aircraft on this tiny jack for repairs.**

After flying passengers around Northern Iraq for more than four hours, Chinook pilots and Chief Warrant Officers Dave Lawson and Jason Shumate thought their night was nearly over. The two pilots from Company B, 6th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, needed only to refuel at Kirkuk Airfield and make the 20-minute flight back to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Speicher. While taxiing into the refuel point, however, Lawson suddenly felt the aircraft begin to sink back and to the right.

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“When I felt the aircraft rock back, I immediately picked it up on instinct,” Lawson said.

When the crewchief, SPC Joseph Batts, also of Company B, told the pilots that they lost the aft (rear), right landing gear, Lawson and Shumate said they thought it was a joke. The pilots of their sister aircraft confirmed Batts’ claim, causing Shumate to call Kirkuk’s control tower to request maintenance support. At the time, Kirkuk airfield had no available aviation maintenance support. The pilots had to make a quick fuel calculation to determine if they had enough fuel to get back to FOB Speicher.

“I knew I had enough fuel to make it back and still hover for about 45 minutes,” Lawson said.

Shumate made the call back to 6th Battalion headquarters while departing from Kirkuk to inform Company B of the situation. Back at FOB Speicher, SFCs Joe Dibiase and Frank Smith were winding down their night and projecting the next day’s maintenance plan when Company B 1SG Stephen Noton tapped Smith on the shoulder.

“You’ve got work to do.”

Dibiase, Smith, SSG Robert Urvina, and Soldiers from Company D quickly sprang to action. They rounded up a Chinook jack and raced out to meet the inbound, three-wheeled aircraft. Lawson contacted the control tower at FOB Speicher, who arranged for Fire and Rescue vehicles to be on the scene when the aircraft landed. While Shumate guided the aircraft to a 10-foot hover, Smith emplaced the jack under the aircraft. SGT Jason French, the flight engineer, threw down a communication cord so Dibiase could talk to the pilots as they attempted to make the landing.

Using precise control touch, Shumate, still under the aid of Night Vision Goggles (NVG’s), slowly lowered the 32,000-pound aircraft. Meanwhile Dibiase calmly provided instructions both to the pilots and Smith who had the daunting task of aligning the jack with a two-inch wide jacking point.

When asked what was going through his head while the 16-ton aircraft slowly descended towards him, Smith replied, “I was just focused on lining up the jack with the jacking point, and I was glad to know Urvina was behind me in case anything happened.”

Despite the distracting lights of the rescue vehicles, a quickly depleting fuel supply, and the stress of operating under NVG’s, Shumate brought the aircraft to a stable landing on the jack on the first attempt with guidance from Dibiase. After Company D soldiers further braced the aircraft with wood and tires, Lawson executed an emergency shutdown. Dibiase, an experienced Chinook crewchief, mechanic, and now Platoon Sergeant, maintained his calm throughout the situation. That’s because he’s been there before. The Operation Desert Storm veteran assisted a Chinook make a three-wheeled landing 15 years earlier, also in the Middle East.



# NEWS

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## Aviation takes to the ground on Roadrunner mission

Story and photos by 1LT Bridget Deuter  
*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*



### Help from above

Company A, 96<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion along with 2-17<sup>th</sup> Calvary Squadron convoy on Nov. 20, outside of Forward Operating Base Warrior. The convoy was supported with OH-58 Kiowa aircraft of the 2-17<sup>th</sup> Calvary Squadron along the route.

KIRKUK, IRAQ -- As there are no longer any clearly defined lines of battle, combat service support Soldiers, Soldiers who would not normally be out 'on the front lines,' are putting their lives in danger just as often 'front line Soldiers,' such as the infantry. Company A, 96<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion (ASB) is one combat service support unit that has faced danger and adversity, running logistics convoys, known as the Road Runner Express, throughout Northern Iraq.

"All the Soldiers were willing to put their lives on the line on any given day," said SFC Timothy Carswell, Company A, 96<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion.

The Transportation platoon of Company A supported the 2-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron for three months requiring them to ground convoy aircraft parts from Logistics Support Area (LSA) Anaconda to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Makenzie through one of the most dangerous cities in Northern Iraq, Ad Duluyia.

Nearly every Road Runner Express, led by 1LT Sam Hartman, Company A, 96<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion, convoy was hit with small arms fire. On two different missions, the Road Runner Express suffered damages from Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) in Ad Duluyia. But after assessing vehicle damages and one minor personnel injury, the missions were regarded a success.

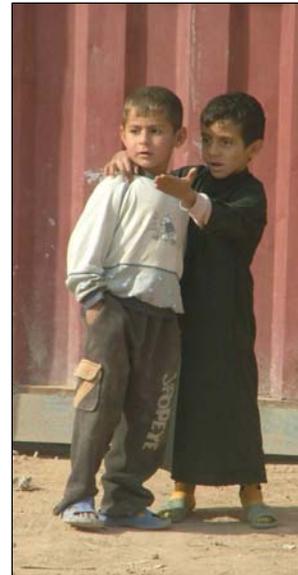
"We knew the dangers involved because that's what we signed up for," added Hartman. "You can bet these troops have the highest morale in the brigade."

On Nov. 16, about 80 Soldiers from Company A, 96<sup>th</sup> ASB, along with two medics, six mechanics, and one communication specialist from other companies throughout the battalion, were tasked with another mission to support 2-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron, this time requiring nearly half of the company to venture out on the roads of Iraq in a 30-vehicle convoy logistics patrol (CLP). Company A was to necessitate support and movement assets for the 2-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry to move from one forward operating base to another. Company A was ready for the challenge.

"We had three days to prepare for the convoy and that's a rough thing for someone who's never been on a convoy," said SPC Shirita Long. "We mounted our weapons, did commo checks, rehearsals and made sure we had food and water while preparing our vehicles."

A consolidated joint effort from each of the support platoons - fuel and water, supply, ammo, and scouts - was necessary to enable Company A to complete the mission. Trucks and troops of Company A convoyed from FOB Speicher down to LSA Anaconda to link up with the Transportation platoon. From there they all convoyed to FOB Makenzie joining forces with the 2-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Upon arrival large containers and vehicles were loaded up and prepared for their move north. The Soldiers of Company A and 2-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry conducted vehicle maintenance and rehearsals, in preparation for the eight hour convoy up to FOB Warrior.

The convoy to FOB Warrior was the most vital part of the overall mission. There were 60 vehicles carrying all of 2-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry's mission essential equipment and vehicles moving through Northern Iraq. The convoy was broken down into two serials of 30



**Local Iraqi children watch and observed the joint convoy of Company A, 96<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion and 2-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron drive through their town on Nov. 19.**

vehicles separated by 30 minutes. Taking so many large vehicles through an area of escalated enemy activity made this a dangerous mission. One serial was led by Company A and the other by 2-17<sup>th</sup> Calvary in a joint effort to move the equipment safely from FOB Makenzie to Warrior.

“There is only one way in and one way out of Makenzie and that is through insurgent-infested Ad Duluyia,” commented Hartman. “You know something’s going to happen. You just don’t know when.”

The 2-17<sup>th</sup> Calvary and 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade, provided a large amount of air support during the convoy. Kiowas and Apaches followed over head throughout the entire mission. In addition to the air support, the convoy was provided with Bradley and Abram tank ground support from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division.

“During the convoy I felt very confident because we always had aircraft support,” said SSG Rodney Williams, Company A, 96<sup>th</sup> ASB. “There was never a time I didn’t see an aircraft flying overhead.”

The overall mission was a success, taking a little over a week and having very little incident. Only once was the convoy fired upon by sniper small arms fire, which did not result in any damage or injury. The 2-17<sup>th</sup> Calvary was moved to FOB Warrior and Company A returned safely to FOB Speicher.

“We had the perfect cast and crew. I couldn’t have asked for any better troops to accomplish the mission,” remarked Carswell.



2-17<sup>th</sup> Calvary Squadron Soldier maneuvers a wrench to load containers on to 96<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion trucks in an effort to move the 2-17<sup>th</sup> Calvary north to Forward Operating Base Warrior on Nov. 20.

# NEWS

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## Aaron Tippin spends Thanksgiving with 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson  
*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*



### Singing and flying

Aaron Tippin (right) hands an autograph to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion pilots during his visit to the “Expect No Mercy” flight line on Thanksgiving Day. Tippin, himself a pilot, seemed to enjoy getting to talk to the aviators, and wore their shirt during his concert that night at the Main Gym.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, IRAQ -- Country music star Aaron Tippin, who crooned such hits as “Kiss This” and “You’ve Got to Stand for Something (Or You’ll Fall for Anything)” spent his Thanksgiving with Soldiers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.

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Tippin started his visit with the Soldiers by eating Thanksgiving Dinner at the Eagle's Nest Dining Facility, where officers from the 101<sup>st</sup> CAB dolled him out some turkey, crab legs, and all the other traditional holiday fixings and more. He didn't do much eating, however, as he was approached by a steady stream of fans in the dining facility seeking autographs and pictures. Tippin signed every one before heading on a tour of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade flight line, where Soldiers from the battalion gave him an up-close-and-personal look at an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter. Tippin, who said he is a helicopter pilot himself, sat in the cockpit and was briefed on the various controls and features of the aircraft by 1<sup>st</sup> BN Soldiers.

While at the flight line, Tippin again made sure every fan who wanted one got a picture and an autograph from the country star. Soldiers brought up guitars, CDs and various other items to be signed while Tippin, donning a black T-shirt with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion "Expect No Mercy" logo on it, signed them all. After spending a few hours with the Soldiers, Tippin departed the area to visit other areas of the FOB before his 8 p.m. performance.

At the flight line, one Soldier shook Tippin's hand and told him, "You're a great American, Sir!" Tippin looked at the Soldier as he walked away and said, "I think you may have that one backwards."



# NEWS

## Eagle's Nest DFAC Thanksgiving Day Shots

SGT Ryan Matson  
*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*



# NEWS

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## A "Purrfect" visit

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson  
*101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade*

Morale was high on FOB Speicher Veteran's Day for reasons beyond the awarding of combat patches throughout the brigade. That's because Soldiers from the 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade were treated to a visit from the "Purrfect Angelz," a group of five young women who performed a song and dance routine at the Main Gym that evening. Before that, however, the Purrfect Angelz took the time to eat with Soldiers at the Eagle's Nest DFAC.

The Angelz are made up of models, former Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders and entertainers from various backgrounds. They made appearances throughout the Middle East as part of a USO Tour. Highlights from the Angelz tour are documented on the FIT TV reality show, "The Gym," on which Purrfect Angel Amber Strauser appears as a castmember.





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# PARTING SHOTS

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## Veteran's Day Combat Patch Shots



### Patch it up

Members of the 96<sup>th</sup> ASB place combat patches on the Soldiers who are serving in their first deployment to a combat zone during their ceremony on Veteran's Day. (Photo by 2LT Viviana Pulido)



### New kid on the block

HHC 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade 1SG Mickelle Penn (right) places a combat patch on the right shoulder of Pfc. Stephanie Descovich, the company's youngest servicemember. (Photo by SFC Antony Joseph)



### **Fly-bys**

The ceremonies featured fly-overs by 1<sup>st</sup> BN Apaches (above) and 6<sup>th</sup> BN Blackhawks (below).  
(Photos by SGT Ryan Matson)



### **Joining the club**

A 6<sup>th</sup> BN Soldier is presented a combat patch by a veteran NCO.  
(Photo by SGT Ryan Matson)