

Crossed Sabers

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"Telling the First Team's Story"

Friday, March 17, 2006

Flying in Warmth to Those in Need

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs

HANGARAI, Pakistan – Two-thousand pounds was no heavy chore for Company B, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

The unit, part of 1st Cavalry Division aviation troops who make up Task Force Quake II, teamed up with DHL, a prominent package delivery company and an Australian SA-70 Black Hawk team to bring clothing to the people of Hangarai, whose village was devastated in the aftermath of an earthquake last October.

The mission was to fly a CH-47D Chinook full of clothing, provided by DHL, and three of the ten DHL employees from Chaklala Air Base to a tiny village tucked into the expansive mountain ranges of Pakistan. The other seven employees



(Photo by Spc. John Payne, 1st ACB)

Villagers of Hangarai, Pakistan line up in groups to receive clothing collected by DHL, a prominent package shipping company.

were taken by the Australians, said Spc. John Payne, crew chief from Co. B.

First Team Chinook crews have flown many missions since arriving in Pakistan,

but what made this one different is they did

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Engraving Memorial Memories



(Photo by Spc. Colby Hauser, 1st Cav. Div Public Affairs)

Lt. Col. Lawrence Holmes (right), 1st Cavalry Division engineer, and Joe Phipps (center), owner of Phipps Memorial, watch Jason Oliver (left) put the finishing touches on a section of the 1st Cavalry Division Operation Iraqi Freedom II Memorial Mar. 8 at the Phipps Memorial warehouse in Waco. The memorial is slated to be unveiled April 4 at a ceremony on the First Team's Cooper Field.

Man On The Street

What is it like being a female Soldier?

Photos by Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs



Maj. Angie Holbrook
Headquarters Det.,
15th Personnel
Service Battalion,
1st Cav. Div.

"I love it. Women in the Army get to do the same things the men do. We get to go on convoys, but we also have to clean out conexs too. The Army is fair and fair is a good thing."

"I do not think of myself as a woman in the military. I'm a soldier and an officer that just happens to be a woman. I am proud that as a woman I can serve my country, but that's only because of the very strong women who have gone before me."



Pvt. Frances Barry
Co. B, 1st Brigade
Special Troops
Battalion, 1st Cav.
Div.

"It's an unforgettable experience. And from the time women could not be in the military to now, a lot has changed. In the military, women are going further than we thought we could."



Sgt. Constance Smith
Headquarters Co.,
Division Special
Troops Battalion,
1st Cav. Div.

Mom Rising to Army Challenges

By Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Although challenging, the life of a single parent in the Army can be rewarding. That's how Spc. Samantha Bates sees it. She's a full-time Soldier and a single mom.

Bates works as a quartermaster chemical equipment repairer with Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, but also strives to meet the needs of her two sons - 11-year-old Shane and 8-year-old Trevor.

Like every other Soldier, Bates' day starts early, but her boys have to get moving, too. When she gets up and ready for physical training at 5 a.m., Shane and Trevor get up and prepare for school. After returning from PT, the kids are off to school, and mom heads to the motor pool.

Although her schedule is tight, Bates said she wouldn't change a thing.

"I love being a single mom and I wouldn't give it up for the world," she said. The kids go to Montana for the summer months to stay with their father, but

she does everything for them the rest of the year.

She says being a single mother is not any different from being a parent with a spouse.

"If their father was here, I would still do the same things I do for my boys now, not much would change," Bates said.

She spends as much quality time with her kids as possible, when she gets home from work she hits the board games and books with the boys. Afterwards, she stirs something up for dinner for her two boys and gets them ready for bed.

"I do all of this and get up the next morning to do it all over again," she said.

Being a Soldier and a mother can be hectic at times, but Bates said the Army life works for her and her family.

"Stability and knowing we'll always have a place to call home is one of the main reasons I reenlisted in 1999," she said. She called her decision to stay in the Army "one of the best decisions for my family."

However, there is a downside to being a Soldier.

"Being deployed is really hard because of the time that we lose with our loved ones," Bates said. She completed a one-year deployment to Iraq, returning in early 2005. After that year away from each other, Bates said there was an adjustment period.

"There were a few minor bumps, but things fell back into the same routine, everything was ironed out and we became the family we were before," she said.

The Army has new plans for Bates. She'll soon be off to the Warrior Leader's Course and then she is on to Fort Bragg, N.C. in July, where long hours in motor pool will be followed by reading stories, playing board games and cooking more dinners as Army life goes on for this single-mom Soldier and her boys.



(Photo by Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div.)

A quartermaster chemical equipment repairer with Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, Spc. Samantha Bates loosens a bolt to allow the oil to drain out of a humvee at her unit motor pool March 9.

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Needed Aid Reaches Devastated Village

Aid

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not sling-load the clothing. Since they have been in Pakistan this second time, task force troops have not landed at a drop zone, Payne said.

"It was the first time we actually shut down for dropping stuff off. Normally we do a sling-load and drop food. This time we actually shut down and unloaded the stuff and handed the clothing over to the people," said Spc. Terence Faust, a crew chief with Co. B.

"For the most part of our missions we've always done sling loads. And when you're up that high and you're looking straight down, the mountains don't look like much; they look like a few trails and a shack here and there," said Spc. Charles Leasure, a Co. B crew chief. "But when you get to land and are level with these places and really get a panoramic view of the way they [the Pakistanis] sort of etched their existence out of the side of the mountain, it really is breathtaking."

When the helicopters made it to the lofty 6,200 foot elevation of Hangarai,



(Photo by Spc. John Payne, 1st ACB)

Villagers of Hangarai go about their day as normal with the aftermath of the earthquake still in plain sight. This heap of rubble and stone used to be someone's home.



(Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Eugene Santos, 1st ACB)

Villagers of all ages wait their turn in line for the much needed clothing being handed out. Members of Company B, 2-227th brought in clothing to Hangarai, Pakistan, donated by the shipping company DHL. This is just one of many humanitarian missions that the battalion has completed since arriving in Pakistan February 17th as part of Task Force Quake II.

there were 200 to 300 locals waiting, half of them were children, Payne said.

"First they had the kids, about a 100 of them, just line up in a big group," Faust said. "They started opening the bags and bringing a kid forward, picking something out for him and sending him off to his parents. The entire time I kept watching people come walking up, getting their kids in line. I would look around and see how all their houses were just tents.

"It was very heartbreaking seeing that all their stuff was destroyed and they're living in little tents up in the mountains where it gets pretty cold," Faust added.

"Everyone's initial reaction is pity and they feel bad for these people because of how they have to live," Leasure said. "I do feel a certain amount of pity because of the travesty that has happened to them with the earthquake. However, they don't have to deal with some of the petty issues; they're just out there to live. In a sense, I envy them because we worry about the small things like gas and bills and whether or not my clothes look good. They just live for life and nothing else."

After unloading the bags of clothing,

Payne said the crew members were greeted by the locals with some hot tea and cookies.

"It was amazing how calm they were," Faust said. "The last time we were in Pakistan landing, we had people climbing all over the helicopters."

The staff from DHL and the two helicopter crews stayed on the ground for over an hour, getting pictures taken with the local military and with the villagers.

A Pakistani Army cavalry unit was there and the American troops got to shake nearly every hand. Leasure said the Pakistanis thought it was neat that the United States' cavalry and Pakistan's cavalry were in the same place at the same time.

Once all the clothing was handed out and pictures taken, it was time to head out.

"Right when we were starting up to leave, a young boy around the age of 14 or 15 walked right up next to me," Leasure said. "He looked at the helicopter then me and said 'Thank you,' just for letting him look at the helicopter."

"This was a great mission," Payne said. "I was happy to help."

Stick Me With Your Best Shot**Soldiers Learn Life-Saving Skills**

By Pfc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT Public Affairs

During peace-time or war, what would you do if your buddy was injured and no medical personnel were around to provide first aid? Would you know how to treat them, or would you panic?

These are the questions Sgt. Nina Persons, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, said she wanted the "Grey Wolf" Soldiers to never have to worry about after they have completed the Combat Life Saver course here, Feb. 21-28.

"The Combat Life Saver course is to help the Soldiers to understand that there are not enough medics in the Army to fill every mission, or squad, or platoon," said Persons. "Soldiers have to help save lives."

While CLS certification is not new to the Army, Persons said the standards for becoming CLS certified have recently changed. Soldiers must learn how to personally deal with witnessing major injuries and gain an understanding of why wounds are treated with certain steps and procedures.

The course, which used to focus on first



(Photo by Pvt. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

Soldiers in the Combat Life Saver course are required to properly administer an IV before completing the course. The training advances Soldiers first aid skills so troops are prepared to treat a casualty if medical personnel are not on site.

aid tactics for areas such as head injuries and fractures, now focuses more on battle related injuries such as chest wounds, major bleeding and opening an airway, she said.

"We are teaching Soldiers how to properly care for other Soldiers on the battlefield," she said.

"Even though Soldiers are receiving more advanced body armor, they are still

vulnerable," Persons continued.

The 3rd BCT Soldiers participating in the certification process learn through hands-on exercises, and are required to pass a performance test and a written exam.

"We are also teaching the Soldiers how to properly evacuate a casualty -- saving time and lives," Persons said.

The hands-on lessons include procedures like needle-chest decompression on a manikin and inserting a nasopharyngeal airway on a manikin, she said. During the performance test, Soldiers are required to approach a "casualty" and treat wounds they might find. Soldiers are also required to properly apply a saline lock and administer an IV using an 18 gauge needle and a catheter.

"I learned a lot in this class," said Sgt. 1st Class James Wiggins, Company A, 3rd BSTB, commenting on how the new lessons taught throughout the course are geared toward the military's current operating environment.

"I think it's very necessary for Soldiers to take this class," Wiggins said. "There are not enough medics in the Army, so the common Soldier needs to know how to help save lives."

It's First Team's Turn to Give Blood

By Spc. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

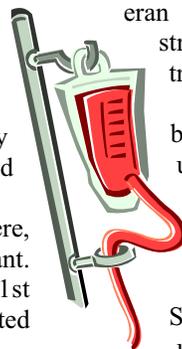
Blood counts.

Soldiers are getting injured nearly every day in Iraq and many need blood transfusions as soon as possible.

But you cannot get what is not there, which is why giving blood is so important. Since redeploying, troops in the 1st Cavalry Division have not been permitted to donate.

However, the one-year anniversary of the First Team returning to Texas is approaching which means they can once again offer this gift.

Being a physician for the division as well as an Operation Iraqi Freedom II vet-



eran gives Maj. William Porter a strong sense of why the division's troops should give blood.

"Being home means that our brothers in arms had to replace us in Iraq," Porter said. "Giving blood back here helps ensure that they will be able to return to their loved ones."

Porter encourages the Soldier to count their days left until they can give.

"Once they step across that border, out of Iraq, their year starts," said Perry Jefferies, a Lockheed Martin Blood Donor recruiter. That means that if a troop left Iraq March 6, 2005, he can donate March 6, 2006 regardless if he stayed in Kuwait

for 3 months after that.

All of the donations are tested at the Robertson Blood Center and sent directly to those who need it.

He said the Robertson Blood Center is prepared to plan blood drives for the First Team, but instead of having a excessive amount of donors all in one day, Jefferies prefers to have a steady flow of Soldiers giving blood in the center every day since there is a constant need and the blood is perishable. Red blood cells last 35 to 42 days after being drawn.

The center is located across the street from the 1st Cavalry Division Museum on 761st Tank Battalion Avenue and is open weekdays from 7:30 a.m until 3:30 p.m. Call 287-5938 to schedule an appointment.

Snipers Increase Mission Readiness

By Spc Cheryl Ransford
1st BCT Public Affairs

VALLEY MILLS, Texas – Laying flat and still on a sniper tower, several 1st Brigade Soldiers aim their M24 Remington sniper rifles down range and fire at colored balloons.

The Soldiers weren't mad at clowns, they were taking part in the second phase of a sniper training program.

The 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment leadership learned from their deployment to Iraq that snipers are a necessity for combat. They began integrating snipers into the battalion through a three-phase training program which started in October 2005.

During the first phase of the training, Soldiers volunteered to be snipers and went through a week-long physical, academic and assessment selection process. Of the 20 Soldiers who volunteered, eight of them proceeded to phase two.

Phase two was a two-week training held Feb. 13 through Feb. 24 in Valley

Mills at the Lone Star Gun Range run by Carl Chandler, Criminologist/Criminal Profiler professor at the Law Enforcement Educators Training Academy, and a member of the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education, and the National Rifle Association.

"During combat, snipers have two major roles – engage the enemy and provide recon. They are the eyes and ears for the battalion," said 1st Lt. Hector Moyano, Headquarters Troop, scout platoon leader. "Snipers were very effective in Iraq during our last deployment and we want to maintain that combat multiplier within the battalion."

During the two weeks the Soldiers spent training with Chandler, they learned many different tactics which included tactical pistol and shotgun (running while shooting at moving targets), barricade (multiple shooters moving amongst telephone poles), tactical weapon swap (changing from pistol to shotgun while

running and firing at moving targets), target distance estimation, and breaching building and cities in a tactical style.

"Being a sniper takes a great deal of concentration and discipline," said Pvt. 1st Class Brett Gardner, HHT, cavalry scout. "You have to be zoned in to get your shot. If you aren't zoned in properly, the shot can be off by a couple miles."

When it came time for the Soldiers to begin sniper training the leadership within the unit had to choose an appropriate location. Because of the isolation and level of knowledge provided by the staff, it was decided that this was this perfect location for the phase two training.

"Carl has a lot of knowledge to offer the Soldiers since he was once a sniper himself," said Staff Sgt. Michael Adkins, sniper section leader. "In the six years I have been in the Army, I have never been taught the kinds of things that I have learned during this two-week course."

As the course wound down and the Soldiers prepared for the final test of what they had learned, the instructors and the leadership were very proud of what they were seeing.

"One day during the final week of training the unit's commander (Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton) came out unannounced," Chandler explained. "At the time, there were Soldiers crawling through a field wearing their ghillie suits. I asked him to find them. He looked for a couple minutes and finally turned to me and said 'I can't.' At that moment I knew that the Soldiers had understood the training I was giving them and were putting that knowledge to work."

Now that the training is complete and seven of the eight Soldiers who began the training are certified with the M9 pistol and the M24 Remington Sniper Rifle, they will move on to phase 3 – U.S. Army Sniper School – with the first two-man team heading to school in April.

"We hope to have all the Soldiers who completed this training through sniper school before the unit deploys again," Adkins said. "But even if they don't get to the school until after we return, this is a foot in the door for the guys to know the weapon and be able to do this job in Iraq."



(Photo by Spc. Cheryl Ransford, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Spc. Jason Hawk (left) runs to a safe location behind Spc. Samuel Nobles, both of Headquarters Troop, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, while Noble provides cover fire during barricade training Feb. 14 at the Lone Star Gun Range. The Soldiers conducted a two-week course in Valley Mills, Texas in order to move on to U.S. Army Sniper School. The first two-man team will be attending sniper school in April.

Dragons Welcome New Battery

By Spc. Cheryl Ransford
1st BCT Public Affairs

Known as the “Can and Will” battalion, the “Dragons” of the 1st Cavalry Division’s 1st Brigade Combat Team have a long and proud history.

And history is again being made with the addition of a new battery to the battalion.

The 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment held an activation ceremony to welcome their newest member – the “Daggers” of Delta Battery March 10.

“In the Direct Support Artillery Battalion, we really suffered a blow when we lost our third firing battery – Charlie Battery,” said Lt. Col. Martin Clausen, 1-82 FA’s commander. “Thanks to Col. (Paul) Funk, (1st Brigade Combat Team commander) we have hatched Delta (Battery).”

As the battery continues to grow, it will eventually be 100 strong, Clausen added.

“Traditionally, field artillery is organized to provide only fire support,” said Capt. Christopher Hill, the incoming battery commander. “However, field artillery has become more of a utility hitter and now we are more equipped to accomplish that



(Photo by Spc. Cheryl Ransford, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Lt. Col. Martin Clausen, commander of 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment and his senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Giles, unfurl the battery colors for the battalion’s Battery D during an activation ceremony Mar. 10.

mission.”

The additional equipment that has been added to the battalion through this battery includes a tank platoon from 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, and four Bradley fire support teams – two from 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and two from 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

“We now have an ability to secure ourselves that I could never have imagined,” Clausen said to Funk during the ceremony. “We also have the flexibility of a third

maneuver team that truly allows us to task organize from 1-82 to Task Force 1-82.”

Perhaps the most important element of the activation is that it links the battalion closer than ever to the cavalry experts in 1-7, 2-5 and 2-8 Cavalry Regiments. The task organization in itself will help bring cavalry expertise that will transcend to the entire artillery battalion.

“Being the first sergeant of this new battery feels really good,” said 1st Sgt. Richard Fisk, incoming battery first sergeant. “I have wanted to be the first sergeant of a maneuver element since our return from Iraq. I finally have that chance, and with a unit that has every major ground combat system in the troop or available to us.”

“This is truly and honor and better than my wildest dreams,” added Hill. “I thought that I was going to command a traditional field artillery battalion. Instead, I have been given the opportunity to command a truly combined arms team.”

As the ceremony came to an end, Clausen had a few last words for the newest leadership team within the battalion.

“I admire your patience as we build your dream team,” he said. “You both love to Soldier. As you figure this all out, from training to maintaining to administering... I ask just one thing: remain tenacious in your pursuit.”

Ironhorse Leadership Puts Families First

By Spc. Cheryl Ransford
1st BCT Public Affairs

A top priority for leadership within the Army is to ensure the welfare of their Soldiers and families.

The 1st Brigade Combat Team leadership is doing this through quarterly Family Readiness Group summits, which are designed to disseminate information about resources available to the Soldiers and their family members.

The brigade’s 2006 Winter

FRG Summit was held Mar. 6 at the Fort Hood Community Events Center and addressed nearly 140 people, representing the entire brigade.

“We all need to know different parts of what is addressed during the summits,” said Col. Paul E. Funk II, the brigade commander. “Rather than have the speakers go from unit to unit, we bring the resources to a greater multitude of people, so we are all on the same sheet of music.”

The concept of the Family Readiness Group is relatively

new to the Army, stated a handout from Wendy Edwards, the 1st Brigade Combat Team FRG assistant.

Commanders of deployed units found that while they were deployed, little, if anything, was being done to train and prepare families to better cope with the stresses and unique problems that often arise during extended deployments.

Thus, the concept of the FRG was born.

Now it is the responsibility of the commanding officers

and other leaders to ensure families are aware of the multitude of resources available to help them through difficult times, Edwards said.

“FRG is part of the Army,” said Jan MacWatters, wife of Lt. Col. Kevin MacWatters, commander of the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “By having the leadership involved, we know that everything we do is supported by the brigade and ulti-

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30 Years in the Saddle**NCO Rides Off into Retirement**

By Spc. Cheryl Ransford
1st BCT Public Affairs

The first of six military members in the Quinones family retired, leaving his children to serve the nation he loves and defended for so long.

For the last 30 years, Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Juan L. Quinones, Headquarters Troop, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has put his heart and soul into guiding and training the Soldiers of tomorrow's Army.

"It has been an honor and pleasure to serve this nation for long," said Quinones after his retirement ceremony held at 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters Feb. 28. "I have been able to watch the seeds that I planted in the minds of young Soldiers grow and watched them mature into great (noncommissioned officers)."

While many look at retirement as a time to relax and spend with family, the Quinones family, while proud of all they have done, is sad to see it go.

"This has been our life for the last 30 years," said Juan's



(Photo by Spc. Cheryl Ransford, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Juan Quinones (right), 1st Brigade Combat Team, walks onto the field with his family to receive his retirement award from Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., 1st Cavalry Division commanding general, during his retirement ceremony Feb. 28 on Cooper Field.

wife Belkys, with tears in her eyes. "I don't know what we will do without the military. This is it. Right now, I feel really, really lost."

But sadness isn't the only thing being felt by the family. Two of Juan's daughter's were able to make it to the ceremony and had nothing but praise for the work their father has done.

Joining the military while her father was deployed was one way, Tech. Sgt. Melkys

Richards, Juan's daughter who is stationed at Grand Forks Air Force base in North Dakota, showed her father how his success in the Army had influenced her life.

"The discipline he showed us while we were growing up has made me able to be as successful in the Air Force as he has been in the Army," she said through a smile full of pride. "It has been a great honor to grow up with the Army and watch

my dad sacrifice time with the family since he was always away - giving us the freedom to be who we wanted to be."

As the father of three daughters in the military, one Air Force, one prior Navy and one Army, Juan has three more reasons to be proud. While he no longer will watch the seeds of success grow in his Soldiers, he can watch the seeds of his life grow in the lives of his daughters and in their careers.

"I am very proud of my father," said Jennifer Ridgeway, Juan's daughter, who had served in the Navy. "It was his influence and our family's military background that made me decide to join the Navy."

Being in the military requires many sacrifices, as the Quinones family has seen for the past 30 years. On his retirement day, Juan reflected on what it means to him.

"Retirement is for those who don't want to be in the Army anymore," he said. "I'm not looking at this as a retirement. I could do another 100 years if they asked. I'm just taking a very long leave."

Emphasis on Information Flow**Family**

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mately, the division."

Each summit held by the brigade will cover different programs and information based on feedback from the leadership and responses to the previous summits.

All information covered in the summits is requested based on the needs of the families in each unit.

According to the brigade command-

er, the summits are a great way to share information.

"The most recent summit was a tremendous information sharing occasion," he said. "My end-state, as always, is 'Have we better informed leaders and spouses, and have we provided resources to allow people to be self-sufficient?'"

If the answer to that question is yes, the brigade commander will be smiling as his troops and families are well informed.



(Photo by Spc. Cheryl Ransford, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Leadership from throughout 1st Brigade Combat Team and Family Readiness Group leaders sign in at the 1st BCT 2006 Winter FRG Summit March 6.

Centurions' Training Takes Flight

By Spc. Cheryl Ransford
1st BCT Public Affairs

Flying across training ranges, preparing for the unexpected was the best way the leadership of the "Centurions," 1st Brigade Combat Team's 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion could think of to put the Soldiers in the mindset of a deployed environment.

The mechanics of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion knew they were flying to the site of four broke-down vehicles, but what they didn't know was what they were going to have to do to get them running again.

This scenario was all part of a support platoon air insertion exercise Mar. 9 at Fort Hood.

The training exercise started at Hood Army Air Field with the crew of a CH-47 Chinook flying 26 Soldiers to a landing zone on Fort Hood where four vehicles had been disabled.

They exited the aircraft, established a perimeter and repaired all vehicles, allowing them to drive them back to the unit's motor pool.

"We have to train as we fight," explained Staff Sgt. Kevin Maitland, a team chief with HHC. "We have to prepare for the worst. If something breaks down in the middle of nowhere we have to know what to do."

This type of training, while important to building the Soldiers' skills, is also fun and changes up the type of training the Soldiers are doing. 1st Lt. Nathaniel Davis, an HHC platoon leader, feels this type of training keeps the morale of his



(Photos by Spc. Cheryl Ransford, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, exit a Ch-47 Chinook helicopter on Fort Hood during a support platoon air insertion exercise Mar. 9. The training was designed to give the Soldiers experience in recovering vehicles in a tactical environment.



Pfc. Robert Covault, Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, tightens the connectors on a humvee battery during a support platoon air insertion exercise Mar. 9 at Fort Hood.

troops high.

"It is good to have training that the Soldiers look forward to," he said. "At the same time we have they have to be able to develop their skills of assessing



Pfc. Robert Covault, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, looks for tools needed to repair the engine of a humvee during a support platoon air insertion exercise Mar. 9.

the situation quickly and fixing the problem."

One Soldier, Spc. David Ziolkowski, a mechanic, knows that if his unit deploys they will be conducting tactical missions similar to this.

"We have to be able to

ensure all vehicles are ready for movement while watching our buddies' backs," Ziolkowski said. "This training is about ten levels above the level we normally train at, but this is the type of training that we can use for real-life situations."

Top AUSA Executives Visit Brigade

By Spc. Cheryl Ransford
1st BCT Public Affairs

Since 1950, the Association of the United States Army has worked to support all aspects of national security while advancing the interests of America's Army and the men and women who serve.

Each month the vice president of AUSA, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Roger G. Thompson, visits with Soldiers throughout the Army learning about their successes and concern.

This time it was Fort Hood's turn. He visited troops throughout 1st Cavalry Division with Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Don Jones, president of the Fort Hood chapter, taking time for a special luncheon with 15 Soldiers and noncommissioned officers from 1st Brigade Combat Team March 8.

"It is important to understand the current challenges and successes of Soldiers," said Thompson. "If you don't know what they need, we can't be an effective voice for the Army."

Having a voice with Congress is the mission of AUSA. It is AUSA that goes before Congress to ask for a multitude of requests that come straight from the Soldiers.

"We work with Congress to get motions passed that help Soldiers – such as yearly raises, correct the pay gap between civilian and military pay, base housing, etc," Thompson explained. "We try to stay in touch with (the Soldier's) needs."

With 126 chapters throughout the



(Photo by Spc. Cheryl Ransford, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Roger G. Thompson, Association of United States Army vice president, talks with Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team during lunch at the 1st BCT dining facility March 8. One Soldier and one noncommissioned officer from each battalion sat down to lunch with Thompson to discuss concerns and successes within each unit.

world, they are able to visit every base and get input from many Soldiers from many different walks of life. With so many chapters, what brought Thompson here was the local Fort Hood Chapter.

"Fort Hood has a chapter with exciting and new programs that support the Soldiers and their families," he said. "We wanted to know what those programs are. Also, Fort

Hood has one of the largest troop populations in the Army. This is where the Action is, and we wanted to be a part of that Action."

While Fort Hood has a large Army population, 1st BCT has the largest population of AUSA members on the post.

It is important for the Soldiers to have a voice, said Command Sgt. Maj. Stanley Small, 1st BCT command sergeant major.

"AUSA speaks on behalf of the Soldiers," he explained. "For many Soldiers, if we did the same jobs in the civilian world we would have unions, but there is no union for the Army. That is where AUSA picks up the slack and fights for what the Soldiers need."

AUSA is open to all Army ranks and all components - including Active, National Guard and Reserve - and Department of the Army civilians, retirees, concerned citizens and family members.

For more information or to join AUSA, visit the Fort Hood Chapter's website at www.forthoodausa.org.

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(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

A Soldier patiently monitors “insurgents” during a Military Operations in Urban Terrain, or MOUT, training exercise at the Fort Hood Hargrove MOUT site Feb. 24. Soldiers from Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, conducted the cordon and search training during an almost two-week stay in the field.

Hostile Fire No Sweat for the Gators

**By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT Public Affairs**

Lobbing rounds from 20 kilometers away is one way artillery batteries can annihilate opponents. In order to make them even more versatile, artillerymen dismounted their massive Paladins to engage an enemy in close-quarters combat training.

Soldiers from Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, took to the streets of the Hargrove Military Operations in Urban Terrain, or MOUT, training site here Feb. 24, to get a feel for the different situations they may face while deployed.

“We’re doing this training to add a different level of lethality to the unit,” said Capt. Eric Cosper, battery commander for the “Gators” of Alpha Battery. “We’re not sure what we might get called to do. This training helps us defeat the enemy, no matter what the mission is.”

After a heavy rain early in the day, the

ground turned to mud almost everywhere the battery went. Humvees and armored vehicles slowly made their way through winding trails on their way to the village. The mission still moved on.

“I always get amped up for this kind of training,” said Sgt. Stephen Kaute, a section chief with the Gators. “Rain or shine, I get motivated.” Motivation and momentum were paramount to success as the Gators stormed into the village.

The sound of gunfire signaled the Gators arrival into Hargrove. No time was wasted in cordoning the area as the Gators swept in.

Teams jumped from their vehicles to take cover and return fire. All the while, one team of Soldiers made their way into the building where the terrorist “Sinbad” was suspected to be hiding.

Soon after, the signal was made that the team had apprehended Sinbad and suppressive fire was laid down while the team took cover to search him and get him out of

town.

The Gator team came out of the village with minimal damage and losses. The mission was complete. After the exercise, Cosper rallied his team for an after action report, or AAR, to discuss what was done and how to improve his fledgling battery.

“The majority of these guys are young Soldiers right out of training,” Cosper said. “They’re the best I’ve seen since I’ve been in the Army. It’s truly motivating. They did well.”

After the AAR was complete, the Soldiers rested and ate while preparations were made for yet another run through the lane.

“This is the best training I’ve ever had,” said Spc. Corey Schramm, a driver with the battery. “This teaches you what to do in Iraq.”

“We’re working in a three-dimensional battlefield now,” Cosper said. “It’s better to make mistakes out here than it is to make them in Iraq.”

“Line of Sight University” Makes Troops Communication Experts

By Staff Sgt. Kap Kim
2nd BCT Public Affairs

They had to set up antennas towering more than 90 feet. They also had to absorb more than 400 hours of course material, but most arduous of all, they endured more than 300 PowerPoint slides to become the first graduates of Company B, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division's unique, “Line of Sight University” held near their Fort Hood motor pool Feb. 24.

A team of four instructors from the 2nd BSTB taught two signal Soldiers from each of the brigade's battalions how to set up and maintain a Joint Network Node within the course of a month. The JNN is a mobile node center that will empower battalion-level commanders with a larger secured and non-secured internet bandwidth.

Historically, this level of communication was available to commanders at division headquarters and higher.

According to Capt. David Price, Company B, 2nd BSTB, the course was designed out of necessity to teach other Signal Corps Soldiers within the brigade how to set up a JNN.

This type of operation is usually tasked to only 25Qs, or Multi-Channel Transition Operator/Maintainer.

The brigade has no 25Qs.

“This course was designed to teach the battalions' signal Soldiers how to use the [JNN],” he said.

Price said course was the

brainchild of a few members of the brigade's signal leadership who saw a real need for battalions to be able to receive certain information not previously accessible during Operation Iraqi Freedom rotations. He hopes the rest of the 1st Cavalry Division's brigades pick up on this course and teaches it to others.

Within the course syllabus, the students received classroom instruction and hours of hands-on training such as putting up the massive LOS antenna masts, running the humvee-mounted LOS V1 shelter and the generator that powers it.

The student's new-found knowledge is something Sgt. Oscar Narvaez, Company B, 2nd BSTB, is hoping he will be able to take back to his unit.

He said having the Soldiers trained will help with their workload during future deployments.

“This training is very important,” he said. “Before, our teams would have to convoy out to different FOBs (Forward Operating Base) [to set them up].”

After all the instruction, the 2nd BSTB laterally transferred a complete LOS setup for each of the units along with their newly-trained troops.

For Pfc. Tremayne Holloway of Headquarters Company, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, taking the course just made him a “whole lot better” as a signal Soldier, even though he and his signal partner, Pfc. Jason Falwell, had to go through 300 different schematic slides, he enjoyed



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Kap Kip, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Pvt. Chris Bortolazzo from Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion 9th Cavalry Regiment, sets up an LOS antenna during the Black Jack Brigade's “Line of Sight University” course conducted at the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion's Fort Hood motor pool Feb. 24.

the new training.

“This is what I'm trained for,” Holloway said. “The more I know, the better I'll be on the battlefield.”

“If we can teach these guys, and if they go back and

train the rest to do this now ... that is definitely the key to success in this unit,” Price said. “If this all works out right, the battalions will have more command and control capabilities than ever before.”

Families Check Out Simulated War Zone

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT Public Affairs

Long days in the field make for lonely nights, and being away from your family can be one of the hardest things a Soldier must endure.

For one battalion of lucky Soldiers, its families were allowed to come to the field to see what really goes on during the "high speed" training the Soldiers are always talking about.

Family members of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, the "Black Knights," got to watch an iteration of Military Oriented Urban Terrain, or MOUT, training here Feb. 26, from high above the simulated battlefield.

"It was a wonderful experience to come out (here) and see the guys perform," said Jennifer Wilbraham, wife of Capt. Andrew Wilbraham, the battalion's logistics officer. "It takes some of the mystery out of what really goes on in the field."

The Black Knights had been in the field for weeks, living in a combat environment. 1-5 had been training scenarios



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

During a brief visit to the Hargrove MOUT site, a Soldier from the 1st Battalion 5th Cavalry Regiment enjoys a playful moment with his wife. Families were bussed into the training lane Feb. 26 to get a glimpse of their Soldiers in action.

like the one they faced at the Elijah MOUT site numerous times.

With their families watching, the Black Knights were motivated to achieve an even higher level of performance during their run-through this

time.

"The Soldiers seem to be more into what they're doing," said Capt. Wilbraham. "It's a huge boost of morale for the guys, and they all put forth an extra effort."

Family support can help Soldiers get through the toughest times.

Not only wives and children are encouraged to support - moms, dads, uncles, aunts, grandparents and friends are all encouraged to support a Soldier close to them.

"I have the most supportive family in the world," said Staff Sgt. Brandon Goodman, a master gunner with Company A. "I was looking forward to this visit all week, and it kept me motivated."

Hugs and kisses aren't the only reason a family goes to the field to see its Soldier. It can

also be a learning tool to educate the families about mission intents, operations and what's being done to keep their Soldiers safer and more likely to come home unscathed.

"This opens up communication to talk about things that families might not have been able to talk about before," Capt. Wilbraham said. "My wife doesn't have to sit at home and wonder what's going on anymore. Families get to understand what we do and how we do it.

"I definitely think this training will help during the next deployment," he added.

No deployment orders have been issued to the Black Jack Brigade, but the brigade continues to train its Soldiers to be ready for whatever mission they may be called to accomplish.



Preventing POV Accidents



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Tough Terrain Tests Driving Skills

By Pvt. Ben Fox
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Looking through the small opening of his night vision goggles, the driver of a High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle watched the terrain in front of his vehicle as he maneuvered through rocky, hilly terrain.

Suddenly, the ground disappeared in front of him.

The driver let the HMMWV roll to a stop at the edge of the drop and warily glanced down the steep grade.

A vertical drop lay directly in front of the vehicle's blind spot. Beyond that lay a steep slope of loose gravel scattered with large rocks.

The truck commander in the passenger's seat calmly told the driver to move forward. The driver nervously released the brake and let the vehicle roll steadily down the slope.

Amazingly enough, this driver didn't have his HMMWV license yet – he was one of several 3rd Brigade Combat Team Soldiers qualifying for it during the Light Medium Tactical Vehicle and Humvee driver's training course here, Feb. 21-28.

The driver's training course provides new and untrained Soldiers the skills they need to receive a military driver's license,



Students in the driver's training course ford through deep water as a part of their off-road training. The course is designed to familiarize Soldiers with the operation and abilities of the High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle.



(Photo by Pvt. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

Students in the driver's training course climb a steep incline as part of their training. After successfully completing the course, Soldiers are issued a military driver's license for the High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle.

said Staff Sgt. Matt Stone, a course instructor with Company A, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

While the course includes a classroom training to include pre-maintenance checks and services, safe driving, traffic laws and night vision goggle orientation; most of the course consists of hands-on training, Stone said.

During the hands-on portion, Soldiers gain experience performing PMCS on the vehicles, driving on paved roads, off-road driving and driving at night with NVGs, he said.

The course is meant to build upon a Soldiers' basic knowledge of road rules and safety.

They are put through different circumstances and terrains to increase their driving abilities, said Staff Sgt. Scott Freeman, a driving instructor with 3rd BSTB.

Pfc. David Trudeau, a Soldier with Company B, had never driven any type of vehicle before the class. He said he hoped the course would give him enough confidence to try to get his civilian license.

"I'm going for my (civilian) license in a couple of months, and the course will give me the 'on the road' experience I

need," said Trudeau.

Trudeau said he believed he would be a good student for the course because he didn't have any bad habits to break.

Even though Trudeau didn't have the experience most of the other drivers had, the course was not considered above his skill level.

The instructors teach the class as if all the students are beginners at driving, said Freeman.

"It won't make you an expert, but it will teach you basic skills to build on later," Stone said.

The driver's training course is one of the first skills a Soldier will usually train on at their first unit, said Stone.

It teaches the Soldiers responsibility, awareness, safety, and confidence in their vehicles.

"There are a number of skills that go along with being in the Army that you need to pick up, and driving a military vehicle is one of those," he said. "I like taking guys who haven't driven these kinds of vehicles before and showing them what they can do," said Stone.

Everybody who goes through the course seems to get something out of it, Freeman said.

Managing the Airspace**Air Defenders Train on New Equipment**

**By Maj. Roderick Cunningham
4th BCT Public Affairs Officer**

FORT BLISS, Texas – The 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division air defense airspace management cell sharpened their technical and tactical skills during their first training exercise Feb. 27 thru March 3.

The 4th BCT ADAM cell training, held at the Drive-Up Simulated Testbed Facility on Fort Bliss, ran concurrently with the 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade Command Post Exercise that exercises command and control of their unit's leadership and systems functions.

The ADAM cell coordinates the use of air defense and aviation assets in an area of operations.

"This exercise allows the 4th BCT ADAM Cell to validate the equipment's operational status, their capabilities and sets the conditions for the 4th BCT Command Post Exercise slated for April 24 to May 5," said Maj. Christopher McElveen, brigade air defense airspace management officer.

"We have established training objectives we want to accomplish during this training," he said. "They include familiarizing personnel with ADAM Cell equipment, practice connectivity with 31st ADA BDE Tactical Operation Center, cross train aviation personnel on ADAM functions, and rehearse Air Battle Drills."

"The brigade has six aviation personnel slots in the ADAM cell," said Capt. Ben Bird, assistant brigade air defense airspace management officer, 4th BCT. "Currently we

have four of them filled. We expect the remainder to arrive soon."

Since the 4th BCT is a new brigade, standing up with minimal to no equipment on hand, a training program, called new equipment training, is in place to train Soldiers on their equipment before it arrives. Training occurs away from Fort Bliss or equipment is borrowed from a neighboring unit.

"In preparation for the arrival of our new equipment, we went through new equipment training at the end of January at Fort Hood," said Bird. "This training prepared us to receive, setup and operate our equipment to standard once it arrived."

The exercise was the first time that the Soldiers had to train on their new equipment since it arrived on Fort Bliss,

Feb. 16.

"This training exercise gave us the chance to setup and test our brand new equipment, said Spc. John Holmes, a flight specialist with 4th BCT. "The purpose was to coordinate all the systems and ensure they work properly," he said.

When dealing with new equipment, challenges are always inherent. The ADAM cell equipment is composed of four different computer systems that have four different software applications.

"Our biggest challenge is getting all four digital systems connected internally and with the 31st ADA tactical operation center," said Bird. "This exercise allows us to practice for future training and deployments"

The systems used in the ADAM cell are the Air and

Missile Defense Workstation, which system plans how to employ Air Defense Systems; the Tactical Airspace Integration System, which is an aviation planning and de-confliction tool; the Forward Area Air Defense Engagement Operations, which allows the use of the sentinel radar to track local airspace users; and the Air Defense System Integrator, which converts the "joint" air picture into a computer language that the other systems can interpret, Bird said.

"This system brings the joint air picture into the brigade tactical operation center," said Bird. "It coordinates the airspace in the area of operations for all branches of service to include Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corp aviation assets."



(Photo by Maj. Roderick Cunningham, 4th BCT Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Roland Asuncion (left), air defense airspace management cell noncommissioned officer, briefs Capt. Ben Bird, assistant brigade air defense airspace management officer, 4th Brigade Combat Team, on the Air Missile Defense Work Station air defense planning station during a training exercise from Feb. 27 to March 3.

Check-ups Keep Aviators Airborne

By Spc. Nathan J. Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs

QASIM AIR BASE, Pakistan – The CH-47D Chinook has flown many missions and has survived enemy fire and precautionary landings.

Now, after 100 hours of flight time, it has to get check-up. But the inspection on a Chinook is a little more detailed than just “turn your head and cough.”

A 100-hour inspection, or “100-hour” as it is commonly referred to, is routine for Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, and 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division serving in Task Force Quake II.

“Over a certain amount of time things just have a tendency to wear out, so we look at it and touch it to make sure it’s still

within its limitations,” said Staff Sgt. Steven Bista, the Chinook mechanic floor supervisor for Company D, 2-227th.

During a 100-hour, the Chinook mechanics look at almost everything on the aircraft, from the wheels, drive-shaft and much, much more, said Bista.

“Certain parts and pieces we inspect visually for normal wear and tear or environmental damage or manufacturer defects,” said Bista.

“As a mechanic, anything that needs to be done to the helicopter we’ll fix,” said Pfc. David Ignatowski, a Chinook mechanic from 2-227th.

Primarily, a Chinook mechanic does most of the work during a 100-hour, but there are other shops that are needed from time to time as well.

“My maintenance team and



Soldiers from Task Force Quake II help guide a CH-47D Chinook helicopter into a hanger at Qasim Air Base, Pakistan, in order to perform a 100-hour inspection.

associated shops, such as avionics, sheet metal, electrical, and more, work on the aircraft during a 100 hour inspection,” said Bista.

Chinook crew chiefs, who take care of the aircraft during flight, are normally involved in the inspection as well, but due to the many hours they are flying, they are not present.

Instead, the crew chiefs are getting much needed rest, said Bista.

Although a 100-hour inspection is just routine back in the states, there are some adversities that these Soldiers have faced while working in Pakistan, Bista said.

Because of the quickness in which the Soldiers left, they were unable to bring a lot of their tool boxes and special tools, Bista said.

“The folks that are here have been extremely helpful as far as tools and equipment that we have needed,” Bista said.

“Not having our own tools has been difficult because we don’t know where anything is or if we even have certain things,” Ignatowski said.

Not only are most of the tools being used not theirs, none of the Chinooks are theirs, said Bista.

The Chinooks that the First Team pilots are using are Kansas National Guard helicopters. This makes the 100-hour a little special, said Bista.

“It’s like your car; you know your car better than anybody else. Because these air-



(Photos by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Chinook mechanics, electricians and airframe specialists from 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division and 615th Aviation Support Battalion climb all over CH-47D Chinook during a 100-hour inspection at Qasim Air Base, Pakistan. The soldiers, part of Task Force Quake II, keep the Chinooks ready for flight until the relief is no longer needed.

Store Visit Draws "Sold Out" Crowd

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs

QASIM AIR BASE, Pakistan - To the dismay of the Soldiers just arriving here, they received a rumor that there wouldn't be any Army and Air Force Exchange Service support for the remainder of their deployment.

That rumor was turned upside down Feb. 23, when AAFES showed up at Qasim's doorstep.

The line stretched almost the length of the hangar with anxious customers, as the AAFES representatives made some final touches on their makeshift store.

AAFES gave Soldiers from Task Force Quake II the opportunity to stock up on some snacks and supplies.

"I'm glad that they are coming, because we were told that they weren't coming again while we're here," said Pfc. Ryan Nyczaj, a combat medic with Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion. "A lot of

people need some stuff so they kind of saved the day."

Some troops were just happy to be able to spend their money on things other than those found at local vendor's establishments.

"I'm just glad have the chance to actually spend some money on stuff other than weird local things," said Spc. Eric Loo, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

Exchange service employees brought many things that Soldiers need while deployed, as well as many things the Soldiers might want.

AAFES was not expecting to come back out to Qasim because they had thought the U.S. troops would be out of Pakistan soon, but when AAFES heard the U.S. had one last part of the mission, they came right out, said Calvin McLain, an AAFES representative.

Some of the more popular items bought were chips, candy and other snack foods, while the more popular high-priced



(Photo by Spc. Nathan J. Hoskins, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Spc. Joseph Majek, an aircraft electrician with the 615th Aviation Support Battalion, browses through the selection that Army and Air Force Exchange Service employees brought to Qasim Air Base, Pakistan Feb. 23. The deployed Soldiers initially thought that AAFES was not going to visit their base again before they left, but a temporary store we set up Feb. 23.

items that left the shelves were portable video game systems and MP3 music players. After the line receded and the stock ran out, AAFES packed away the remnants and trash of what used to be a fully stocked

portable store.

The brief visit made some Soldiers wonder where the AAFES came from.

"We are based out of Germany," McLain said. "But we go where the troops are."

Inspections Critical for Humanitarian Effort

Inspect

From Page 15

planes belong to somebody else, they're just maintained differently, we don't know them as well. It's the small details and nuances of each individual aircraft that make it more difficult," Bista said.

Aside from not having their own equipment, the Soldiers of TFQ II drive on and complete the mission, but not without a few more surprises.

"For this 100-hour I inspected the engines," Ignatowski said. "What was unusual to me was that I found what looked

like a bullet hole going towards the engine."

Because these birds have been to war and have endured some taxing environments, their condition is unlike the Chinooks inspected during peace-time, Bista said.

"With these birds, I think a 100-hour, in this case, is a bit more critical," Bista said.

The aircraft are unlike anything these mechanics see back in the states, they gain more knowledge and experience from this inspection.

"I learned some stuff from this inspection; you always learn something new dur-

ing an inspection," Ignatowski said.

The 100-hour is fairly intensive with the Soldiers of TFQ II working from noon till 2 a.m. the next day, Bista said.

Still, this is not the most detailed look the aircraft will have, there are still the 200-hour "mini-phase" and 400-hour phase to come, Bista said.

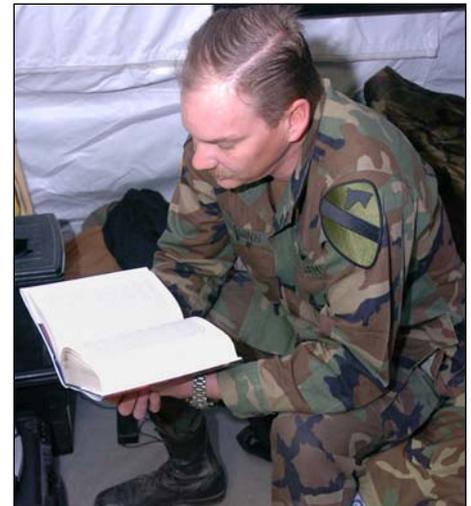
The mini-phase is to prepare for the 400-hour phase which is where the aircraft is completely taken apart. It takes a month or two to finish a 400-hour, Ignatowski said.

With the 200-hour and 400-hour still to come, the Soldiers of TFQ II can rest assured that they will get in a full day's work, every day for the rest of the deployment.



(Photos by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Pfc. Jeremy Bucholtz, an airframe specialist for Company D, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, nearly runs over a Marine while playing a lively game of touch-football at Qasim Air Base, Pakistan. Bucholtz volunteered to join Task Force Quake II and head out to Pakistan to help the people affected by the earthquake last October.



Sgt. Joseph Quinn, a quality control inspector for Company D, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, takes time to sit down and read a book during some rare off time at Qasim Air Base, Pakistan.

Aviation Troops Find Ways to Unwind

**By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs**

QASIM AIR BASE, Pakistan – When not at work, Soldiers find various ways to keep busy and keep entertained, but what they do to relax can sometimes change a little when those same soldiers are deployed.

That is the case for Soldiers from 615th Aviation Support Battalion and 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. These Soldiers make up Task Force Quake II and are currently providing humanitarian relief in Pakistan.

Although working a taxing mission, the Soldiers do have the opportunity to take advantage of some down time. Because of the rioting in Pakistan due to the cartoon drawn of Muhammad, Soldiers are not allowed to take trips to the Embassy or go off base. This leaves the options for entertainment confined to on-base activities.

Some Soldiers find their way to the Morale, Welfare and Recreation tent to watch movies on the 46” plasma-screen television.

“When I’m not working, I’ll go watch

a movie, listen to music, play on the computer, go running and definitely play some football,” said Pfc. Nick Dassuncao, a CH-47D Chinook mechanic with Company D, 2-227th.

MWR has also set up a trailer that has laptops for the Soldiers to use. This helps keep communication open with people back home and also provides a venue for entertainment.

“If there are internet services available I surf the net and play some solitaire,” said Sgt. Joseph Quinn, a quality control inspector for Co. D, 2-227th.

There seems to be an activity that has been around for a very long time that is very common among deployed Soldiers – reading.

“I like to read, definitely,” said Spc. Kevin Thomson a Chinook mechanic for 2-227th. “If there is a chess set around, I do like to play occasionally; I’m not the greatest in the world, but I can hold my own.”

When not sharpening their minds, Soldiers toughen their bodies. Physical activity is a normal part of any Soldiers life. Whether it be working out or playing sports, it is obvious this is one way to keep from getting the boredom blues.

“I love playing football on my down-

time. We even played the Marines. We all came out, gave it our all and in the end we all shook hands. I even came out of there with some friends,” said Dassuncao.

There is also a gym set up in a tent so that Soldiers can keep up with their workout programs.

Along with that, there is a path set aside on the airfield for running.

Although there are numerous ways to keep entertained throughout the day, Soldiers of TFQ II do not forget about their jobs and responsibilities.

“I have such an important job that I have to think about what I have to do all the time,” said Quinn. “I have to make sure the helicopter is safe to fly.”

And for some soldiers, down time is a luxury that is not often enjoyed.

“I just about never have any down time. I usually try to stay pretty busy,” said Sgt. Thomas Beal, a Chinook maintainer from Co. D, 2-227th.

With every Soldier of Task Force Quake II working hard, it is good to know that at the end of the work day there is an enjoyable reprieve to look forward to. Whether it is football, reading, or an action flick, the soldiers are able to unwind and recharge for the next days mission.

New Flight Qualification Brings More Capabilities to First Team

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st ACB Public Affairs

Why would you spend hours trying to destroy an object with a rubber mallet when a sledgehammer would do the job in one swing?

While it's more powerful than a rubber mallet, the AH-64D Apache Longbow doesn't deliver the blow of an Air Force or Navy bomber.

Until recently, Army commanders had to rely on ground controllers from other services to use Air Force or Navy fighters and bombers to provide close air support, dropping bombs in close proximity to ground troops.

The 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division now has the capability to assist the controllers on the ground through Forward Air Controllers-Airborne, or FAC-As.

"The job of a forward air controller, airborne or ground, is to provide the tactical control for aviation during air strikes,

most typically close air support," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steve Kilgore, an Apache pilot and FAC-A with the 1-227th "First Attack."

First Attack has four FAC-As, the first and the only Longbow qualified forward air controllers in the Army, according to Lt. Col. Christopher Walach, the commander of 1-227th.

The four Apache pilots, hand-picked based on their experience level, completed a ground school in Coronado, Calif., near San Diego before moving to Yuma Proving Ground, Ariz., in January for the flight school.

At the ground school, the main focus of learning was on eliminating ambiguity in the terminology in order to ensure the FAC-A's intent could be understood by members of all services, Kilgore said.

Once in Yuma, the pilots put what they had learned in California into action, flying numerous missions with instructors from the Marine Corps using both live and simulated ammunition.

"The training was excellent," said

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Frank Almeraz. "The Marines have a very professional setup for the academics and their ranges supported this mission well. We got to the point where we were putting bombs, dropped from aircraft at 10 or 20,000 feet, onto vehicle-sized targets regularly, with accuracy and consistency."

Once the training at Yuma completed near the end of January, the four pilots met the joint service requirements to be forward air controllers.

Although qualified as FAC-As, the pilots aren't trying to replace joint-service controllers, either airborne or on the ground.

"We can enhance [a ground controller's] capabilities, or we can perform the mission in his absence," Kilgore said.

The FAC-As can also act as the eyes of the ground controllers, Kilgore added, ensuring the bombs land on the correct target when the ground controllers are unable to see the intended target.

"It brings us the ability to leverage the 'heavy-hitters' that fly in support of us," Kilgore said. "It allows us to actually get on the radio and leverage those assets in support of 1st Cav Division operations."

Kilgore said it would take six or seven Hellfire missiles to rival the effects of a single bomb carried by these heavy-hitters.

"This has increased our joint awareness, joint lingo use and understanding, and finally this has given my company commanders and aircrews a better understanding of how to employ [close air support] with their direct fire plan," Walach said.

The added capabilities make Walach's aviation attack battalion even better.

"This gives our Longbow crews more lethality, flexibility, and agility to execute our combat mission," he said. "We set out on this mission with one intention ... to quickly and efficiently bring the most lethal fires on the enemy for our brigade combat teams in the 1st Cavalry Division without any delay in the process."



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

An AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter from 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division prepares to fire simulated ammunition at a target Feb. 16 at a range on North Fort Hood.