



# THUNDER EAGLE MAGAZINE

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## Night missions

B Co., 7-101 goes to work in the dark

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### 159th Combat Aviation Brigade Units:

HHC BDE



7-17 CAV



4-101 AVN



3-101 AVN



7-101 AVN



C 1-58 ATC



50th MED



563rd ASB



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**Cover:** Chief Warrant Officer Joe Mosher, CH-47 Chinook pilot for Company B, 7-101, briefs his crew before flying a cargo mission to Taji and Kirkuk in the early morning of Jan. 16.

# Putting on the combat patch

## Brigade Soldiers wear symbol of 101<sup>st</sup> legacy



### Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Kevin Doheny 159<sup>th</sup> CAB PAO

At 10:15 p.m., June 5, 1944, 6,600 soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division began taking off aboard 1,432 C-47 transport aircraft from England. Shortly after midnight, the C-47's were over UTAH and the 101st Airborne Division paratroops began hitting the silk.

From that moment on, the Screaming Eagles, past and present, who have worn the ever-famous "Old Abe" patch, have become synonymous with honor and valor in combat.

At the division's activation ceremony in 1942, the Division Commander, Maj. Gen. William C. Lee, observed and said, "The 101<sup>st</sup> has no history, but it has a rendezvous with destiny."

Since that day, the Soldiers whom have worn the Screaming Eagle patch have fought in every major war since World War II, proving they have always met their next rendezvous with destiny. It was the first Division to receive the then 'Distinguished Unit Citation' (now known as the Presidential Citation) for its defense of Bastogne during WWII.

Now with the division back in familiar territory, a combat zone, new Soldiers earn what their predecessors over 50 years ago made possible, the wearing of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) combat patch.

With the division spread out for miles and miles across the urban, mountain, desert and swampy terrains in Iraq, the Thunder Brigade Soldiers of the 159<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade are performing up to

the high standards which come along with wearing the 101<sup>st</sup> patch.

In separate ceremonies in December and January, the patch which dates back to the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division in 1918, was honored again over 88 years later. Combat veterans and first-time Soldiers received the 101<sup>st</sup> patch from their immediate supervisors during combat patch ceremonies.

The first group of Soldiers to receive their combat patches was from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 159<sup>th</sup> CAB. During the ceremony Capt. John Peters, HHC commander, spoke of the lineage and honors of the 101<sup>st</sup> in combat. After Peters spoke, the 159<sup>th</sup> CAB Commander, Col. Jeffrey Colt, also wanted to stress the importance of the Soldiers mission and reiterate the proud history of the division.

The first battalion to receive their 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Patch was the "Wings of the Eagle!" 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Avn. Regiment. Wings Six, Lt. Col. Tony Fish, alongside his command sergeant major, CSM Scott Sowers, handed out patches to company commanders and first sergeants, who in turn handed them out to the respective squad leaders to pass to their Soldiers.

The battalion is no stranger to combat. The battalion's heritage dates back to the Vietnam War and Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield. In 2003, the battalion participated in the longest air assault ever in combat, and while directly supporting the "Rakkasans", 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team of the 101<sup>st</sup>,

**Patch continued on Page 8**



# Big choppers rule the night

Story and photos by Sgt. Susan Redwine  
159<sup>th</sup> CAB PAO

The UH-60 Blackhawk may be the most ubiquitous helicopter in the 159<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, but the CH-47 Chinook arguably has the most versatile mission. That keeps the brigade's only Chinook unit, Company B, 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment, busy and flying.

The mission of the unit is to provide general support to units in theater by flying passengers and cargo in order to keep convoys off the ground and out of the way of IEDs, said Chief Warrant Officer Joe Mosher, Chinook pilot for the company.

"We can do everything from carrying 40 Joes in the back, two humvees, big Air Force pallets, fuel blivets, stretchers, ammo, parts and external sling loads," said Capt. Jeff Winston, Chinook pilot with the company.

When the load is too big or heavy for smaller helicopters, Company B is there to haul.

"We're always there to get the big stuff," Winston said. "Stuff that would take six Blackhawks, we can do with two Hooks [Chinooks]."

The unit, which flies mainly at night – only test flights are conducted during the day – has an

important mission, Mosher said.

"If we don't move passengers or cargo, it means it has to go on the ground and risks and IED attack," he said.

"We're not 100 percent safer, but I think we're saving lives by flying and not driving," he added.

The unit flies nightly throughout the country; a typical mission is between two and four hours long and has about three stops, Winston said. There are usually about two different missions a night.

The challenges of flying at night include the risk of encountering visual illusions and spatial disorientation, said Mosher. Also, since the helicopters fly

without lights on, it's harder seeing other aircraft, he said.

"You have to be more vigilant while flying," Mosher said. "You have to scan your sector to make sure nothing is out there."

Left: A CH-47 Chinook stands ready for a mission. Lower left: Crewmembers for Company B, 7-101 load cargo during a mission. Right: Chief Warrant Officer Joe Mosher briefs his crew on flight plans prior to a mission Jan. 15. Middle right: Crew from B Co. and Iraqi soldiers help load up a Chinook during a mission in Kirkuk. Lower right: A pilot adjusts his night vision goggles during the flight run-up.



without lights on, it's harder seeing other aircraft, he said.

"You have to be more vigilant while flying," Mosher said. "You have to scan your sector to make sure nothing is out there."

The pilots and crews use night vision goggles, which takes practice getting used to. Training progressions using the goggles are required before pilots are allowed to fly missions.

"It takes about 10 flight hours before you get used to wearing NVGs," said Sgt. T.J. Heatherly, Chinook crew chief.

Part of the unit's success is due to the fact that many of the Soldiers have been in the company for awhile, Heatherly said. The Soldiers know each other and work well together.

The unit's cohesiveness is an asset when dealing with other units. According to Winston, the Blackhawk has the reputation of being newer, "cooler", and generally more capable, but the Chinook can still fly faster and carry more.

"We can fly faster fully loaded than they can completely empty," he said.

The nature of the rivalry between pilots and crews of the different helicopters is good-natured ribbing, Winston said.

"We joke with them a lot," he said. "They give us a hard time; we give them a hard time, but it's all in good fun."



# A passion for martial arts

## Officer teaches Karate to Soldiers

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Susan Redwine  
159<sup>th</sup> CAB PAO

Soldiers deployed to combat zones find unique ways to spend what free time they have with limited resources and freedoms; it's just a part of the job. Many use the time to work on civilian education through distance learning, and many use it as an opportunity to improve physical fitness.

For one officer, deployment is a perfect chance to refine his martial arts skills, and to teach others about the martial arts.

Capt. A.C. Wiley, battle captain, 159<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, has a passion for the martial arts – he has a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree black belt in Goju Ryu Karate, a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree black belt in Jujika Jujutsu and a 1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do – and a passion for passing on his



knowledge of the martial arts. He teaches Karate four times a week at the Balad West MWR center's aerobics room.

"I'll continue teaching until I can no longer teach," Wiley said. "But I'll continue studying and learning until I can no longer learn, which means I'll probably be dead."

Wiley said his interest in the martial arts began at the tender age of 6, when he saw his first Chuck Norris movie, saying, "It just looked cool."

His interest didn't waiver until he was finally able to talk his parents into letting him take classes as a young teen. Now, he can claim expertise in two different schools of martial arts and actively studies several others to help develop specific skills.

Wiley said he studies Tae Kwon Do to improve kicks, Judo for throws and Kenpo for hand speed. He said he's also become more interested in Modern Army Combatives for ground skills and plans to study Brazilian Jujitsu when he returns from deployment for ground skills.

"The first thing I do when I move to a new place is get out the phone book and open up the martial arts section," he said.

He then visits as many schools as he can, just to get a feel for atmosphere of each so he can either

become involved in the school, or at least be able to recommend one to prospective students.

However, studying the martial arts is just one area of Wiley's interest. Teaching is also a passion of his.

"I thought about teaching after the first year [of studying martial arts]," he said. "I knew it would take awhile, but knew I enjoyed it and wanted to pass it along."

"Teaching is the best way to learn something," Wiley went on. "You've gotta learn it to know it and relearn it to teach it."

Wiley said he had his first regular teaching job while in flight school in Alabama, but has taught on and off since he first began learning Karate. He noted whenever someone shows someone else something which the person doesn't know, even as a white belt, that person is teaching.

Any time he has taught Karate, he has done it as a volunteer, but a long-term goal is to eventually have his own full-time school, he said.

"It's quite a ways down the road, but it's a goal," he said.

When he found out the 159<sup>th</sup> was deploying, Wiley said he started thinking of the possibility of offering Karate classes.

"I wanted something to do," he said. "I wanted to share the art and personally felt I needed the

experience of learning to run a school.

"I'm hoping that by teaching, I can pass along a love of martial arts to a group of people who may have not gotten into it otherwise. I'm looking to refine my teaching abilities and hope to continue to develop myself as a teacher and a person."

Wiley offers the class Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. He said the number of students in the class varies due to operational tempo, but he averages about seven students per class.

Some students have had martial arts experience, but most are beginners. Wiley said he's flexible and will spend more or less time on specific techniques depending on the needs of the students.

"It's an excellent class," said class regular Pfc. Isaac Obregon, Company A, 563<sup>rd</sup> Aviation Support Battalion, 159<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade. "I love it."

"For this hour and a half, I'm not in Iraq anymore. I'm in his world," Obregon went on. "I completely forget about everything that's going on around out there. When I'm here, I just look forward to class. I live from class to class. It's my time to better myself – physically, mentally and spiritually."



coming here,"

Obregon said. The

workout in the class helps keeps in him shape and flexible for other sports, such as boxing and Muay Thai kickboxing, he added.

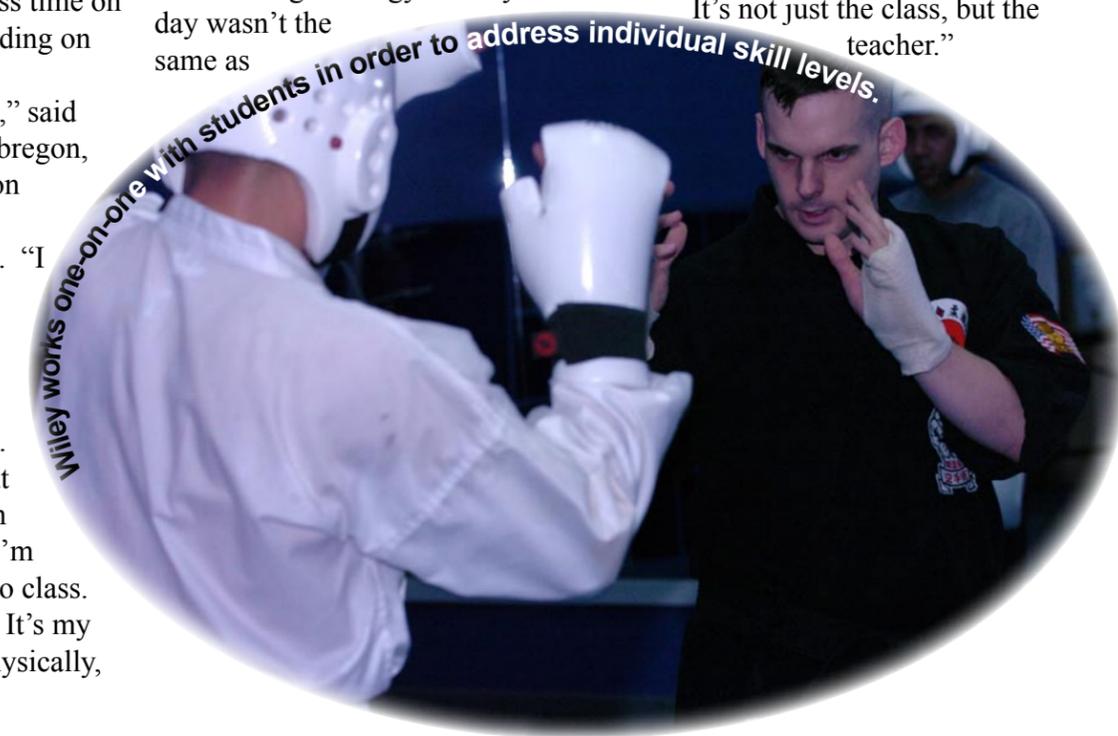
Of the instructor, Obregon said Wiley one of the best teachers he's had.

He said he discovered the class one day after working out by poking his head in the door.

"He's a real good role model," Obregon said. "I think he has a lot to do with why I come back.

"Coming to the gym every day wasn't the same as

It's not just the class, but the teacher."



and also flew to every corner of the country while logging over 10,000 combat flight hours in Iraq.

The next ceremony was for the “Keep Them Fighting!” battalion, 563<sup>rd</sup> Avn. Support Bn. The ASB literally keeps the brigade fighting with signal, medical, air and ground maintenance support, just to name a few. The battalion was re-designated from 9<sup>th</sup> Bn., 101<sup>st</sup> Avn. Regt., just before the brigade deployed and the lineage of the 563<sup>rd</sup> dates back to World War II.

Lt. Col. Lorelei Coplen, battalion commander, talked of the rich heritage of the 101<sup>st</sup> during the Battle of the Bulge in WWII.

Speaking of Bastogne, Coplen said, “The only force available, the only force that could be expected to move quickly and was considered flexible enough to manage independently; was the 101<sup>st</sup>. Lightly clothed, lightly provisioned, and lightly armed, within 24 hours of notification, the 101<sup>st</sup> rapidly cordoned the town of Bastogne, denying the use of the road and rail network to the Germans, and defended the town against eight heavily armed German divisions for over one week.”

The final battalion to receive their patches was the “Eagle Lift!” 7<sup>th</sup> Bn., 101<sup>st</sup> Avn. Regt. Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Steve Toumajan, said during the ceremony, “Today we recognize the soldiers of

Task Force Eagle Lift by officially granting wear of the Screaming Eagle patch on the right shoulder, denoting wartime service with our historic division. Today we all join the brotherhood that began when our division had no history, but only a prophetic rendezvous with destiny.”

Toumajan battalion’s lineage dates back to Vietnam where it directly supported the 101<sup>st</sup> during many operations flying over 45,000 hours in combat, and during OIF I, conducted the longest air

assault ever in combat. The Eagle Lift battalion has a proud heritage and also at one time was the only CH-47 Chinook battalion in the entire Army.

Although there were no helicopters or air assaults in WWII, the respective battalion commanders all had one single theme during their ceremonies, that each of the battalions had a rendezvous with destiny, just as those paratroopers did over 50 years ago.

The Old Abe patch is known world wide. From France to Iraq, the 101<sup>st</sup> patch has been a part of defending freedom and offering a new way of life for those less fortunate.

As the 101<sup>st</sup> was receiving their Distinguished Unit Citation after WWII, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, said of the Screaming Eagles, “You were given a marvelous opportunity and you met every test. With this great honor goes also a certain responsibility. Just as you are the beginning of a new tradition, you must realize each of you that from now on, the spotlight will beat on you with particular brilliance. Whenever you say you are a Soldier of the 101<sup>st</sup> Division, everybody, whether it’s on the street, in the city, or in the front line, will expect unusual conduct of you. I know that you will meet every test of the future like you met it at Bastogne.”



**Soldiers from 7-101 surround the larger-than-life image of the combat patch they just put on during a ceremony Jan. 1.**



*Thunder Brigade Soldiers gather Sundays at the Balad West MSR center to play Magic: The Gathering.*



*7th Battalion celebrated the first 90 days in country with a cookout mid-January. Maj. Jeffrey Poisson, Bn. XO, took time to man the grill.*

**THUNDER**



*Two company commanders stand next to the guidon of the 188th AHC, which dates its lineage to the Blackwidows of Company C, 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment.*



*101st ABN DJV (AA) Commander, Maj. Gen. Thomas Turner (walking with Col. Jeffrey Colt) and Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Grippe stopped by the LSA to check up on the 159th.*



*Spc. Wilfredo Rivera, mechanic for 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, cleans his 240B machine gun.*

**IMAGES**