

Task Force Storm flight crews take time to ensure air assault missions go smoothly

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Under the cover of darkness, Soldiers seem to appear from thin air, and within seconds, they converge on a house. For the insurgents, targeted by these precision infiltrations, it’s a mass of confusion. The Soldiers who came from out of nowhere are now everywhere - and the only sound is the unmistakably deafening roar of low-flying helicopters.

Countless adrenaline-throttling videos and photos show missions like these - ground forces kicking doors open to capture high value targets and information, but have you ever wondered ... how did they get to that house?

Convoying to these locations can, in many cases, be just as tricky as entering the home of a suspected terrorist because of possible enemy attacks and roadside bombs. Transporting Soldiers to and from these potentially hostile areas by helicopter has become a popular alternative to convoying through unsecured areas.

These “air assault” missions are still extremely dangerous and Task Force XII aviators must meticulously plan their portion of these missions to help ensure the safety of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers aboard each aircraft.

“The more you can prepare, the more you’re prepared for, and the less that’s going to go wrong,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher Peters, an instructor pilot for Company C, Task Force Storm from Mellen, Wis. “If something does go out of the ordinary, we try to be ready for it.”

“We integrate our air-plan into (the ground commander’s) tactical plan, because everything we do is to support the ground tactical command,” added Lt. Col. Jay Macklin, the commander of Task Force Storm. “He says where he needs to be at what time and we backward plan



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

A Soldier from 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division prepares to enter a Task Force Storm UH-60 Black Hawk during a night air assault mission.

from there.”

The typical planning cycle for an air assault is usually several hours after the mission request is received from the ground forces, but it can be done sooner if mission dictates, said Maj. Jeff Gloede, the Task Force Storm operations officer.

“After we receive the (request), we’ll do an air-mission brief to begin the co-

ordination between us and the infantry unit we’re supporting; then we’ll develop our plan and brief our flight crews,” he said. “They pretty much give us all the details like which aircraft will do what; who will be on which aircraft; how they will exit the aircraft; and what they want to achieve with the air assault.”

These infantry Soldiers are trans-
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Check out what’s inside ...



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Griffin 06 Sends ... new move, new mission

Soldiers and Families of Task Force XII

Our time at Camp Taji is nearly complete. As I walk around the brigade footprint, I see Soldiers packing, cleaning and preparing for the various moves that will occur over the next few weeks.

This isn't the first move you've endured, and it will not be the last.

We will all do it again in a few months as we prepare to head back home. I'm impressed by, and grateful for, your willingness and professionalism during this time of near constant transition.

The "can do" spirit of Task Force XII in Multi-National Division - Baghdad served us well over the past seven months. Now is clearly not the time to rest on our laurels, but it is a perfect time to reflect on what we've accomplished.

During the past seven months, the 1,100 Soldiers of this task force have flown 5,560 missions with more than 23,413 hours in the air.

You safely and expeditiously hauled more than 628 tons of cargo and 67,000 passengers – not bad for a task force that came together in the middle of a combat zone and replaced a brigade twice its size.

Our attack brothers from 4/3 ACR flew more combat hours in this period than any other attack formation now or ever in OIF.

They were cited by MND-B's Commanding General as being the critical combat formation to defeating the enemy's indirect-fire and Improvised Explosive Device threats. Threats that were being instigated directly on innocent Iraqis, Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces and even indirectly/strategically on the



fledgling Government of Iraq.

Suffice it to say, that without the critical lift and attack/reconnaissance work you were all a part of, MND-B could not have succeeded as quickly or at as low a cost in friendly casualties.

We have already begun to welcome Col. Pat Tierney and the "Iron Eagles" of the 4th Combat Aviation Brigade. They have worked very hard over the last year to prepare for this deployment, and from what I have seen thus far, they are arriving battle-ready and eager to assume this important mission.

Griffins, give them your fullest attention and cooperation. Our situation is unique, as we leave this mission behind and prepare to take on our own new challenges back at Balad for HHC, 12th CAB

and at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) for the Stormriders of 3-158 AHB and the Brave Rifles of 4/3 ACR. As I've said before, your legacy is tied directly to the success of those who come behind you.

The same drive that you've demonstrated throughout this deployment - sustaining this CAB in the fight - must also be applied with equal diligence to the preparation of these great warriors for this vital mission.

For many of you, this will be the last time I address you as your commander in this theater: to the outstanding heroes of 2-147 AHB and 4/3 ACR. Let me take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for what you've done, and for the professional manner in which you've done it.

We have asked much of you, and you've delivered – Above Standards and Above the Best!

Finally, I wish you all the best – whether you are just arriving at Camp Taji and ready to continue the first class aviation support to troops on the ground in Baghdad, or moving on to BIAP, Balad, or returning back to your home station. Continue to give 100% effort in all that you do.

Ours is a mission that both requires, and deserves as much.

As always, my thanks goes out to the extraordinary Soldiers, Families and Friends of the 12th CAB rear back home – AWESOME care and support, we love and miss you!

"Wings of Victory!"

Col. Timothy Edens

Commander, Task Force XII

Command Sergeant Major's Corner

Hi Gang,

I hope this note finds you all happy and healthy.

We're getting ready to do some major muscle movements again - another tactical jump to take on another important mission.

This requires a huge team effort; and with hundreds of events happening daily, everybody is going to be real busy. This has gotten me a wee bit worried.

I don't want my team to forget about their Families and children because there just isn't enough time. I don't want them to forget about the Soldiers who might be having trouble with relationships or spouses and need that helping hand of a friend or supervisor. The mission is going to get done, but at what cost?

Let's not let anything get lost in the shuffle. Don't put your Family on the back burner till you get the job done ... your spouse will help you through it with a lot less stress.

Don't ignore a friend in need, that's what makes great leaders great - caring.

If someone is struggling, help them out; every body has a bad day.

Wait a darn minute; this is the mighty 12th Combat Aviation Brigade I'm talking about.

The same bunch of guys and girls who rewrote the book on combat aviation operations here in Iraq; the same group of Soldiers who flew more hours, hauled more people and equipment and kicked more butt than any aviation brigade in country.

This is the same group of men and women who, after a year in this fight, are still a tight-knit highly professional family. Maybe I don't have anything to worry about!

Guys, tell each other everyday how much you love one another. Talk about the good times and plan for the future.

Be good to each other, and be understanding. It's hard here and just as rough at home for our spouses.

I hope everybody back home is ignoring that silly stuff in the newspaper; 12th CAB wives are the greatest bunch of gals in the world and there are a couple of



thousand of us that will vouch for that. Have a great day!

Wings of Victory!

CSM H. Lee Kennedy,

Command Sgt. Maj., Task Force XII

Soldiers in Iraq get front row seats at high school graduations

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Micaela Cardoza beamed as she stood in her blue cap and gown at the Ansbach, Germany high school graduation. She couldn't help but smile as a teacher read Micaela's message to her Family and friends.

"I want to thank my mom, Miriam, and my dad, Elias, for always supporting me and being there through good and rough times," the teacher read. "I will always be thankful for all your hard work and support."

A few thousand miles away,

in a conference room in Iraq, Sgt. Elias Lantigua, Micaela's dad, choked back tears.

"I got a little emotional ... more than I thought I would," said Lantigua, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company Task Force XII from Boston, Mass. "Once she said my name I couldn't help it."

Lantigua was one of a few Soldiers in the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade to watch their kids take the stage - courtesy of the Department of Defense Dependents Schools, US Army Europe and the 5th Signal Command in Germany.

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Irvin, a production control specialist in 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment, watched from another conference room at Logistical Support Area Anaconda as his own daughter, Trista, crossed the stage.

"I'm glad I could see it," he said. "Of course I want to be there, but it's nice to see it. I talked to her this afternoon as they were getting ready to go. I'm very proud of her."

"I think it's very positive,"

said Lt. Col. Richard Crogan, the deputy commander for Task Force 49 and 12th CAB Soldiers stationed at LSA Anaconda. "It's a great morale boost being able to see your child go across the stage. It's the next best thing to being there."

This is the fifth year that parents of students in Germany have been able to watch the ceremonies from Iraq. The recorded ceremonies are also available online for parents to watch later if work schedules kept them from seeing it live.

Lantigua, who said he was skeptical about how he would feel watching from so far away, spent most of the ceremony waiting for glimpses of his daughter.

"I was able to participate in something that, just a few years ago, I didn't think was possible," he said. "For that short time, I actually felt like I was there, and that I went through this with them."

After the 12th CAB wraps up its deployment in September, Lantigua and his Family will travel to Boston and Micaela



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Sgt. Elias Lantigua, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII, smiles as his daughter Micaela takes the stage during her graduation ceremony in Ansbach, Germany, June 7.

plans to speak to a recruiter about joining the Air Force.

"I'll be with her for that," he said. "It's important to both of us ... she wants me to be there, and I want to be there for her."

And for one important hour on a Friday night in June, he says he was there for her.

"After seeing the picture and the big screen, the feed was so good, I felt like I was actually in the audience," he said. "I probably had a better seat than most of the people there."



Photo by by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam, TF 49 PAO

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – SFC Thomas Irvin, 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment (Attack), watches the Ansbach High School graduation from 2-159's conference room in LSA Anaconda, Iraq on June 6.

Preparing for an air assault

Continued from Page 1

ported to and from their target's locations by UH-60 Black Hawk flight crews; the crews consist of two pilots, one crew chief and an additional door gunner.

Each night several aircraft are dedicated to supporting various units, in MND-B; sometimes they are used for resupply missions but typically they are used for air assaults, said Gloede, who hails from Glenn Burnie, Md.

Moving these Soldiers by helicopter is not only safer, but it also gives them a strategic advantage, said Macklin, a native of Macon, Ga.

"Normally when (ground forces) are going after a target they have to drive out of their (base) and sometimes the bad guys can be tipped off that they're coming," he said. "We help give the ground commander mobility because we can fly directly to the target's house and pretty much achieve that tactical surprise."

Speed is essential when trying to achieve this element of surprise, so planning down to the most minor detail can save precious seconds; but more importantly it can save lives.

Even with all that planning and strategizing, the old motto "practice makes perfect" seems to still apply. Aviators and infantrymen work on synchronization by "cold" loading and unloading the aircraft, this means without engine power or spinning rotor blades.

"(Cold loading and unloading) helps



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A UH-60 Black Hawk flight crew in Company C, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, Task Force XII conducts a mission brief before heading out on an air assault.

them get familiar with getting in and out the aircraft safely," said Gloede.

By the time flight crews get into the air they will have had several different briefings, to include crew briefings and the rehearsal with the infantry Soldiers.

"If you don't do your homework here, and you don't do the required pre-combat checks and rehearsals, if something happens out there your Soldiers will pay the price," said Macklin. "Once you take off, and the infantry Soldiers are onboard, you can't help but get butterflies in the pit of your stomach; the Soldiers of Task Force Storm love it. If you talk to any of them, they tell you this is the highlight of what they do and this is the reason the decided to join the Army."

Brave Rifle troops earn Army deployment award

Multi-National Division – North PAO

TIKRIT, Iraq – The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment earned the Chief of Staff of the Army Deployment Excellence Award in the Operational Deployment Large Unit category, and Maj. David Olsen and 1st Sgt. Donald Doughman received the award on behalf of the regiment during a ceremony in Washington D.C., June 3.

The regiment earned the award for being one of only two units to fill more than 96 percent of its allotted seats on deploying aircraft in the past 27 years.

The regiment moved more than 4,500 personnel and 2,158 pieces of equipment from Fort Hood, Texas, to Iraq maintaining full accountability of all equipment, and for not experiencing any major accidents or safety violations.



Photo by Master Sgt. Tim Volkert, 3d ACR PAO

A ground guide brings a 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, UH-60 Black Hawk to a stop at the Port of Beaumont, Texas, in September 2007.

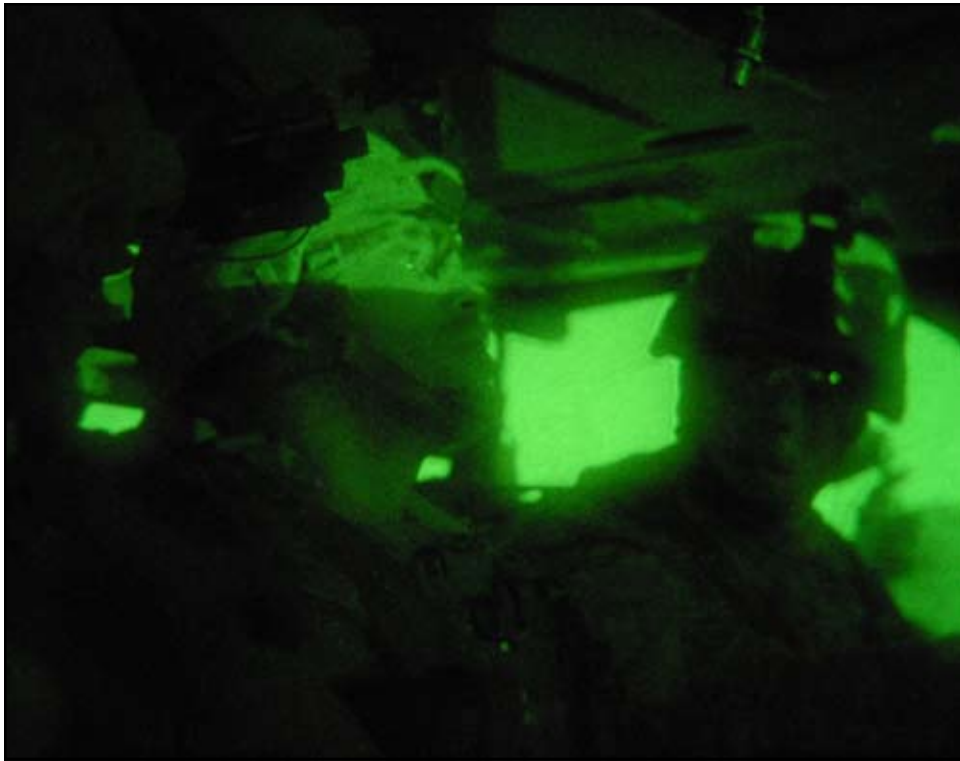


Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division sit inside a Task Force Storm UH-60 Black Hawk during a cold load training exercise.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy (left) and Task Force Storm Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Cuomo pose next to a UH-60 Black Hawk from Company A "Blue Stars," 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Spc. Jackie Wirick III, the mail clerk for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII, poses for quick picture while carrying a stack of boxes inside of his mail room.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Col. John Hort, the commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, speaks to Task Force XII Soldiers before he gives coins to "Brave Rifle" troops for their air support in Sadr City.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Several Soldiers in 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment perform nighttime maintenance on an AH-64 Apache Longbow to help reduce the possibility of heat injuries.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Spc. Chris Scheele, an aircraft maintainer in Troop N, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, hoses down an AH-64 Apache Longbow after performing preventative maintenance checks and services.



Photo by Capt. Melissa Comiskey

Two Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment attempt to escape from the scorching Iraq sun while posing for a picture inside the Pool located on Camp Taji.

Reminding Families we still care

MWR employee works with Task Force XII aviators to help remember missing OIF Soldiers, their Families

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – They are the mainstays of Soldiers who've served through multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. They are civilian supporters ... some are moms and dads; others are just people who want to help.

Despite the politics, they continue to wear yellow ribbons, write letters, and collect items to put in care packages for troops overseas.

Gloria Vickers was one of those people. She grew up a "Navy brat", living at bases all over the United States during her formative years.

She's been active in organizations designed to help service members since the Viet Nam war, when she was in high school.

When the Global War on Terrorism started, she joined a group in Tulsa, Okla., called Blue Star Moms – a collection of kind-hearted women who diligently provided much needed care packages and correspondence to service members, like her own Air Force daughter, in the desert.

But it wasn't enough for Vickers. She decided that she needed to be there.

In August, 2004, she packed up and traded Tulsa for Taji. She had accepted a job as a Morale Welfare and Recreation Coordinator for Camp Taji – a position she's held for nearly four years.

Ironically, after she started the job, she decided that the people who needed her support the most were not even in Iraq.

"I had decided to apply for the position April 3, 2004," she said. "On April 9, I heard that a Soldier had gone missing."

The Soldier was Keith Matthew Maupin – a young man who had been captured while on a convoy, and who later became

the face of the war's POW/MIA issues.

"When I took the job, in the back of my mind I thought if I go over there, I want to do something to help Keith and Carolyn (Maupin's parents)," she said. "I had emailed them, but the first time I talked to them was when I talked to Keith on the phone from Iraq, and the first thing he said to me was 'Hi Gloria, how are the Soldiers and what do they need?'"

Gloria unofficially named the MWR center "Matt's Place." While working to help Soldiers in Iraq, she also stayed in contact with Maupin's parents.

"On the first anniversary of his capture, I had met some pilots, and I asked them to fly a flag over Baghdad for him," she said. "Every year since then, I fly a flag for Matt and his Family."

Vickers and the Maupin Family grew close. Over the years she has gone to visit the Family in Ohio, and has seen the Yellow Ribbon Support Center, an organization set up by the Maupins to help support Soldiers in Iraq.

She decided that she'd stay in Iraq until Matt was found.

Then it happened ... March 20, members of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment found Maupin's remains, and on April 27, Staff Sgt. Maupin was finally laid to rest in Cincinnati.

"I had talked to Keith and Carolyn, who I knew pretty well by that time, and I said, I think I'm going to (fly a flag for him) anyway," Vickers said.

Though Maupin was found, there were now three others missing. Two of them, Pfc. Byron Fouty and Sgt. Alex Jimenez had gone missing May 12, 2007. Vickers decided to reach out again, and enlisted the help of the Maupins.

"I asked Keith if he could get the flags to their Families," she said. "He said 'if you get them flown, I'll make sure their Families get them.'"

May 12, 2008, one year after the two were captured, AH-64 Apache pilots, Col. Timothy Edens, and Lt. Col. Scott Williams, the commander and deputy commander of Multi-National Division – Baghdad's Task Force XII, flew the flags at the same time and in the same place that Jimenez and Fouty went missing.

"I've flown a lot



Photo courtesy of Gloria Vickers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Camp Taji Morale, Welfare and Recreation Coordinator, Gloria Vickers (right) presents a flag to the parents of Sgt. Alex Jimenez, at a "Rolling Thunder" motorcycle rally May 27. Jimenez has been listed as missing in action since May 12, 2007.

of flags, but those were the most special," said Williams.

Two weeks later, with a little help from the Maupins, Vickers personally presented the flags to the Families of the missing Soldiers at a "Rolling Thunder" motorcycle rally designed to bring visibility to POW/MIA issues.

"The Families were very touched," said Vickers. "Sgt. Jimenez's mother, Maria, and his dad, Andy, were so touched that people in Iraq had remembered their son in that way."

Vickers sent an email back to the pilots reporting "Mission Accomplished."

"Doing that and getting the note back from Gloria, knowing that we had helped put smiles on the faces of those Families who had gone through such a hard time was rewarding," said Williams, who hails from St. Cloud, Minn.

Despite her initial plan to stay in Iraq until Maupin was found, Vickers says she has no plans to leave anytime soon.

"Matt's home now, and that chapter in his Family's life is over, but they're not closing up their doors ... now they're helping other Soldiers," she said. "In the meantime, I've met two more Families who are waiting to hear about their sons."

"They need some support, and they need to know somebody's here helping keep their sons' names out there," she added.

In the meantime, Vickers continues to serve the Soldiers, just as she has for the past four years.

"I'll be here as long as they let me stay," she said. "I want to be one of the ones who turns the lights out."



Photo courtesy of Gloria Vickers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Camp Taji Morale, Welfare and Recreation Coordinator, Gloria Vickers (left) poses with Keith and Carolyn Maupin, at a "Rolling Thunder" motorcycle rally May 27. The Maupins are the parents of Staff Sgt. Matt Maupin, a Soldier who, until recently, was listed as missing in action.

A moment with the Chaplain



How to keep your marriage in mint condition

By Chaplain (Capt.) Michael Henderson

Here is some food for thought even if you've only been married a few years; I married my best friend twenty-six years ago. We had a lot of fun when we were dating, and we really enjoyed each others company. Twenty-six years, and three kids later, we still have fun together but I must admit that sometimes I start letting certain things slide.

I have to constantly tell myself that I have to put the same kind of energy into my relationship with Suzette that I used to ... so I'm still working on things. I'm still trying to be a good husband, I have to try and remind myself of the things that keep my marriage on the right track.

When two people have been married for a while, they begin to settle in with each other. They stop thinking about their marriage so much, and they stop trying so hard to impress each other. They get distracted by their jobs, their kids, their to-do lists, and the freshness of their marriage fades a little among other priorities.

Most married couples don't talk for hours like they used to do. Most married



couples don't hold hands as much as they used to do. Most married couples don't compliment as much, or dress up as much, or flirt with each other as much as they used to do.

Certainly life is marked by changes, and I'm not about to suggest that all married people should forever behave exactly like they did when they were dating; that would make for a pretty sappy and kind

of annoying world.

Even so, it's important to keep the sentimental stuff going in a marriage. Just because you're five or ten or twenty years into your relationship, that doesn't mean you can't have the kind of fun that you used to have.

It's the little things like kisses, smiles and laughs that will boost your relationship's energy level. These are the things that help to keep a marriage going strong. These are the things that help keep discontent and divorce at bay.

When was the last time you and your spouse stayed up late just to talk? When was the last time you got dressed up and went out on the town, just the two of you? You can't do it now, but you can go on a date after we redeploy.

When was the last time you laughed really hard at one of your husband's jokes or gave your wife a kiss on her forehead? When did you last compliment your spouse? When did you last encourage him or her?

When did you last give a backrub, winked or batted your eyelashes, or smiled really big? It's all of these little things that will keep your marriage in mint condition.

Flying with decades of experience

Senior warrant officers share wisdom with younger Soldiers

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – More than 20 years ago, the Nintendo was considered the most advanced gaming system ever and two of Miami's most popular television detectives were making speedboat chases, and wearing a t-shirt with a blazer, part of routine police work.

This was also around the time when Chief Warrant Officer 4 Guy Cash, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dennis Seymour, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Langewisch and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Curtis Bell began their Army careers.

Since then, these Task

Force XII aviators have seen more changes throughout the Army and aviation than you can shake a stick, or a cane, at; and in the process they've become some of the most knowledgeable and highly respected aviators in the task force.

"It was hard to accept the idea that I was a senior warrant officer and that my opinion carried as much weight with the commander as it does," said Langewisch, the Task Force XII brigade aviation maintenance officer and an AH-64D Apache Longbow pilot.

"Being a senior warrant in Task Force XII is pretty exciting because

there's a lot of responsibility and it's a good opportunity to help lead the brigade," said Bell, the Task Force XII safety officer and a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot.

It has taken these aviators many years of hard work and dedication to

their craft to reach this level of knowledge and experience.

"A lot has changed in Army aviation since I joined 26 years ago," said Cash, the Task Force XII standardization officer who will be promoted to Chief Warrant Officer 5 in July. "Back then, aviation wasn't even its own branch; I had to join under transportation."

In addition to seeing uniform changes, these pilots also got to see everything from the helicopters to flight school evolve. They also learned different flying techniques and adjusted to changes in the way pilots must fly.

"I learned flying at night in the dark because back then we didn't have (night vision) goggles," said Cash, who hails from Jacksonville, Fla.

In those days, the senior warrants were usually Vietnam veterans and they preferred to use a few unorthodox methods to groom the younger warrant officers.

As the years have progressed, so has the breed of young Soldiers who choose to become pilots, said Langewisch, a native of New Franklin, Mo.

"They're part of a genera-



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Chief Warrant Officer 4 Curtis Bell, the Task Force XII safety officer and a UH-60 Black Hawk pilots, address Soldiers attending his award ceremony.

tion that knows a lot about computers and video games; so operating these hi-tech aircraft seems second nature to them," he said.

Every now and then these senior warrants make time to get together for a meal and talk about the "good old days." The cohesion they have can be seen whenever they talk about which one of them is the better pilot or how much the Army and aviation have changed over the years.

Even though these four pilots have more than 100 years of combined military experience, they all say their love of aviation is what keeps them hanging around.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Chief Warrant Officer 4 Guy Cash (left), Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dennis Seymour (center), Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Langewisch (right) address Soldiers attending their award ceremony.

Task Force XII leaders get tools for success

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Any young officer who has taken his first command can tell you it can be a little intimidating. Taking over a company in garrison is tough enough – even without the added pressures of a combat zone. Senior leaders of Task Force XII decided to help ease the transition with a forward-deployed version of a Pre-Command Course held here 31 May-1 June.

The course gave captains who have recently taken command, or will take command in the near future, training in areas that ranged from taking care of Soldiers and their Families to property book management.

“When you switch company commanders in a deployed environment, the officers who are taking charge don’t get to

attend a Pre-Command Course,” said Lt. Col. Charles Bowery, the Task Force XII executive officer. “We designed a model of that course to give them information about the types of things they’ll deal with when they take command.”

“The training was very informative,” said Capt. Brian Schapker, the assistant operations officer for Task Force Storm. “It gave a broad-stroke view of the challenges we’ll face in the future.”

Schapker, a native of Enterprise, Ala., will take command of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment; but this course was not limited to officers taking command of flight companies.

“I’m a multifunction logistician, but I was commissioned as a transportation officer,” said Capt. Karin Meindl, the commander of Troop R, 4th Squadron,

3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. “It was an eye opening experience for someone (like me) who never worked with aviation before.”

This course was taught by several subject matter experts throughout the brigade’s staff and it took several weeks to put the two-day course together, said Bowery, who hails from Quinton, Va.

“None of the folks I’ve talked to here have ever seen this done before, so we’re kind of proud of that; and we made the decision to take people’s time away from the mission because this was something we knew was important,” he said.

This is the first class of its kind Task Force XII has done at Camp Taji, but it’s actually the second company commander course they’ve done in Iraq.

“There was a (Pre-Command Course) given in November when we were in Balad, and all of the participants in that class have already become company commanders,” said Bowery. “They’ve all signed their property books, they’re accountable for their equipment, and their Soldiers continue to function with no degradation in capabilities; I think that speaks for the quality of the course.”

A portion of this course was also dedicated to teaching these new leaders about the roles that warrant officers and noncommissioned officers will play in their command.

Flight warrant officers definitely play a large role in aviation operations, and it was beneficial to learn about the different things they do, said Meindl.

Taking this course in Iraq means these officers will not have to take it when they redeploy, but more importantly it allowed them to ask questions and get guidance from experienced leaders.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Lt. Col. Todd Royar, the commander of 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment (left), talks with officers attending a Pre-Command Course held here 31 May-1 June. Royar was one of several subject matter experts who passed on knowledge to these future leaders.

The TF XII Commemorative OIF Print!!

Commissioned by the Officers and Soldiers of Task Force XII and Task Force 49, OIF 07-09

IRAQ



TF XII has commissioned Jim Dietz, world-famous military / aviation artist, to produce a limited edition print honoring our OIF 07-09 deployment. The final resolution on the layout is TBP, but this is pretty close.

Only 500 signed, serial-numbered prints will be available, for the price of only \$70, or \$80 with a reserved number!

Jim Dietz will travel to Germany, and other locations TBD, to personally deliver and sign our prints.

Contact your unit representative (below) now to reserve your copies because once they’re gone ... they’re gone!

HHC, 12th CAB / FLE- SGT Diaz-Xiong, LTC Bowery

4/3 ACR- LTC Bowery

2-159 ARB- LT Vega

3-158 AHB (Taji)- MAJ Rodesky; (Balad)

LT Connors

5-158 GSAB- CPT Hawkins

412 ASB- MAJ Bartlett

2-147 AHB- CPT Husnik

TF Hawk- MAJ Kelly

Rear Detachment- CPT Stickney

Task Force XII Soldiers battle heat on flight-line

Story by Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – It's highly unlikely that a terrorist will take the day off because it's just too hot outside; or that he'll bring in a doctor's note recommending he stay indoors and not blow things up until it gets cooler outside.

The enemy doesn't take time off from what he does, because of increasing temperatures, so Task Force XII aviators can't afford to either. However, working outside in these plus 100 degree temperatures can have a strenuous effect on a Soldier's body.

Since the sun doesn't show them any sympathy, Soldiers working outside must take certain precautions to prevent themselves and their buddies from becoming another heat casualty statistic.

"Working outside can be pretty rough at times," said Spc. Rene O'Neil, an AH-64 Apache Longbow maintainer in Troop N, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. "Our workload has been steady for the last couple of months but the temperature has increase by about 20 degrees."

These aircraft maintainers are responsible for conducting Preventative Maintenance, Checks and Services (PMCS) to keep Task Force XII helicopters flying around the clock.

"Our aircraft have to be serviced either every 14 days or after they've been flown for 25 hours," said O'Neil, who hails



Temperatures on the flight-line can sometimes reach up to 20 or 30 degrees higher than the temperatures in other places around a base.

from York, Penn. "We have to pay close attention to the flight schedule to know which aircraft is due for PMCS, because an aircraft can't overfly a PMCS."

Conducting a PMCS on an aircraft means first inspecting it for leaks or visible damage; all while braving the brutal sunrays and extreme heat bouncing off the concrete airfield.

If the temperature walking around the base is 100 degrees, it's probably somewhere between 120 and 130 degrees on the flight-line, said 1st Sgt. Jon Martin, the top enlisted Soldier in Company C, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment.

"Everyday (1st Sgt. Richard Bonney)

makes sure we have plenty of water and ice out here," said O'Neil. "He's always making sure we take breaks and rotate between time in the sun and time in the shade. We also work as a team to get work done faster and we try to save big jobs that can wait until it gets a little cooler."

In addition to drinking water, these Soldiers must take other precautions to protect themselves from the sun's wrath.

"We try to make sure that the Soldiers are wearing sunscreen and booney hats if they have sensitive skin," said Martin, a native of San Diego. "We also make sure that all the Soldiers have gloves when they're working because the parts on those aircraft get hot enough to burn your hand."

A Soldier's diet and physical fitness can be key factors when trying to prevent heat injuries, he said.

"We really try to stress the importance of physical fitness, because if you're out of shape your body will definitely tell on you in weather like this," said Martin. "I also let the smokers and coffee drinkers in my company know the effect it will have on them in this heat."

Taking time to ensure Soldiers have protection against heat injuries helps keep aircraft flying even if the enemy decides it's a little too warm outside to cause trouble.

Why I Serve: 1SG gives leadership on battlefield, and on soccer field

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – June 20, 2008 was a special day for 1st Sgt. Anthony Farinosi. A quick change of responsibility ceremony on a flight line in the middle of a combat zone marked the first day of his tenure as a full-fledged, diamond-wearing first sergeant.

His new job, with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, isn't his first time filling the role as a company's top enlisted Soldier. During Operation Iraqi Freedom II, Farinosi, a native of Irvine, Calif., held the position in AVIM Company, 412th Aviation Support Battalion as a sergeant first class.

"My best time in the Army has been when I worked as a first sergeant," Farinosi said. "I had 235 Soldiers who were just like my kids. If I can influence one kid, or keep him on the right track, then I feel like I was successful."

"First sergeant" is one of several titles Farinosi is proud of; among other notables, Farinosi is "Dad" to two teenage boys ... but the title he's proudest of, and the one that he says

fits all areas of his life, is that of "Coach."

Since arriving in Germany, in 2003, Farinosi has been coaching for a German community soccer club called Sportverein Oberreichenbach. The club has several teams, ranging from the children's teams to the Alte Herren (Old Men) team. Farinosi's team now competes in the 17 to 18 year-old brackets.

"Coaching is amazing because of the influence you can have on a kid," he said. "For a lot of them, the happiest time of their day is when they're playing soccer."

During his time as a coach, three of the athletes he's helped mentor have been recruited to play at the division one level – the highest in a country whose national sport is soccer. One of his players has even played for the German national team for his age group.

Farinosi says that the cultural differences are no longer an issue as the kids have gotten older, and gotten used to him and his sons, who also play for the club.

"That makes me feel really good," he said. "I don't have all

the answers, but I can show them what they're doing wrong and help them find the right way to do it."

His new commander, Capt. Barbara Burger, who also worked with him in the 412th ASB, said his ability to mentor and motivate transcends the soccer field.

"Coaching helps with patience, and the first sergeant job teaches me a lot of structure that I can apply toward coach-

ing," said Farinosi. "Some of my Soldiers are only a couple of years older than the kids on my team."

Because he's been deployed for nearly a year, Farinosi has missed a full season of soccer. He'll be back in Germany in time for one more season before it's time to leave Europe. Ultimately, though, He says he wants to return to Germany some day with a new title – "Teacher."



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Capt. Barbara Burger (left), commander of Company C, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, poses for a photo with new 1st Sgt. Anthony Farinosi June 20.

Order of Saint Michael Award Ceremony



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Col. Timothy Edens, the Task Force XII commander, places the Order of Saint Michael ribbon around the neck of Sgt. 1st Class Barick Watts, the brigade senior fire support NCO during a ceremony held May 31.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Col. Timothy Edens, the Task Force XII commander, addresses Soldiers during a ceremony, held May 31, to present the Order of Saint Michael award to five Task Force XII Soldiers for their outstanding aviation support.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy (far left) and Col. Timothy Edens, the Task Force XII commander, stand with the recipients of the Order of Saint Michael award. Recipients (from left to right): Maj. Jeff Whitmire, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Lindsey, Sgt. 1st Class Vincent Branchetti, Sgt. 1st Class Shon Skinner, Sgt. 1st Class Barick Watts.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Col. Timothy Edens, the Task Force XII commander, pose for a picture with 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Lindsey during a ceremony to present the Order of Saint Michael award held May 31. Lindsey is one of five Task Force XII Soldiers who received this award for their outstanding aviation support.

Got a photo you want to share? How about a story you wrote or an idea for a story? If so, we need you!



Product submissions by Soldiers and Family members of Task Force XII are always welcome. If you have a story, photo or even a story idea you'd like to see in The Griffin, contact the Task Force XII Public Affairs Office.

Ask the JAG ... about war trophies

By The Task Force XII Legal Office

Want something to remember your deployment by? Planning on taking home a memento of your time in Iraq? This is not as easy to do as you might think, and failing to follow the rules can have severe consequences.

If your idea of a souvenir is a “Baghdaddy” T-Shirt, or a crossed-saber coffee cup, you can take those home without a problem.

However, if you want to take home something that once belonged to, or was used by, the Iraqi military or the Iraqi government, things get complicated.

Whether you found it, bought it from a vendor, or received it as a gift; these types of items are considered war trophies or war souvenirs, and must go through a formal approval process before they can be cleared to leave the country.

While the rules are fairly complicated, here are some basic guidelines. Firearms, components of weapons systems, munitions and shell casings can not be legally taken from the country. TA-50 type items, such as Iraqi helmets, canteens,

and some types of knives usually can be kept if they are properly approved by the commander.

The process starts with the Soldier submitting a DD Form 603-1 (May 2007) being submitted to the chain of command. Commanders must then obtain a legal review regarding the request. Copies of approved requests will be returned to the soldier. Soldiers should keep copies so that they can later prove that they had approval to keep the item.

Do not let your desire for a souvenir cause you to do something that will get you in trouble. Each rotation someone tries to take home something they shouldn't. For these individuals their tour ends with shame instead of honor, punishment instead of awards.

For questions regarding war trophies and souvenirs see Appendix 5, Annex I to TF OPOD 08-05 or call the JAG office.

Please feel free to stop by the Task Force XII Legal Office and we would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Married Soldiers have rare re-up ceremony

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - For proof that the Army can be a Family affair, one need look no further than the Daly Family. They're a married couple in Multi-National Division - Baghdad's Task Force XII who reenlisted in a double ceremony. If you're still not convinced, you can talk to the Johnston Family ... the husband and wife team who administered the oath.

Sgt. Michael Daly, a native of Tampa, Fla. met his wife Sgt. Yeimie Osorio, from Bayamon, Puerto Rico, a few years ago while deployed to Afghanistan. They got married two years ago, and have managed to stay together, in the same unit, Headquarters and Headquarter Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, ever since. In July, 2007, the couple deployed again - this time to Iraq.

"It's good having your spouse here, but sometimes it's a little difficult," said Osorio. "We'd like to be able to treat each other the same way as we do back home - all 'lovey dovey,' but here, we work every day, and we're Soldiers 24-hours a day."

There are several married couples in

Task Force XII. Among them are Capt. Jay Johnston and his wife Capt. Jennifer Johnston.

Jay, who now commands Company C, 412th Aviation Support Battalion, spent a year and a half working as the signal officer for 3-158th, where he was Daly's boss. Jennifer works in the 3-158th air mission request cell with Osorio.

"I already knew that if I reenlisted I wanted him to do the oath," said Daly.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Capt. Jennifer Johnston (left) and Sgt. Yeimie Osorio of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, pose for a photo next to their husbands, Capt. Jay Johnston and Sgt. Michael Daly (right) May 27.

"Since my wife and his wife work together, this worked out really well."

The two couples faced each other during the ceremony, each pair reciting the oath in unison - first the Johnstons, then Osorio and Daly.

"I've done a lot of reenlistment ceremonies," said Jay Johnston. "This one was unique though."

Upon redeployment, Osorio and Daly will begin a new chapter in their life as an Army married couple. The two will report to Recruiter School at Fort Jackson, S.C. They hope to share their story with future Soldiers who may be interested in joining the Army Family.

They also hope to work in the same recruiting station, but say they're ready for anything.

"We both stay in the Army because wherever he goes, I want to be with him," said Osorio. "Even if it means deploying, or working long hours in a recruiting station."

"I wish them the best of luck," said Jay Johnston. "I know they'll do great on recruiting because they're both great Soldiers."

Retention NCO's meet USAREUR re-up goals early

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Some 12th Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers chose to be on the flight-line, some chose to stand on top of a building, and some have even decided to be in an aircraft flying over 2,000 feet in the air.

Regardless of the location, these Soldiers have come together to help the 12th CAB reach its reenlistment goals ahead of the rest of U.S. Army Europe's other brigades.

With three months left in the fiscal year, the career counselors and

retention noncommissioned officers in 12th CAB have already reenlisted 539 Soldiers, and counting, while dishing out nearly \$5 million in bonuses.

"We normally get the retention (fiscal year goals) Oct. 1 and we have until Sept. 30 of the following year to accomplish that mission," said Master Sgt. Joseph Organ, the 12th CAB senior career counselor. "Normally it takes everyone the whole fiscal year to do it, but we reached our goal June 6; right around nine months."

"The 12th CAB retention group has done

a phenomenal job, and they are second to none," said the 12th CAB Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy. "They make every effort to go that extra mile to make sure they're taking care of Soldiers."

These numbers include all the deployed 12th CAB units as well as those supporting the Families and missions back in Europe. Nearly 40 percent of the Soldiers who took the reenlistment oath chose to remain part of the 12th CAB organization.

"Each battalion has a great career counselor, or a retention NCO, and they're the ones out there talking to the Soldiers," said Organ, who hails from San Angelo, Texas. "Unit leadership has also played a huge part in our success, because they are the one who are getting those Soldiers to go talk to the retentions NCO's."

The retention NCO's and career counselors in 12th CAB have traveled all over Iraq to take care of reenlisting Soldiers in person; not over email, said Kennedy, a native of Abington, Va.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Genita Ruffin

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Spc. Misty Reynolds, a supply clerk in Headquarters and Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, poses for a picture on top of a UH-60 Black Hawk after her reenlistment with 1st Lt. Paul Aldaya.

These Soldiers reenlisted for various options that ranged from current station stabilization to Military Occupational Specialty reclassification.

Even though a hefty bonus and/or duty station of choice might be tempting offers, some Soldier decided to reenlist just because they love being in the Army, said Organ.

"A lot of people are quick to assume that it's the money that makes all these Soldiers reenlist, but that's not always the case," he said. "Nearly 100 of our Soldiers reenlisted for needs of the Army and

they didn't get a bonus or a duty station."

There have also been several unique reenlistment ceremonies such as spouses reenlisting together and one spouse reenlisting the other.

"Even though we have met our retention goals, we're far from done," said Organ. "We will probably do nearly a third of the number of reenlistments we have done so far over the final three months."

No matter where they do it, or what type of ceremony they have, 12th CAB Soldiers have met and exceeded USAREUR's retention expectations.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

LSA Anaconda, Iraq - The 12th Combat Aviation Brigade retention team (from front to back, and left to right): Staff Sgt. Rodrigues Lemon, MSG Joseph Organ, Staff Sgt. Jose Olivo, Staff Sgt. Genita Ruffin and Sgt. 1st Class Eboni Britton.

12th CAB spouses conduct 'Operation Better Half'

Story by Ronald Toland Jr., USAG Ansbach Public Affairs Office

ANSBACH, Germany - Griffin Spouses Combat Day, or Operation Better Half, began with a bang May 5 when Chief Warrant Officer 4 Ted Tomczyk, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 12 Combat Aviation Brigade delivered a spirited in-brief. Tomczyk was also responsible for setting up the event.

With a "Hooah" of about 110 highly motivated spouses, the straining events of the day kicked-off.

By signing up for Operation Better Half, spouses volunteered to be a Soldier for a day.

The event was set up to provide participants a better idea of what their Soldiers experience in training. Combat and self defense training, paintball grenade toss, litter carry as part of medical training, a 50 question hands-on test, a crate climb competition, tug of war, an obstacle course, a rucksack relay, and paintball were part of the day's training program.

Conducted at the Urlas training area, each participating Spouse received a safety briefing and a set of orders. Every spouse was assigned to a team, and each team had to report to their respective drill sergeants.

After a brief instruction on "about face" and various other commands, and more or less successful attempts to obey, each drill sergeant and cadence calling team of spouses were on their way to mastering the first task.

"The brigade is sponsoring this event on behalf of the spouses which allows them to come together as a team, as partners--while their husbands are deployed--allowing them to share this experience together, and in some small part, have fun and understand some of the things that their husbands do in the military. It is an esprit de corps and camaraderie building event," said Lt. Col. Guy Zero, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) Rear Detachment Commander.

According to Veronica Martin, 12th CAB Family Readiness Support Assistant who coordinated all non-military logistics

for the event, the concept worked.

Events like the combat day allow spouses to get together and to get to know each other.

"There are a lot of women who normally don't participate (in Family Readiness Group events) and this is good for them - that they get involved today," said Martin. "It gives them an idea of what their spouses do and epitomizes being the better half. We are there for their support and this gives spouses a way to have a taste of what the Soldiers go through since not all spouses have been in the military."

"Any little bit where they can have that connection (to their deployed Soldier) is important and they value that--they are getting a taste of the rigid training we go through," said Zero. "With all the different teams, we (the judges) are consistent and fair with the judging and not letting them off the hook easy. The spouses are motivated, standards are tough, the ladies are tough, and they are really go-getters."

"I love it; the camaraderie between spouses and seeing what our husbands have gone through before, their training, and to be able to experience that, and hang out with friends, it is so exciting," said Kelly-Anne Thompson, a participating spouse of group three, the "Krusaders".

For 12th CAB Family Readiness Group leader, Leslie Edens, the Rear Detachment's and community's support are unparalleled.

"This is an incredible event; it takes a community to do something like this and that is what is so great about it--the Soldiers, Read D...even though they are stretched, they helped out," said Edens. "There are 60 cadre here today that are helping, and that speaks volumes; Mr. Ted Tomczyk did a phenomenal job. It demonstrates to us that the community and its leadership value us enough to do something like this."



Photo by Rabia Nombamba

From left Sarah Conners, Tamara Kisinger-Yolo, Pamela Zottes and Shari Brown prove their strength during a tug-of-war competition that was part of Operation Better Half.



Photo by Ronald H. Toland Jr.

Daisy Girl Scouts (from left to right): Jaclyn Ramirez, Ashlyn Crooke, Raina M. Bryant and Morgan Fisher open the Girl Scouts bridging ceremony with the Girl Scout Promise, June 2 on Bleidorn Kaserne. The Dasies became Brownies during the annual ceremony.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Walter Collins

Residents of Bldg. 5930 in Katterbach proudly pose in front of their building shortly after a Building of the Quarter sign was set up. Among three other buildings in Katterbach bldg. 5930 was identified as Building of the Quarter after the results of an inspection conducted May 27 were evaluated.

The Griffin Brigade Chronicles

History of USAREUR's 12th CAB (Part 11)

Story by Lt. Col. Charles R. Bowery Jr.,
Executive Officer for Task Force XII

Just as our three "donor" brigades- 12th Aviation Brigade, 11th Aviation Regiment, and 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division- made significant contributions to peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, they also added to their legacies in the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom. All three provided the responsive aviation support so necessary both in a conventional maneuver fight and in a widespread counterinsurgency. This month, we will focus on aviation operations in the first year of the war, and will let some of those who were there do the talking.

The 11th Regiment formed the tip of the V Corps spear during the drive northward to Baghdad in the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Lt. Col. Kevin Christensen, our current Gunslinger 6, was the Squadron S-3 for the unit's predecessor, 6-6 Cavalry, during OIF. His current S-3, Maj. Brad Barker, was the 11th Regiment Logistics Officer. Brad writes this summary of the regiment's participation in OIF I:

The Regiment's primary role prior to the invasion was to prevent Iraqi mechanized forces from penetrating Kuwait and attacking during the buildup. While 2-6 deployed in October 2002; 6-6 CAV, 5-158 GSAB (from the 12th Aviation Brigade), and 7-159 AVN (our maintenance unit at Illesheim) conducted Victory Strike III in preparation for combat operations.

The rest of the Regiment deployed to Kuwait in February 2003 and arrived in March. The Regiment also received an additional attack battalion, 1-227 Aviation from the 1st Cavalry Division, for the ground offensive.

The planning for the tactical portion of the move into Iraq focused on the fight against the Iraqi 11th Division in An Nasiriyah and against the Medina Division in the Southwestern Baghdad defensive belts on March 19, 2003; but bad weather brought this attack to an end before contact with the enemy.

The movement of aircraft northward

from Kuwait began the afternoon of the March 23. A ground brigade had quickly swept through the staging area leaving the 1-227 TAC and Distro Platoon to support the fight against the Medina. I arrived with the Regiment Tactical Command Post in one of 5-158's CH-47 Chinooks. During the movement, one Chinook was hit by a RPG, that passed through the aircraft without detonating, leaving one Soldier with shrapnel in the leg.

Nearly 45 minutes before sunset, the last elements of 1-227 arrived in the assembly area. With limited intel, the attack moved forward. All participating aircraft, two troops from 6-6 and all three companies from 1-227, suffered varying degrees of battle damage, and one Apache from 1-227 was downed with its crew captured by the Iraqi Army.

Since 2-6 did not participate in the attack, they conducted operations in support of 3rd Infantry Division in the fight for Baghdad, with devastating results. With the fall of Baghdad and the subsequent arrival of the 4th Infantry Division, elements from that division moved north to clear Balad and Tikrit. Shortly after they cleared Balad, 11th Aviation Regiment became not only the first aviation unit to arrive but one of the first units of any type to occupy LSA Anaconda.

Our current Storm 6, Lt. Col. Jay Macklin, served as Storm 3 during the early stages of OIF I, and later as Griffin 3, the Brigade Operations Officer. He recounts the Griffin Brigade's first operations in the Global War on Terror:

Prior to deployment to Kuwait, 3-158th was in direct support of 6th Fleet, U.S. Navy Europe. This very unique mission had UH-60 Black Hawks landing on Navy ships in the Mediterranean Sea and participating in the 'take down' of ships that were suspected of smuggling or Al Qaeda activities. While on a ship in the southern Mediterranean, I was instructed to start movement back to Germany in order to deploy

to Kuwait.

In January 2003, HHC 12th Aviation Brigade, 3-158th AVN, F Co. 159th AVN (Big Windy - our current Chinook Company), 3-58 ATS, and B/7-159th AVN were alerted for deployment and arrived at Camp 35 in Kuwait a short time later. We conducted the first OIF penetration of Iraq by conventional rotary wing aircraft.

As a part of the ground invasion of Iraq, the 12th Brigade moved north and occupied Tallil Air Base where they provided aviation support to the V Corps command group and critical logistical support with Chinooks as the ground forces outran their logistics. Capt. Terry Rodesky, now Storm 5 but then the commander of HHC/3-158th, was a serial commander in this convoy. At one point, 3rd Infantry Division was flown bridges by 12th Brigade Chinooks to cross canals on their drive to Baghdad. As Baghdad fell, the Brigade was ordered to move and occupy Balad Air Base.

As the Corps Aviation Brigade at Balad, the 12th Brigade conducted air assaults with the 82nd Airborne Division and 4th Infantry Division as well as supported special operations with aircraft and crews. One critical contribution was the flying of Chinooks from Balad to Kuwait daily. This effort sustained the Corps when the supply system was very immature and underdeveloped. The brigade flew thousands of hours, moved over 25,000 personnel, and controlled over 230,000 air movements. By the time we redeployed to Germany after one year in Iraq, the Corps Aviation Brigade had grown to 122 aircraft.

We have lots of "Old Griffins" in our formations, and quite a few 11th Aviation Regiment combat patches as well, so when you see one, ask that Soldier what they did in the "Big OIF I." The answer may surprise you!



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