

AIRBORNE THUNDER EAGLE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 06, ISSUE 4
MARCH/APRIL 2006

Fire Away

**WINGS OF THE EAGLE SOLDIERS
TRAIN DOOR GUNNERS IN IRAQ**

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For questions, story ideas or concerns regarding Thunder Eagle Magazine, please e-mail SGT Susan Redwine, susan.m.redwine@us.army.mil, or SSG Kevin Doheny, kevin.doheny@us.army.mil.

For questions, story ideas or concerns regarding Thunder Eagle Magazine, send mail to:

**Thunder Eagle Magazine
159th Combat Aviation
Brigade
APO AE 09391**

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SGT Kendrick Baker/159th CAB, HHC

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



Brigade Commander:
COL Jeffrey Colt

Brigade Command Sgt. Maj.:
CSM Craig Rinde

Staff Writer:
SGT Susan Redwine e-mail: susan.m.redwine@us.army.mil

Editor/Public Affairs NCOIC:

SSG Kevin Doheny e-mail: kevin.doheny@us.army.mil

Cover: Pfc. James Tidwell, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, fires on a range during the culmination of a two-week door gunner course taught by Soldiers from 4th Bn., 101st Avn. Regt., at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Marshall Thompson)

By Sgt. Susan Redwine
159th CAB PAO

It could possibly be the biggest Old Abe you'll ever see. Measuring 74 feet tall and 53 feet across, with 10-and-a-half foot letters, it dwarfs the average Soldier. Pilots can see it from the air as they fly into Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq. Soldiers pose next to it and send the photos home.

There is a chance the world's largest Screaming Eagle is painted on a hardened aircraft shelter belonging to the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, the only brigade from the 101st Airborne Division located on the LSA, and 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment wants everyone to know they're there.

Specialist James Garner, an all-wheel mechanic for Company E, 3-101, said the idea for the large patch was borne after he had painted a smaller, version on one of the small bunkers in the unit's area. A Soldier in the unit used the area for his reenlistment, and Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Babb, the battalion's command sergeant major, was impressed. Soon after seeing it, he hatched the idea for something bigger.

Garner said he was approached by the sergeant major to paint Old Abe on the side of the battalion's hardened aircraft shelter, large enough to be seen from far away.

Since he had painted the first patch, it fell on Garner to lead the project for the aircraft shelter.

The initial step was to power wash the side of the shelter, which took about a week, Garner said. Once the area was prepared, he drew the outline of the patch by hand. Getting the sketch right took about a week, several attempts and plenty of running up and down the side of the shelter to check for perspective, he said.

Once the outline was complete, about 15 or 20 people from his company, including his commander, Capt. Cindi-Jean Garrett, as well as the sergeant major, got on their hands and knees and finished the painting in two days.

"Specialist Garner was out there from the time he stenciled it on until the time it was completely done," Garrett said. "He definitely spearheaded the operation, but it was definitely a group effort to get it painted."

Whereas almost a whole company painted Old Abe in short time, Spc. Raul Medina from Company D, 3-101, spent almost three weeks working alone on an equally-large image of Air Assault wings on the next shelter over.

Medina said his first sergeant saw him drawing in Kuwait and approached him about doing some artwork when the unit arrived in Balad. First he painted the "Eagle Attack" logo above the aircraft shelter's door, and

Big Old Abe

Eagle Attack Soldiers paint huge 101st patch for all to see



Photos by SSG Kevin Doheny/159th CAB



AIR ASSAULT! The first project was the front of the shelter (far left), but after Garner's Battalion Command Sergeant Major saw how good the large Old Abe looked (above), he asked Medina to draw the battalion logo and the Air Assault wings (right). Both are visible from the sky and many use these to take pictures with, including a battalion picture taken after 4th Battalion's Combat Patch Ceremony (left).



then was asked to paint the Air Assault logo to go along with Garner's Old Abe.

"It was my first time drawing something so big," Medina said. "So I had doubts. I didn't know if I could do it."

Instead of using the freehand technique that Garner used, Medina drew the image in miniature and divided it into grids in order to translate each section into the large version on the shelter.

He said he had some help painting on the letters, but did most of the work himself. Also, the Air Assault patch required shading, a more time-consuming technique that calls for an artistic eye.

"I feel pretty good about it," Medina said. "It came out better than I expected and I've gotten good responses. Everyone says it looks good."

Garner noted the positive effect the paintings have on Soldiers in the brigade.

"It's a good morale booster for the people here," Garner said. "It's a morale booster for me. To me, it's a big accomplishment."

"I think it turned out amazing," Garrett said. "It's awesome. You can see it from so far away. It's such a point of pride for the battalion and this brigade as a whole."

"It's a pride thing for the Division," Garret went on. "It's a gift from us to the Division."

MECHANICS VITAL TO SUCCESS



OTHER 3-101 ARTWORK



(Above Left): The battalion's companies are represented on a sign located just outside the battalion area at LSA Anaconda. (Above Right): This concrete shelter is painted with the battlaion colors and motto. (Below Left): This barrier shows the battalion's 'Air Assault' pride. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) is the world's only air assault division. (Below Right): A smaller version of the battalion's division pride is located inside the battalion area. Old Abe is the division's single-most identifiable image.



*By Spc. James Hunter
MNC-I PAO (49th PAD)*

Helicopters play a major role in the military's mission, providing security, transporting troops, and conducting reconnaissance surveillance and patrols from the sky.

In order to keep the aircraft running and the pilot flying to conduct the military's mission, mechanics are needed.

Aviation mechanics with the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade work day and night repairing and preparing helicopters for various missions.

"When we get an aircraft for inspection and maintenance, we fix everything that needs repaired or corrected, ensuring there is zero damage on that aircraft so when it goes out for its next mission it's going to be safe to fly," said Sgt. Derek Taylor, Company B, repair platoon, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, 159th CAB.

Aircraft have to be structurally and operationally sound, said Spc. Michael Brown, shops platoon,

563rd ASB. During their deployment, the 159th has provided high level maintenance quickly for each unit they are supporting.

The mechanics in the 159th CAB work on the OH-58 D Kiowa Warrior, the AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook, which are all used for general support, base and patrol security and to perform air assault missions.

"Our units are structured around an infantry-based unit, which is what the Army is," Brown said. "Our aviation units are providing infantry support so the Army can accomplish its mission."

Aircraft are repaired based on scheduled maintenances. Different teams are given an aircraft for phase inspection and each troop is assigned an area to inspect and repair.

If a fault is found, then the mechanic repairs or replaces the item. If there is a problem with a major component, such as the engine, rotor or hydraulics system, then the component is passed off to the repair shop.

The repair shop specializes in

repairing the major components of the aircraft. Unlike the repair platoon, who specializes in repairing a specific aircraft, the shops platoon has the ability to fix the engine or rotor blades on each aircraft.

When they receive the part, they completely break it down, repair it, and the repair platoon replaces the part in the helicopter.

Each component has a certain life span, so the shops team tries to avoid any major problems by replacing or repairing it before then.

When faults are found within the communications system, the avionics platoon is needed to fix the problem.

Avionics deals with receivers and transmitters, channels and frequencies, and the Doppler Radar System.

The avionics objective is to ensure the communications systems are working proficiently so the pilots can go forth with the mission, said Spc. Elisha Harmon, avionics platoon, Co. B, 563rd ASB, 159th CAB.

When an aircraft reaches 150 to 200 flight hours, the entire aircraft



Back Together Again: Soldiers from Company B, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, place a CH-47 Chinook rear rotor blade after the aircraft had gone through scheduled maintenance. (Right) Soldiers from B/563rd ASB work on the inside of a Chinook.

is taken apart and repairs are made as needed. The 159th CAB mechanics also deal with unscheduled maintenance, where an aircraft, prior to or during a mission, needs repairs.

They run 24-hour operations, so they can be on site immediately to address the situation.

It's an immediate repair, and in anywhere from just a few minutes to few hours the aircraft is mission capable, said Brown.

"If they have a component fail once they're in the air, it could be a life or death situation," Brown said. "The aircraft is an immediate priority."

The aircraft gets fixed so they have the available air support needed to conduct various missions, he added.

When the aircraft is repaired, test flown and all fine-tune adjustments have been made, the aircraft is ready to fly and continue on its mission, said Brown.



AROUND THUNDER BRIGADE:



259th Re-enlistment: Col. Jeffrey Colt, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade Commander, re-enlists Sgt. Stephen Snedden, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, March 24 in front of the Eagle's Nest at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq.



Runner-up: The 159th Combat Aviation Brigade Women's Basketball Team finished 2nd in the women's post-wide basketball tournament March 13 at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq. The team held the lead until the final minutes of the game.



Returning home: A UH-60 Blackhawk returns to Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq March 30 after a mission earlier in the day, while another crew gathers all their equipment from their aircraft. Blackhawk crews are busy with day-to-day missions which take them to different locations in Iraq.



Opera Non Verba: Kingsmen 06, Capt. Michael Stull, speaks during a memorial service for four former Kingsmen whose remains were found earlier in the year in Laos. The Kingsmen have conducted this remembrance every year since the crew had been listed as MIA.



SSG Kevin Doheny/159th CAB PAO

ARMING AND REFUELING

KEEP 'EM FLYING

WITH MORE THAN 100,000 PASSENGERS AND THOUSANDS OF POUNDS OF CARGO MOVED, THE THUNDER

BRIGADE MISSION GETS COMPLETE BECAUSE OF THE TIRESOME WORK OF THE SOLDIERS AT THE FORWARD ARMAMENT AND REFUELING POINTS

**BY SSG KEVIN DOHENY
159TH CAB PAO**

We all do it. We drive right up the gas pumps in our vehicles, open the gas tank and begin to fill up.

As the fuel raises the needle on the gauge and reaches the large “F” at the top, the handle clicks, we re-hook up the handle to the pump, tighten the gas cap, close the gas cover, pay and drive off.

We do it all the time. It is convenient to drive right up to the gas pump, fill up and head on our way.

What we fail to think about are all the logistical parts and pieces that go along with getting the gas to the pump or how many man hours go into ensuring we have our gas ready for us when we pull up to the pump.

While not quite like a service station back home in the United States, the forward refueling and armament point located at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq, which services all the aircraft the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade has in its inventory, makes the process to refuel and re-arm the aircraft as simple as those pumps back at home.

Soldiers man these refueling points 24 hours a day so pilots can touch down with their aircraft at any time, refuel and be back in the air to continue on with missions in a timely manner.

“We understand the urgency of their mission, and we pride ourselves on being quick and responsive,” said Attack FARP Officer in Charge, 1st Lt. Matthew Hoffman, 3rd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, of the pilots in his battalion. “They recognize how well-trained and professional we must be to keep them safe while they are being refueled in the FARP, and they know if they are in the air, we are out there supporting them.”

It takes coordination from the pilots in the air and the refueling point on the ground to ensure both are on the



(ABOVE) A Soldier puts away the fuel nozzle after refueling a UH-60 Blackhawk at the Assault forward armament and refueling point at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq. (LEFT) The Assault FARP has pumped more than 1 million gallons of fuel into aircraft in a time span of just under six months. The Attack FARP has pumped nearly a half million gallons.



According to Freeland, safety is as essential as getting the aircraft in the air quickly. FARP Soldiers take many precautions during the refuel process.

“Fire extinguishers and Tri-Max fire extinguishers are kept on all the points,” said Freeland. “My guys also wear ear protection, eye protection, gloves, Army combat or flight deck helmets. The purpose of this is to protect them from anything during refuel operations. JP8 is a caustic liquid and will burn the skin and the eyes should a valve blow out or a nozzle give out due to use. These are very real dangers during any refuel operation, and there is zero tolerance for any violation during operations.”

Both Freeland and Hoffman know that their operations are as important as any other in the brigade. Without fuel the aircraft can’t fly. If the aircraft can’t fly, then the pilots can’t even get off the runway.

“The guys on the ground, the infantry and armor Soldiers, rely on our OH-58D Kiowa Warriors and AH-64 Apaches to look out for them, to provide support and assurance,” Hoffman said. “A FARP requires complex choreography between fuelers, ammunition handlers, and armament Soldiers, and can be a dangerous place for aircraft if poorly executed. My Soldiers and the Soldiers of the armament platoon understand this and pride themselves on how well we execute.”

Freeland feels her Soldiers at the FARP are an important piece of a bigger animal. She said they don’t normally know of the aircraft’s mission when they stop to refuel, but she knows by keeping the aircraft in the air, Soldiers are off the roads which eventually save lives.

“We also see the medical evacuation aircraft coming through, and at times, my guys have had to help the medics unload the wounded,” said Freeland. “There are many missions in Iraq, our goal here at the FARP is to execute ours better than anyone else and do our part to support the pilots and the Soldiers who are executing other missions throughout Iraq.”

same page to make the refueling process as quick and safe as possible.

According to Assault FARP OIC, 1st Lt. Laura Freeland, 7th Bn., 101st Avn. Regt., a number of tasks must be completed before a drop of fuel is even pumped into the aircraft.

“The pilots call in for clearance and pad assignment,” said Freeland. “Then the Shift non-commissioned officer in charge assigns Soldiers, they turn on the fuel trucks, ensure all proper safety measures are in place, and all passengers exit the aircraft to a safe distance away from the aircraft. All these tasks are done within a matter of 30 seconds.”

The FARPs at LSA Anaconda have been busy since the brigade transferred authority in Iraq in November. More than one million gallons of “hot” fuel – fuel which is pumped while the aircraft are still running – has been pumped through the trucks and into the aircraft on the Assault FARP. The Attack FARP has pumped close to half a million gallons.

A Day with the original DUSTOFF... Right



Above

A UH-60 MEDEVAC AIRCRAFT AWAITS A MISSION

Right

A MECHANIC ENSURES THE AIRCRAFT IS OPERATIONAL FOR MEDEVAC MISSIONS



TWO 57TH MEDICAL COMPANY TROOPS LOOK OVER THE TAIL ROTOR BEFORE ASSEMBLY

Bottom

ONE AIRCRAFT HOVERS WHILE WAITING FOR ITS TRAIL AIRCRAFT



Right

MEDEVAC BIRDS ARE PREPARED FOR LIFT OFF WITHIN 8-10 MINUTES OF NOTIFICATION





Left

CW3 STEPHEN WILLIAMS PREPARES FOR TAKEOFF FOR A PATIENT TRANSFER

Above

A 57TH MEDICAL COMPANY AIRCRAFT EN ROUTE TO A POINT OF INJURY LOCATION



Above

TWO CREWCHEIFS INSPECT THE FRONT OF THE AIRCRAFT BEFORE A MISSION

Right

SFC. JOSHUA TOUCHTON SHINES A LIGHT ON THE MAIN ROTOR



flight

A UH-60 MEDEVAC AIRCRAFT FROM THE 57TH MEDICAL COMPANY SITS ON THE PAD AT ABU GHRAIB PRISON TO TRANSFER A PATIENT TO ANOTHER MEDICAL FACILITY IN IRAQ FOR FURTHER TREATMENT. THIS STOP WAS THE SECOND OF THREE FOR THE FLIGHT CREW.

inside

A CREWCHIEF FROM THE 57TH MEDICAL COMPANY ESCORTS PERSONNEL FROM THE 10TH COMBAT SUPPORT HOSPITAL AND A PATIENT FOR TRANSFER TO THE AIR FORCE THEATER HOSPITAL AT LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, IRAQ.



Wings of the Eagle

4th Battalion trains door gunners to help out with heavy mission load

By Sgt. Marshall Thompson
207th MPAD

A SOLDIER FIRES THE 240-H MACHINE GUN ATTACHED TO A UH-60 BLACKHAWK DURING AN AERIAL GUNNERY RANGE JUST NORTH OF LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, IRAQ. (PHOTO BY SGT MARSHALL THOMPSON/207TH MPAD)

A SOLDIER FROM A PREVIOUS DOOR GUNNER CLASS FIRES HER M240-H MACHINE GUN AT AN AERIAL GUNNERY RANGE. THE DOOR GUNNERS BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE .762-CALIBER ROUNDS WHICH ARE FIRED BY THEIR M240S (BOTTOM RIGHT)



Photo by SSG Kevin Doheny/159th CAB PAO

Soldiers who volunteered to become door gunners on UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters finished their training in mid-March with a visit to a firing range north of Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

The 4th Battalion of the 101st Aviation Regiment, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, trained the volunteers in a two-week course. When the 4-101st deployed they had enough door gunners, but injuries and mid-tour leave rotations created a demand for more, said Staff Sgt. Paul Valencia, training instructor with 4-101st who has taught three classes like this in Iraq.

Sgt. James Guillory, a computer analyst with the 40th Corps Support Group, said he volunteered to be a door gunner so he could see more of Iraq.

"I wanted the chance to get off the FOB and not be a fobbit," Guillory said. "From the air you can kind of see how the people live."

Valencia said that traditionally they recruit door gunners solely from the infantry because their knowledge of the weapon systems.

Because of the intense battle rhythm of the infantry in Iraq, the 4-101st opened up the job to anyone interested. Recruits learn how to provide security for the aircraft and crew using the 240-H machine gun.

"They're not flying the aircraft, and they're not fixing the aircraft, but they're protecting everyone on board," Valencia said.

Soldiers like Guillory will spend half their time on door gunner missions and half their time doing their regular missions, but others hope to make the position a permanent home. Private First Class Kevin Wingard, cavalry scout now attached to Company A, 4-101st, will become a full-time gunner now that he has completed his training.

"The training went well," Wingard said. "I got a lot out of it. There were a lot of things that I didn't think were included in being a door gunner. There's a lot to this job."

The trip to the range was the first time Wingard had been in a Blackhawk helicopter.

He had flown in civilian helicopters before, which helped him from getting airsick. Not all of the new door gunners was as lucky.

Wingard said the hardest part was learning how to shoot and reload the weapon while flying at high speeds. "It's difficult to load the ammo cans when you're going about 140 knots," Wingard said.

Valencia said the group was looking good, but it would take a few more weeks of practice and experience before they would be functioning at their highest level.

Sergeant Richard Olivas, an ammo handler with the 40th CSG, said he felt everyone in his training group did well despite the challenge of firing a weapon while a helicopter is banking away.

"We know what we're supposed to do," Olivas said. "Protect the aircraft, protect the personnel, and assist the crew chief. That's our job."

Valencia said that there might be another training class in a month.



TO THE 159TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE FRG TEAMS:

EVERY LEADER AND SOLDIER THANKS YOU

FOR ALL YOUR DEDICATION AND THE HARD WORK

YOU DO FOR THE BRIGADE,

WE COULDN'T COMPLETE OUR MISSION WITHOUT YOU!

