

101st Combat Aviation Brigade

Official Publication

No Mercy Eagle Assault Shadow Of The Eagle Trouble Shooters Out Front



Hellcats Dragon Killer Spades Arctic Cowboys Buccaneers

OIF 05-07

WINGS OF DESTINY MAGAZINE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 101ST COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

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From the Editor

As the deployment draws to a close, so too, does my time in the Army and the *Wings of Destiny* magazine. The June and July issues of *Wings of Destiny* are the final two issues of OIF 05-07.

It has been a pleasure, a privilege and an honor covering the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade for the past two years. Writing about the Soldiers here and back home in the 101st has been the highlight of my military career. I hope you have enjoyed reading the magazine during the brigade's latest "Rendezvous with Destiny." Air Assault!

SGT Ryan C. Matson, Editor

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NEWS

Task Force No Mercy – The TEAM in Tall’Afar, Iraq

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson and Sgt. Joseph Scott
101st Combat Aviation Brigade



Expect No Mercy in Tall’Afar

A mural of Task Force No Mercy outside the 1st Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, Tactical Operations Center at Forward Operating Base Sykes near Tall’Afar, Iraq.

TALL’AFAR, IRAQ -- “This is an incredible team we have up here,” MAJ David Kramer, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade Executive Officer said.

Kramer was referring to Task Force No Mercy, a task force comprised of elements from 10 companies and six different Army units throughout the world who have pooled together at Tall Afar to support the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

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On January 15, the first elements from 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, arrived in Tall'Afar to relieve the 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. Task Force No Mercy supported the 1st Brigade, 1st Armor Division until May 19, until the 172nd Stryker Brigade assumed responsibility for Western Ninevah.

The 172nd Stryker Brigade patrols an area about the size of Rhode Island in Northwest Iraq on the Syrian border. In the city of Tall'Afar, which lies roughly in the middle of the area, Task Force No Mercy supports the 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment. The Apaches of 1st Battalion provide an attack asset to the ground units, conducting reconnaissance and surveillance to Soldiers on the ground.

A breakdown of the various units comprising Task Force No Mercy and their particular role within the Task Force follows.



Supporting the Stryker

From left to right, LTC Douglas Gabram, Commander, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation, CW2 Stephen Buckley, Company A, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, SPC Steven Nelson, Company B, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, SPC Byron Pirdo, and SSG Victor Scimeca, both of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, stand in front of an AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter and a Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle June 15 at Forward Operating Base Sykes near Tall'Afar, Iraq. Task Force No Mercy, which consists of Apache helicopters from 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, Kiowa helicopters from 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Blackhawk helicopters from Company B, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, as well as Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles from Second Platoon, Company B, 634th Military Intelligence Battalion (Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle), has been supporting the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team since May 19.

Headquarters, Task Force No Mercy – “With the help of 1SG McGuire in 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, we were able to establish one of the finest command and control facilities of any battalion-level task force in theatre,” Kramer said.

He said the handful of Soldiers who staff the communications, intelligence, operations and logistics sections of the headquarters element are all able to run a fully mission-capable tactical operations center with less than half the manpower usually allotted for such an operation.

SPC Michael Comboy is responsible for handling the task force’s communication needs, along with a handful of other young Soldiers serving on their first deployment.

“It’s a unique situation here,” Comboy said. “We’re supporting a task Force with more units than your typical battalion. The comms section provides tactical communication and automation for the entire task force’s needs.”

LTC (P) Doug Gabram, the Task Force Commander, talked about the dynamic team assembled in Tall’Afar, Iraq.

“This is a true test of the ‘One Team, One Fight’ concept,” Gabram said. “It is active duty and National Guard units coming together to form a cohesive Task Force in a combat environment. The success of the Task Force belongs to the junior leaders and Soldiers commitment to each other and their country. The true test and report card for any aviation unit comes from the Soldiers and commanders on the ground. We are proud to say our ground Soldiers are more than happy to have No Mercy aircraft above their heads. I have often said, ‘You can fake attitude, you can fake enthusiasm, but you can’t fake passion.’ Our Soldiers have a passion for what they do.”

Company B, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade – The “Bearcats” are the Longbow Apache attack helicopter company of Task Force No Mercy. They provide direct aerial attack helicopter support to the 172nd Stryker Brigade, and before that, the 1st Brigade, 1st Armor Division.

The Bearcats have flown about 2,500 flight hours in support of the 172nd and 1st Brigade, 1st Armor Division since the Task Force took effect Jan. 15.



CW2 Matthew Zepp is an Apache pilot with Company B. He discussed some of the various operations the company has performed in the Task Force.

"We get a chance to provide convoy security, cordon and searches, zone and route reconnaissance," he said. "Our role goes as far as helping the Infantry Soldiers find a route to their destination from above, acting as eyes in the sky."

He said the mission has changed somewhat from the battalion's last deployment.

"The enemy this time around doesn't wear uniforms and every person we look at may or may not be the enemy, and until they present themselves, we don't know," he said.

While the company is currently supporting the 172nd, Zepp said they have supported everyone from the 3rd Infantry Division to Special Operations teams, to logistics convoys during their time in theatre.

Company E, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade – The Company E "Executioners" are responsible for running the Forward Ammunition and Refueling Point for Task Force No Mercy. They also provide vehicle maintenance for the Task Force No Mercy motorpool, SFC Tomorris Robinson, Company E and FARP Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, said.

"Anything that comes in here with fuel requirements, we refuel it," Robinson said.

The four-point FARP has pumped over 800,000 gallons of fuel and issued over \$6 million of ammunition, Robinson said. Soldiers at the FARP work two 12 hour shifts a day to provide constant fueling to any incoming aircraft, from C-130s to Kiowas.

"They always must be ready," Robinson said. "About every 30 minutes another aircraft comes in."

During the task force's first three months in Tall'Afar, the Executioners also operated a two-point FARP at Forward Operating Base Nimr (in the Western village of Synjar.) This austere outpost was initially critical in the first phase of Task Force No Mercy's operation in the Western Ninevah Province.

Company D, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade – As the company which is overall in charge of the aviation task force maintenance, the "Dragonslayers" of Company D also handle the maintenance and armament needs for the Apaches of Task Force No Mercy. A small detachment of Soldiers from the company moved to Tall'Afar to support Task Force No Mercy with basic aircraft maintenance, 250-hour inspection capability, and other basic needs to keep Company B flying high.

The armament section rearms and performs electrical maintenance on the aircraft. The maintenance section replaces seals and performs general maintenance on the aircraft. Meanwhile, the shops section works on the engine, power transmission, and airframe, SFC Tommy Daigle, the acting company first sergeant said.

The company also has a quality control section which inspects the work done and a technical supply section which orders the needed aircraft parts. The crews work two 12 hour shifts each day, every day and Company B has never dropped a mission due to maintenance issues.

"I've been in aviation maintenance for 16 years and nine in the 101st Airborne Division, and 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, is the most professional organization I've worked with," Daigle said. "I've got a great bunch of guys – guys who work hard and put in 100-percent every day."



Company C, 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment – The “Outcasts” provide the Kiowa piece of Task Force No Mercy.

“We provide convoy security, aerial reconnaissance, and Quick Reaction Force missions,” Company C first sergeant, 1SG Don McGuire, said. “We pretty much do the same things as the Apaches, except they go further out, we fly in the more immediate area.”

One of the other missions the Kiowas have brought to the table is the use of Scout Weapon Attack Teams (SWAT teams, also known as “pink” teams in other areas of operation), Kramer said. He said the teams couple the precision reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities of the OH-58 with the lethality of the AH-64D.

McGuire said the Kiowas also provide security during No Mercy Watch missions and have been flying at an extremely high operational tempo. He said Company C brought elements of its own maintenance company and headquarters company, to make it a totally self-sustaining detachment under the task force’s operational control.

“Everything’s been working pretty well,” he said.

Bird’s eye view

A Kiowa Warrior helicopter from 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, part of Task Force No Mercy flies near Tall Afar, Iraq.



Company B, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment – The “Arctic Cowboys,” from the Alaska National Guard, are the Task Force’s UH-60 Blackhawk element. MAJ Cheryl Anderson, the company commander, said the main mission of the Arctic Cowboys is battle field circulation – running log packs in the Area of Operations. The company has been flying more than any other UH-60s within the overall Band of Brothers Task Force, averaging 650 flight hours per month. They joined Task Force No Mercy after working with 2nd Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade and 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment in Mosul during the first five and a half months of their deployment.

The company has also participated in numerous Air Assault missions with Task Force No Mercy and the 101st Airborne Division to include Operation Swarmer and Iron Triangle.

1SG Mike Jones, the company first sergeant, said another key mission within Task Force No Mercy is conducting “No Mercy Watch”, in which snap Traffic Control Points are established from the air. This mission is similar to “Eagle Watch,” which is conducted by 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade and its Pathfinder Company farther South near Tikrit. The difference between the two operations is that No Mercy Watch incorporates an AH-64D attack weapons team that provides added security and lethality to the mission. In No Mercy Watch, the Arctic Cowboys transport a team of Infantrymen from Company B, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade in Blackhawk helicopters. The AH-64Ds and Blackhawks conduct a route reconnaissance of Main Supply Route Tampa as well as suspicious houses or areas, looking for smugglers and other suspicious activity. The UH-60 aircraft then land, allow the Infantry to quickly set up a TCP within the area and search suspicious vehicles and homes.

19th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron – The Air Force weather team in Task Force No Mercy provide constant weather briefs to any outgoing flights from the task force.

“We take hourly weather observations and do force and resource protection by issuing advisories and warnings on weather,” CPT Kristian Harjo, the team’s Officer in Charge, said. “We give commanders information on weather to avoid. In the summertime, we do dust watches, monitoring places when dust storms might generate and where.”

The team coordinates its forecasts with Shaw Air Force Base, who watches the area via satellite and generates forecasts for the country of Iraq and tailors them to each Area of Operation.

“We’re the eyes forward,” Harjo said.

G 126th Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Company – The “Griffins” provide unit level maintenance for the Company B, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment “Arctic Cowboys,” and intermediate level maintenance for Apaches and Blackhawks.

The company, which is a National Guard unit based out of Connecticut, is made up of Soldiers from four states – Tennessee, Connecticut, Alaska and Maine – and Puerto Rico.

“None of our states came together until we deployed,” MSG Barbara Pepin said.

The company also includes a Supply Support Activities (SSA) section which includes four Soldiers from 96th Aviation Support Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, and receives all aircraft parts and handles the supply for the task force.

“The SSA has been critical in keeping the Task Force operational, especially way out here away from the main support hub,” Kramer said.

The company works with Company D in providing Apache maintenance, and with Company E in sustaining the motor pool.

Second Platoon, Company B, 634th Military Intelligence Battalion (Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) – The “Nightmare” platoon is responsible for launching, maintaining and navigating the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, the Shadow. Detachment commander is CW2 Steve Schiffli, a Blackhawk pilot from the Minnesota National Guard who stepped into the commander’s role.

“I’m a Blackhawk pilot, I thought I’d assume an air ambulance role, none of us really expected to be doing this,” Schiffli said. “We have Soldiers from every Military Occupational Specialty background in the unit – infantry, tank mechanics, radar operators, you name it. For being a bunch of people thrown together, the Soldiers have done a great job, I couldn’t ask for anything more as a commander.”

At the end of the deployment, the company will have been mobilized for two years, having undergone a year of training on the UAV prior to the year deployment.

The UAV has a number of roles within Task Force No Mercy. It conducts aerial reconnaissance and convoy route reconnaissance, flying at 7,000 feet above the ground, and provides photo imagery for missions. The 14 by 12-foot remote-controlled aircraft is also capable of filming missions such as Air Assaults as they happen, giving a commander the chance to view the mission’s progress in real time.

Because the remote-controlled plane is unmanned, Schiffli said it can fly over dangerous areas without putting the lives of an air crew at risk and gather the same reconnaissance information.

The UAV, which runs off Aviation Grade gasoline, has been instrumental in the capture of several Anti-Iraqi Forces personnel, such as on June 13, when the UAV found a suspect and directed elements of the 172nd Stryker Brigade and Task Force No Mercy to the suspect for his ultimate apprehension and detention.

“Finding the enemy motivates me, that’s immediate gratification for our team,” Schiffli said.



A group of Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, Company B, 634th Military Intelligence Battalion (Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle), prepares to launch a TUAV on Forward Operating Sykes near Tall Afar.

Company D, 3rd Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment – The Company D, 3rd Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment, “Dragons” joined Task Force No Mercy in December from their home station in Grafenwoer, Germany.

“Basically, we do the same thing in the tactical environment as in a fixed environment,” SSG Paul “Pablo” Perez, the company’s Air Traffic Control Chief, said. “We are responsible for running the airfield from the tower, de-conflicting incoming and out going aircraft, anything within our airspace.”

Perez said his parent headquarters has controllers at airfields and helipads throughout Iraq, and that the team works eight-hour shifts, 24 hours a day, continuously.

“The 172nd Stryker Brigade is the ninth different brigade 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade has supported this deployment,” Kramer said. The Task Force No Mercy team mentioned above is capable of conducting a multitude of Army aviation combat missions in Northern Iraq without additional augmentation.

“We are truly a ‘one-stop shop’ for multi-functional aviation capabilities,” Kramer said.



Pumped up

Soldiers from Company E, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, refuel an AH-64D Apache helicopter at the No Mercy Forward Arming and Refueling Point at Forward Operating Base Sykes in Tall Afar. (Photo by Sgt. William Risinger, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade)

NEWS

It's all about precision

Pathfinders, 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade conduct Fastrope Training in Iraq

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson
101st Combat Aviation Brigade



Sliding past the sun

A Pathfinder is silhouetted in the desert sun as he fast ropes out of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade during FRIES training June 19 at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.



Looking out Below

A Pathfinder looks down as he fast ropes from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during Fast Rope Insertion/Excertion System training June 19 at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.

We have all seen Special Weapons And Tactics teams fast rope onto a rooftop in a Hollywood movie. But for the Pathfinder Company, the only infantry company attached to the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, and the pilots of 5th Battalion, 101st CAB, fast roping is not a Hollywood stunt, but a technique they may have to employ on a combat mission.

“We try to teach the Soldiers the fundamentals so they can perform a controlled descent down a rope to insert a team in any operation that has limited access, or anything where we’re trying to gain an element of surprise,” SSG Chad Stackpole, a Rope Master with the Pathfinder Company who led the training with SSG William Clancy, said. “We wouldn’t do this to just go out into the middle of the desert – it would have to be a mission that was well-planned.”

He said the method of inserting Soldiers via a fast rope is called the Fast Rope Insertion/Extraction System (FRIES), and it would be employed in a situation which called for Soldiers to get into a tight spot quickly where the aircraft was unable to land. He said it is one of the Pathfinders essential tasks they must stay current on and conduct training on at least every six months.

The Pathfinders and 5th Battalion air crews conducted the four days of FRIES training in the 5th Battalion area on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, from June 18 to 21. The training certified all the Pathfinder Soldiers, including interpreters in medics, as fast ropers, as well as 5th Battalion pilots as current FRIES pilots.

Stackpole explained the steps leading up to the fast rope from the helicopter. He said that training started with a Rope Master refresher course to make sure they were all are on the same sheet of music, current with the new Standard Operating Procedure.

“Once we finished that, we conducted ground training with the troops, to get them used to the fundamentals of fast roping,” Stackpole said. “We did this before the tower training, to teach them the walk-ins and how to move to the aircraft, teaching them the capabilities, and limitations of fast roping, the time warnings, hand and arm signals, emergencies, and what to expect in the aircraft.”

Following ground training, Pathfinders underwent two days of training on the tower, where they practiced secure lockouts and controlled descents with and without equipment on, Stackpole said.

Even though sliding down a rope may seem like a fairly simple task, the pilots and Pathfinders both said there are many risks to this type of operation and it must be executed properly to ensure the safety of the Soldiers and air crew. The aircraft must be at a stable hover to ensure the fast ropers hit their objective safely. The ropers must be comfortable with moving around in the aircraft when that time approaches. The ropers must also descend quickly but under control, watching the area below them, and clear the rope area so as to avoid landing on top of one another and incurring injury there. Stackpole said this becomes more challenging with the additional weight of the Individual Body Armor.



Tower training

A Pathfinder demonstrates a secure "lock out" to his Ropemaster instructor during tower training June 19 prior to qualifying on fast ropes from a helicopter.



Down the rope

A Soldier from the Pathfinder Company, 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, fast ropes out of a 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade Blackhawk during FRIES training at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, June 19.

The Rope Master must also send Soldiers down the rope at even interval to ensure safety and proper locking techniques and landings. These techniques must be mastered during tower training before the ropers fast rope from the helicopter. The rope must also stay centered on the objective, Stackpole said. He said he tries to get 10 to 12 Soldiers down the rope safely onto the objective in under a minute.

“There are a lot of risks to doing something like this, and that’s why they have this training,” LTC Donald Galli, 5th Battalion commander said.

Communication between the Rope Master and the air crew is also crucial, Stackpole said. Since the crew chiefs are also responsible for maintaining security from possible threats around the area, the Rope Master must also act as almost an extra crew chief, directing the pilots to their precise position above the objective.

“We (the air crew and Rope Master) talk the whole flight and they let us know how far out we are from the objective. That gives us a time warning, and each one means something different to the Soldiers inside the aircraft,” Stackpole explained.

“At the ‘10-minute’ warning, everyone starts paying attention, putting their eyes on the Rope Master. At ‘6-minutes’ they’re prepping their equipment and making sure everything is alright, again, keeping their eyes on the Rope Master. At ‘one-minute’ chem lights are being pumped. Then they are given the command to ‘get ready’, at which point they undo their safety lines. Before they get the command ‘go’, the pilot starts talking to me. Once he gives me the command ‘ropes’, meaning to drop the rope, he’s already at a stabilized hover. The job of the Fast Rope Master then is to ensure the aircraft stays in that one area. If at any point as the Soldiers are fast roping out, the aircraft starts drifting, the Fast Rope Master is responsible for stopping that aircraft and getting it back over the center of the objective, and continue to send the ropers down at that point. He and the crew chief are working hand-in-hand, listening to everything the pilots say on the radio before we cut rope so that we know no troopers below are going to get hit.”



Ready to go

Pathfinders stand ready to fast rope from a 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade helicopter during FRIES training June 19 at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.



Hooked up

SGT William Yates III, Pathfinder Company, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, waits to fast rope out of a 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during FRIES training at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.

Once we finished that, we conducted ground training with the troops, to get them used to the fundamentals of fast roping. We did this before the tower training, to teach them the walk-ins and how to move to the aircraft, teaching them the capabilities, time warnings, hand and arm signals, emergencies, limitations, what to expect in the aircraft.”

By the end of training, Pathfinders had qualified as ropers. They performed six controlled descents from the tower, including one without equipment, one with equipment, a static hold or lock without equipment and with equipment. In the static hold, the Soldier must form a teardrop and demonstrate the ability to hold himself for more than five seconds, Stackpole said, and in the lock, they must be able to hold themselves for 20 seconds, he said. The Pathfinders must execute two descents from the tower in combat stacks properly, and five controlled descents from the aircraft, three during the daytime and two at night, with and without equipment. Once all of these requirements have been met, Stackpole said the Soldiers are qualified as a current roper for six months.

The aircrews also qualified by flying the Pathfinders onto the

objective and holding a stable hover for the insertion. CW4 Troy Mercier, 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, was one of the pilots of five aircrews to qualify during the training. The aircrews conducted several passes over the objective with the Rope Master, practicing approaches, hovers and dropping the rope before Soldiers fast roped from the helicopter.

“This is to get the orientation down and the pattern down that we take to the objective,” Mercier said. “We also work on the calls, the time warnings for the Pathfinders so they know how far out we are. Basically the whole training, on our part is timing, getting everything down quickly. You’re actually pinpointing and the pilots can’t see so we’re

looking at an area just past the target. We hit that spot, and then it's the job of the crew chiefs to call us in to a tighter spot by calling us back, left or right. Once we give the command of ropes, the Rope Master is the one who says whether we're over the target or further fine tune us A few feet can make a big difference when they're coming down the ropes."

Mercier said flying such an operation is much more challenging under Night Vision Goggles.

"There are less references," he said.

Mercier said the instructor pilots qualified first and then qualified the pilots. He said it is one of the numerous tasks pilots qualify on. He said fast rope qualification is a task which requires a greater amount of the ability on the pilot's part. Mercier, a senior pilot, has been qualified on FRIES since 1999.

"I really think this maneuver hones individuals, especially younger aviators because it takes more concentration and it takes more ability than some other tasks," he said. "I think it takes you to the next level as an aviator. There is also a necessity for the mission when you can't find landing zones."

PFC Todd Davis, Pathfinder Company, had never fast roped before the training.

"We learned to use our hands," Davis said. "I also learned that if you do everything right, nobody gets hurt. It's a fast way to get down to the ground."

He said getting the correct form down, and learning to fight against the instincts to do something wrong and properly slow down on the rope, was the most challenging part of the training. He added employing the fundamentals on the helicopter was his favorite part.

"I liked the first time we did it off the bird," Davis said. "The first time you go through and you see if you do everything right and get a good landing, you don't get hurt. I didn't get hurt, I'm still walking."

"It was good training. It's another thing that I know how to do now, that all our NCOs knew how to do. So if we have to do it, I'm confident I can do it."



NEWS

CSM Little's Change of Responsibility

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson
101st Combat Aviation Brigade



Moving on

CSM Keith Little, (left) LTC Michael Miller (center) and CSM Dwaine Walters, all from 6th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, stand at parade rest during CSM Little's Change of Responsibility ceremony June 25th in the 542nd Medical Evacuation hanger on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. CSM Little was 6th BN's CSM since October, 2004, and is moving on to 2nd Battalion, 82nd Aviation Brigade at Fort Bragg, N.C. He was replaced by CSM Walters.



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NEWS

53rd QM Company and 96th ASB participates in NIZ sample testing

Story by SFC Renee K. Williams, United States Petroleum Center and SFC Class Cory Van Ry, 53rd Quartermaster Company, 71st Corps Support Battalion, 101st Sustainment Brigade and 1LT Bridget Deuter, Company A, 96th Aviation Support Battalion, 101st Aviation Brigade



It keeps you running

SGT Jacob Rodriguez and SPC Jose Nieves, 53rd Quartermaster Company, 71st Corps Support Battalion, 101st Sustainment Brigade, take a monthly filter effectiveness sample from the outlet side of a 350 Gallon Per Minute (GPM) fuel filter separator on June 3, FOB Endurance, Iraq.

During the past six months, the 53rd Quartermaster (QM) Company, 71st Corps Support Battalion, 101st Sustainment Brigade, Forward Operating Base (FOB) Endurance, Iraq, and the 96th Aviation Support Battalion (ASB), 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT), Contingency Operating Base (COB) Speicher, Iraq, have been participating in a sample correlation with Defense Energy Support Command-Europe (DESC –EU).

Historically, the fuel supplied to military units in the Northern Iraq Zone (NIZ) has been delivered by contractors from Turkey via Harbour Gate at the Turkey-Iraq border. The contracted fuel tankers may spend up to two weeks at Harbour Gate border crossing awaiting a customs release into Iraq. During this time, security seals that are placed on the manhole cover at the top of the tankers and the fuel issuing lines are removed and the tankers are inspected by customs officials. Once the fuel tankers have completed the inspection process, a new seal is attached to the manhole cover and issue lines.

Each driver has corresponding paperwork for their fuel tanker stating type and quantity of fuel to include seal serial numbers. However, the new seals are not documented on any of the driver's paperwork. By not documenting the new serial numbers, some drivers have resorted to pilfering and selling a portion of the fuel cargo to the local civilians to acquire extra money. To make up for the volume sold, the driver puts debris and water in the fuel tanks, which contaminates the fuel.

In order to ensure quality fuel is being delivered after it is loaded into the contracted tankers, the Soldiers in the 53rd QM Company conduct a Type C test on each fuel tanker delivering fuel. The Type C test consists of drawing an all-level sample and performing an American Petroleum Institute (API) gravity and visual test. By conducting these tests, the 53rd QM Company has been able to identify fuel tankers that are delivering contaminated fuel. In a few occurrences, up to 70% of the fuel in the fuel tankers has been replaced with water. Drivers that are delivering contaminated fuel are returned to Harbour Gate with the contaminated fuel.



Checking it out

SPC Ehi Mackay and SPC Paul Williams, Company A, 96th Aviation Support Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, pose outside the 96th ASB Petroleum Quality Analysis System (PQAS) on May 31, COB Speicher, Iraq.

The U.S. Army Petroleum Center (USAPC) mandates the 53rd QM Company and 96th ASB fuel testing and tracks the results. SFC Class Cory Van Ry, 53rd Quartermaster Company, 71st Corps Support Battalion, 101st Sustainment Brigade, randomly draws five all-level samples from five separate fuel tankers delivering fuel to FOB Endurance. After conducting a visual test for debris and water, the samples are then sent to SSG Melvin Floyd, 96th ASB Petroleum Quality Analysis System (PQAS) Lab NCOIC, at COB Speicher, for Type B-3 testing, which can pinpoint what contamination is in the fuel.

The 53rd QM Company sends a copy of the driver's Customs Material Release (CMR) to USAPC-Quality who forwards the CMR to DESC-EU-Quality. DESC-EU-Quality then provides USAPC-Quality a copy of the Iskenderun, Turkey, Laboratory analysis report for each storage tank that had been used to fill the Turkish tankers that had samples drawn by the 53rd QM Company. The USAPC Quality team will then conduct a thorough analysis of both the PQAS and the Iskenderun laboratory's test results. This will detect any contamination occurring during the fuel transport. The overall correlation process between the two labs can take up to three weeks. 96th ASB PQAS team began sampling and testing the Turkish fuel in January and is conducted on a monthly basis. Beginning in June, samples will be drawn and tested weekly.

By conducting the sample correlation between the two labs, the 96th ASB PQAS was able to have its testing results validated. The PQAS is the Army's new Petroleum Laboratory. Since its deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the 96th ASB PQAS has been validated with the

Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR) Petroleum Lab, LSA Anaconda, Iraq, and the 603rd ASB, 3rd Infantry Division, PQAS at Camp Taji, Iraq, prior to their redeployment. The PQAS has also been validated with a DESC-EU contracted petroleum lab, confirming that the 96th ASB PQAS can reproduce similar test results as the fuel tested at a contracted DESC-EU Lab, which is the primary objective with fuel testing in a deployment environment.

The correlation reports have had much visibility in the Army petroleum community. The

petroleum agencies have an interest in not only the quality of the fuel being delivered in Northern Iraq, but also how the PQAS stands up against commercial labs. The 96th ASB PQAS team has been proven worthy of such distinction as being the first Army Tactical Lab participating in such a sample correlation. Based on these reports, the USAPC has now expanded this correlation program throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, to include KBR labs and other service labs. Credit must also be given to the 53rd QM Company because they support in obtaining the samples and forward the samples to the 96th ASB PQAS team.



Conducting Analysis

SSG Melvin Floyd, Company A, 96th Aviation Support Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, prepares to conduct a fuel sample in his Petroleum Quality Analysis System (PQAS).

NEWS

96ASB delivers supplies

The 96th Aviation Support Battalion conducted a humanitarian mission to the village of June 12 by the 96th Aviation Support Battalion. Below are some photos from the latest visit. The 96th ASB has been rendering aid to nearby villages and schoolhouses since it took over the mission from the 42nd Infantry Division in September.



NEWS

Effects Based Operations at the Aviation Task Force

Story by CPT Brad Winklesby and MAJ Hank Taylor
2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment



Looking out for each other

A Soldier from Company C, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, approaches a town near Kirkuk, Iraq, as a Kiowa Warrior helicopter from 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, patrols the area surrounding the village.

"May God have mercy upon my enemies, because I won't." - General George Patton Jr.

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The 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment is conducting attack, reconnaissance and security operations in direct support of the 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in Kirkuk, Iraq. In order to effectively nest the Squadron's effects with the ground commander's desired endstate, the Squadron participates in the BCT's effects working group conducted weekly. Properly conducted effects working groups are a blend of targeting groups, non-lethal effects conferences and fire support coordination meetings. Each portion of the staff brings their own assets to the table and it is at these working groups that these limited assets are focused and synchronized in order to determine and engage the High Payoff Targets (HPT) essential to the success of the BCT and partnered Iraqi security forces operating within the 1BCT area of operations.

Effects based operations (EBO) utilize the targeting methodology in the Field Manuals. Targeting is ensuring that the right target is attacked (decide) at the right time (detect) by the right asset (deliver), achieving the commander's intent or desired endstate (assess). The priority of effects directed by the Brigade commander drives the EBO process. The commander's guidance and priorities are integral to the development of the products utilized in a fully functional effects working group. Using the Brigade commander's priority of effects as a basis, the Squadron commander then develops his priority of effects, making sure that they are properly nested. These effects working groups are generally chaired by the Brigade Executive Officer at the Brigade level and the Squadron XO at the Squadron level.

Decide: The squadron staff recommends what High Priority Targets should be engaged, in what order, by what means, and the effect desired. Detect: The S2 takes the lead on detecting/influencing the HPTs, and recommends what means should be utilized to detect/influence them and how long they should be engaged. Deliver: The staff produces a Target Sync Matrix (TSM) that shows when the target should be engaged, the desired effect on the target, what system of engagement should be used (lethal, non-lethal or combination). It also allocates the resources to accomplish the engagement. That is, which unit is engaging the target, the number and type of rounds to be utilized (lethal)/the IO theme (non-lethal) and how the target is going to be tracked in order to assess the effect of the engagement. Assess: Lethal engagements are easily assessed. Non-lethal engagements are more difficult. Non-lethal effects can be subjective and may not be able to be measured right away. Measures of performance (was the engagement completed) and measures of effectiveness (how successful was the engagement) are two ways to assess the effects on non-lethal targeting.



On the prowl

A Soldier from Company C, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, pulls security in a town near Kirkuk, Iraq, as a Kiowa Warrior helicopter from 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, patrols the area surrounding the village.



In order to prepare for the Squadron effects working group, the Squadron S2 shop consolidates enemy activity by time and location from the previous Effects Tasking Order (ETO) cycle. The S2 shop then analyzes the various enemy attack methods and the Squadron's effectiveness in achieving the desired effects from the previous ETO cycle. For instance, IEDs are a common threat in the Iraqi Theater of Operations. For IEDs, the S2 looks at the time, place and effectiveness of IED detonations and discoveries in the area of operations. They then either confirm the HPT list for IEDs based on the Squadron's effectiveness or modify it based on a shift in location, time, location and type of enemy activity. This analysis occurs with all of the Squadron's desired effects. The HPT lists are then finalized for the next ETO cycle, based on this historical analysis as well as predictive analysis. This allows the Squadron planners

to focus the Squadron's combat power at certain NAIs at critical times in order to achieve desired effects. The planners also are charged with synchronizing our operations with the ground battalions in AO Bastogne, as we share some of the same effects. This includes synchronizing the UAV coverage schedule with the Squadron ISR plan. This is to minimize overlap of reconnaissance assets over the same NAIs. These HPT lists are living documents too, so as the time and location for enemy activity changes, the Squadron modifies its scheme of maneuver accordingly. The planners then produce daily and weekly synch matrices, which consolidates R&S missions, deliberate air missions and ground operations onto a single document. The weekly synch matrix shows major muscle movements for the Task Force's players while the daily synch matrix provides each aircrew to be briefed with their task(s) and purpose(s) for their R&S period. When the aircrew is briefed, their mission card includes their task/purpose, NAIs to be covered, as well as the indicators and warnings to report in the AO. This process is proven effective, resulting in numerous IEDs discovered, IED emplacements and triggermen captured or killed, caches located and exploited, and enemy activity interdicted. It allows us to get inside the enemy's decision making cycle and prohibits him from keeping the offensive.

Utilizing the effects working groups have been an integral part to the success of the Out Front Squadron and the Bastogne Brigade. Understanding the priority of effects desired by the 1st BCT Commander and knowing the HPTs allow the Squadron to begin with the endstate in mind and nest our desired effects with his. Therefore, we can build our missions in order to place our combat power at the proper place and time on the battlefield, totally integrated and synchronized with the rest of the BCT's numerous combat enablers. This multiplies the effectiveness of each OH-58D Scout Weapons Team that departs FOB Warrior in order to support the warriors of the 1st BCT.

CPT Brad Winklesky is the Commander of A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment. MAJ Hank Taylor is the Squadron Executive Officer, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT). Both are currently serving in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

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NEWS

1-10 Attack Aviation: Watching Mosul From Above

Story by SGT Ryan Matson, photos by SGT Ryan Matson, 1-10 Attack
101st Combat Aviation Brigade



Keeping a lookout

An OH-58D Kiowa Warrior armed reconnaissance helicopter from 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment flies low over the city streets of Mosul, Iraq, looking for suspicious activity. The 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment "Dragons" have logged over 17,000 hours flying over Mosul in support of the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team since October, 2005. (photo courtesy of 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment)

Flying over the skies of Mosul, Iraq, just a few hundred feet above the ground, are the pilots of 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment. They fly day and night, looking for suspicious activity, and working in direct support of their infantry counterparts patrolling the city on the ground, the 172nd Stryker Brigade.

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The "Dragon" Battalion is an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior armed reconnaissance helicopter battalion from the 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y., which has been attached to the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade in support of Task Force Band of Brothers, the task force patrolling Northern Iraq. While the remainder of the 10th Mountain Division went to Afghanistan, 1-10 Attack has been assigned where its Kiowa Warrior assets can be utilized best, patrolling the city streets of Mosul.

MAJ David Bingham, the battalion's executive officer, explained how the battalion ended up in Mosul.

"Originally, it looked like we'd replace 2nd Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade in Key West, Iraq," Bingham said. "They were in direct support of the 172nd Stryker Brigade there. We skipped the usual stop at Kuwait and flew straight to Q-West. At the time, the big focus was on the elections in the December, 2005, timeframe. Then the assets became needed elsewhere. For awhile, we were split in three locations and had Forward Arming and Refueling Points operating here in Mosul, as well as in Q-West."

The Battalion started arriving in Mosul in October and was split between Mosul and a company at Tall'Afar, Iraq by February. Since October, the pilots have logged roughly 17,000 hours in and around Mosul. The battalion also has a company at Forward Operating Base Sykes near Tall'Afar, Iraq, which patrols the area there as part of Task Force No Mercy with 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade.

During the first three months of their deployment to Iraq, 1-10 Attack patrolled the Mosul area with the Apache attack helicopters of 2nd Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade. Together, the two aircraft worked in what are known as "pink teams", an old term from the Vietnam era in which an attack aircraft flies in the skies high above the area, and a scout helicopter maneuvers lower, using its capabilities to watch the city streets below.



**Coming to
your city**

**An OH-58D Kiowa
Warrior helicopter
takes off from
Mosul Air Field in
Iraq June 28 to fly
over the city.**

"I loved it (flying in pink teams)," CW2 Steve Workman, a pilot with Company A, 1-10 Attack said. "You have a pure gunship above us, what better thing is there to cover us?"

The battalion executes a variety of missions in the Mosul area, Bingham said. The primary mission, of course, is working in direct support of the 172nd Stryker Brigade.

"We kind of live for that 10 or 15 minutes of excitement when the ground guys call us up with something to do," Company A pilot 1LT Jared Sutton said. "You get pumped up to help them out."

"Being there for the ground guys is really what it's about for us," Workman added.

"If there's a patrol in the city, we want to be overhead and support those guys no matter what they're doing," Workman said. "If they're waiting on the Explosive Ordnance Team to show up to remove an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), we'll stay overhead and support those guys. We still get a few deliberate missions like cordon and searches or cordon and knocks throughout the week. Or if not much is going on, we might be doing route recons."

"We (1-10 and the 172nd) have a pretty good relationship," said CW3 Dean Leasure, an Alpha Company maintenance test pilot. "They like us being overhead when they're on the ground and especially when they're dismounted, and we like them on the ground when we're flying around." He said it is a mutually supporting relationship that increases the effectiveness and security of both of the combat systems.



A lot to look over

A shot of one of the more densely-populated areas of Mosul, Iraq. The 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment "Dragons" have logged over 17,000 hours flying over Mosul in support of the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team since October, 2005. (photo courtesy of 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment)

The pilots added that much like a policeman on patrol, they have no real "average" day. Bingham said the Kiowa's will provide security for convoys. If a vehicle breaks down, the Kiowa is on hand to provide security from above. The Kiowa will also look for suspicious activity on the ground, such as people digging or weighted down vehicles, as well as suspicious things that could be IEDs and call them in to the Stryker brigade below. They have found several IEDs this way, Bingham said.

"Mosul's the second largest city in Iraq, with a population around 1.8 million people," Bingham said. "There's a lot of clutter in the city, so it's a challenging task looking for things that aren't supposed to be there."

During IED attacks, the Kiowa teams will look for the triggerman responsible, Bingham added. Just the presence of a Kiowa in the air will stifle many possible attacks, the pilots said.

The pilots will also support Military Police units and coalition training advisors who work with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police.

"Us being overhead is a HUGE factor," Company A pilot CW2 Brian Parks said. "The enemy really doesn't do a whole lot when we're overhead. The ground guys will tell us they're taking fire and as soon as we roll over top of them, it's done."

Another day, the pilots may be providing security for a Medical Evacuation helicopter transporting wounded Soldiers to a treatment facility, Sutton said.

Besides the variety of the missions, although the pilots acknowledged flying so much can become repetitious, it can also be enjoyable, Leasure said.

"For me, it's almost like we're not really in the desert sometimes," he said. "Of course we are, but you've got the river that runs through here, the trees and the green grass. It's really nice in the spring and the winter, you've got green hills all around. I was in Baghdad for OIF One, and it's about 10 degrees cooler here, so I'll take every degree I can get!"

Because the Iraqi Forces are taking more and more of a role in the patrols of Iraq and its cities, the pilots said they are flying a little less than they did at the beginning of the deployment, but still an average of four to six days a week.

After all this time in the air, the pilots who were new at the beginning of the deployment said they all have picked up invaluable experience and lessons learned.

"I had zero experience coming over here, I was fresh out of flight school," Workman said. "I've tripled my flight time over here, made pilot in command and got all the experience of working with the ground guys. It pretty much shaped my career. This experience is irreplaceable, what I've learned over here."

"You can't replicate that in the rear," Parks said.



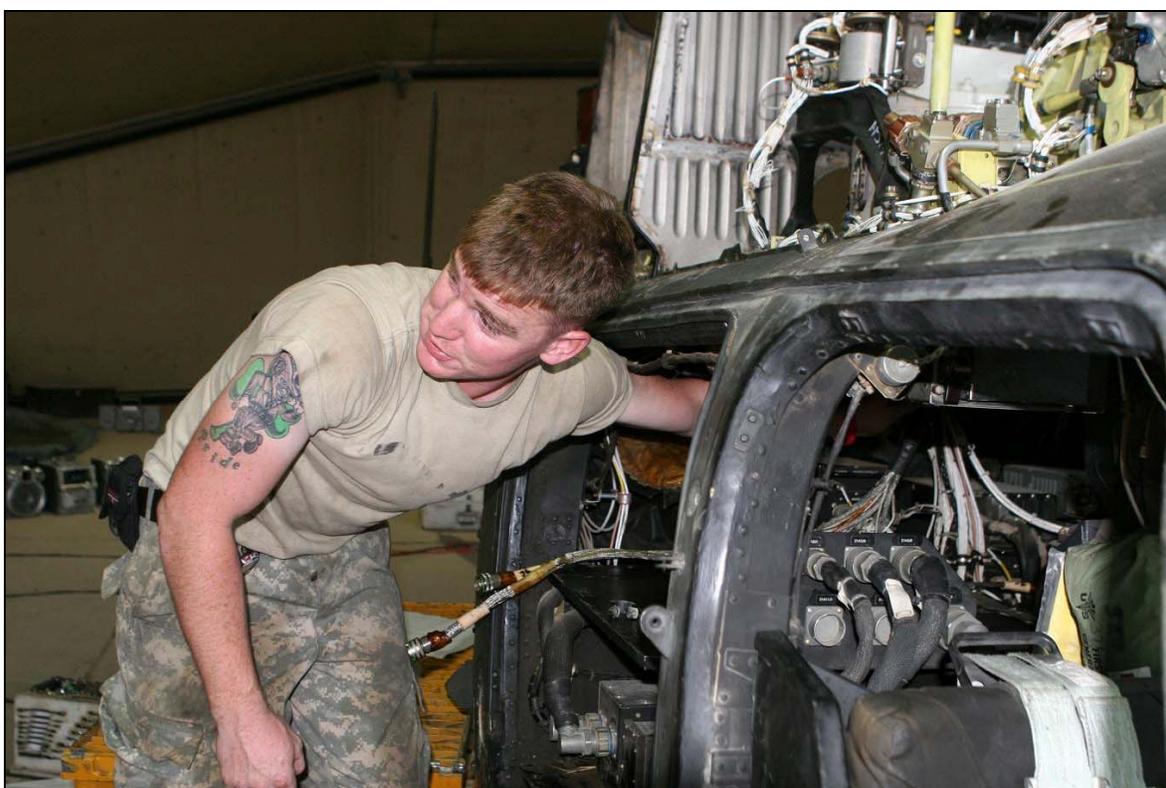
NEWS

Witchdoctors break records

1-10 support crew keeps helicopters fueled, in the air

Story and photos by SGT Ryan Matson

101st Combat Aviation Brigade



Recordbreaker

PFC Joshua Boyle, Company D "Witchdoctors", 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, works on a Kiowa helicopter at Mosul Air Field, Iraq. Boyle and his fellow mechanics recently set new standards on quick maintenance for Time Between Overhauls.

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When 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, arrived at Mosul Air Field nearly a year ago, their maintenance area was an empty ramp.

Together, with the help of a crew of Soldiers from 96th Aviation Support Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, the Soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, set up a large maintenance area. They set up two maintenance tents, moved in all their tools, and were able to relocate unused buildings from throughout the airfield to use in their new home. Since that time, they have established some new standards in fast, quality maintenance work.

“New TBO requirements were established for maintenance,” LTC Doug Ziemer explained. “TBO stands for, Time Before Overhaul, meaning the time an aircraft can fly before certain components on the aircraft are replaced or undergo maintenance. Since we are flying in a rather aggressive style over here, the demands on the aircraft are higher, meaning the time between overhauls was decreased.”

The new time limits did not phase the 1-10 maintenance crew. In fact, they adjusted in record time, becoming the first Kiowa maintenance team to finish maintenance under the newly-emplaced TBO requirements. Ziemer said the team finished in about 75-percent of the allotted time, with all work to standard. For this accomplishment, the mechanics in the company all received Army Achievement Medals.

PFC Joshua Boyle, Company D “Witchdoctors”, 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, is a Kiowa crew chief responsible for performing general maintenance on the battalion’s helicopters. He explained some of the many components changed during overhauls.

“We change the strength springs, strength spring mounts, side beams, transverse beams, quarter mounts, engines,” he said. “I like learning and getting my hands dirty.”

He said that as opposed to breaking down the entire aircraft in phases that may last two weeks as in Blackhawk, Apache and Chinook helicopters, Kiowas undergo a progressive phase of maintenance in which they replace components every 100, 200 and 600 hours.

Engines, which are made by Rolls’ Royce, are swapped out after every 600 flight hours. The mechanics said they will typically replace one engine a week, which can be done in a day to a day and a half, they said.

A combination of mechanics work on the helicopters, including the crew chiefs, specialized engine, hydraulics, avionics, and transmission mechanics. They work together as a team, with the crew chiefs performing the general maintenance and the other mechanics lending a hand in their particular areas of expertise. They work on maintenance shifts around the clock, seven days a week.

“It’s a fun job,” SPC Anthony Grieve, a Witchdoctor mechanic from Syracuse, New York, said. “We do a lot of the same things, big and little jobs, but every day is different.”

The Soldiers have also been busy over at the Forward Arming and Refueling Point, where aircraft are armed and refueled.

“We pump 10 to 15,000 gallons of fuel a day,” SPC Willie Jackson, Company E, 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment. “We do everything that lands at Mosul Air Field – Chinooks, Kiowas constantly, Apaches, and all fixed wing aircraft that come in here like the Sherpas (Russian planes).”

The six-point FARP has three pads Soldiers man the FARP in three eight-hour shifts running around the clock.

“We’ll be in here playing a video game or hanging out, but we can hear them come in and feel our building shake, or they’ll call in about 20 minutes out,” Jackson said.

“There’s really good communication between the pilots and us. Either way, by the time they get here we’ll already be outside.”

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He and SPC Richard Gales, of Hammond, Louisiana said they enjoy responding to a constant flow of aircraft into the FARP and refueling them hot, or as they run.

“It’s the rush of responding to everything coming in that I enjoy,” Gales said.

“You’ve got to be alert, the birds are coming,” Jackson said.

The Soldiers estimate that they have pumped round 800,000 gallons of fuel so far this deployment.

Also at the FARP, Soldiers arm the battalion’s Kiowas and other aircraft. The armament specialists split time between loading ammunition on the FARP and working on the Kiowa’s weapons and avionics systems in the hangers.

“I like working at both locations about the same,” SPC Frank Mix said. “When you get tired of working at the FARP, working in the hangers is a completely different story.”

Mix said they load about 35,000 rounds a week. They arm .50 caliber machine gun rounds, hellfire missiles, and 2.75 inch rockets.

“I remember loading 37 rockets, three hellfires and over 1,000 rounds on Christmas,” Mix said. “As far as the FARP goes, it’s like a NASCAR pit crew, we’ll time ourselves as to how fast we are, because there are times where you have troops in contact and you know lives depend on what you do.”

The training to become an armament specialist is no easy chore, either, SPC Marcus Thornton, from Concorde, N.C., said. He said it spans 33 weeks and requires Soldiers to have an in-depth knowledge of the electronics and weapons on a Kiowa.

“If it’s not the engine or the airframe, it’s us,” Thornton said.



All clear

SPC Marcus Thornton, an armament specialist with 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, ensures the .50 caliber machine gun on a Kiowa Warrior helicopter is clear at the Forward Arming and Refueling Point on Mosul Air Field, Iraq, June 29.

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PARTING SHOTS



Dancing Queen (and king)

SGT Tasalaotele Siler (right picture), Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, dances while her Samoan admirers adore her during the girl's Samoan Siva dance as part of the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade Asian Pacific Month Program May 26 at Destiny Chapel on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. (left) CW2 John Weyrauch, Company C, 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, front, does his version of a ceremonial dance during the program.

No Mercy Tribute

1SG Brian O'Leary, Company D, 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, reads the poem "Freedom Isn't Free," during the battalion's twilight Memorial Day ceremony at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. The "Expect No Mercy" Apache attack helicopter battalion has been flying missions in support of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team since arriving in Iraq in September.

