

Volume 2, Issue 1

“WINGS OF VICTORY!”

JANUARY 2008

Artist visits Soldiers to take pictures, gather ideas for 12th CAB commemorative print

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For hundreds of years, paintings have immortalized different aspects of war from the ferocity of combat to the bond formed between Soldiers who lived and died together.

The process of immortalizing the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade’s impact on the future of aviation began with a visit from James Dietz Jan. 13.

Dietz, a world-famous military and aviation artist, decided to visit 12th CAB Soldiers here, and at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, to begin developing an outline for a 12th CAB commemorative print.

“A picture speaks louder than words,” said Dietz, a historical artist. “My job is to (understand a unit’s history) and translate it into picture form.”

His detailed images have graced the walls of numerous offices and conference rooms throughout the Army.

“It’s amazing and gratifying to me to see how many places my work turns up,” he said. “The Army, in spite of being a large organization, is actually like a small family; so the chances of someone owning something you’ve done, or having seen it, are higher than I’d expect.”

Before his vision can begin to take shape on canvas, Dietz says, he must arrange all the pieces into a scene in real life.

“The easiest way to say it without being overly descriptive is that you create a scene from a movie,” said Dietz. “It’s as if you set up a scene that is the most important part of many other scenes, and have the people you’re working with cooperating with that vision.”

“He had me helping a Soldier onto a UH-60 Black Hawk; (he was) showing us getting ready to go out on a mission,” said Honolulu, Hawaii native, Spc. Justin



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – James Dietz (center), an award-winning military and aviation artist, explains to two 12th Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers where he wants to them to be positioned for his photograph. Dietz will later use this photograph, and others he has taken, to begin production of the 12th CAB commemorative print.

Duh, an aircraft maintainer in Company B, 412th Aviation Support Battalion and model for the print. “He does a very good job showing the Soldiers in action and the hard work we do out here.”

“This print is a good way to show all of the great things we have been doing on

this deployment,” said Sgt. Brett Babin, a Black Hawk maintainer in Company A, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment and also a model for the print.

Dietz took dozens of photographs, here and at LSA Anaconda, to develop an idea

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Griffin 06 Sends ... New year, new challenges

Soldiers and Families of Task Force XII:

Happy New Year to all of you! Good news for our Griffins who deployed from Germany. We can now say that we will be going home this year!

We are quickly approaching the half-way point of what has been a very successful deployment thus far. Through your hard work and dedication, we completed more than six months in combat without the loss of a Soldier to accident or mishap in an extremely high op-tempo.

While deployed, you have re-enlisted at a rate that has led U.S. Army Europe in retention. Two more examples of just how extraordinary the Griffin Brigade truly is.

A new year brings new challenges. One of those challenges continues to be controlling the inevitable rumors.

In my conversations with Soldiers and Family members, I have heard multiple variations of rumors about the future of this deployment, and our return to Europe. I'll tell you now, so you can say you heard it straight from the commander, that the 12th CAB units will be returning to Germany 15 months from when we left.

In short, if you left July 2nd, you should be home, on or about October 2nd. Of course if you have been in the Army for more than a year, you know that things can, and do, change. With the leadership of Multi-National Corps-Iraq



in transition, any number of decisions could be made to best suit the needs of this mission.

But as of right now, there is no one between myself and the Army Chief of Staff who can tell you anything besides what I just stated; our 15 month deployment has not changed. Rumors can be tough on Soldiers and Family members. While I know that they are rarely spread with malicious intent, I would ask that we all do what we can to control them.

If you hear a rumor, ask someone in

your chain of command or family readiness group to get clarification and the leadership will give you the truth.

As I talk to Soldiers on the flight lines, motor pools and in the offices around this brigade, I know that you see the inherent goodness in what we are doing in Iraq.

It's amazing to see the progress being made here on a daily basis. Flying over many places in Baghdad you can see markets open to large crowds and people feeling secure enough to walk down streets once kept as barren wastelands by terrorists and thugs.

We're here during a key time in a nation's history as Iraq becomes an independent and self-sustaining nation that can take care of its own people. Make no mistake; your part in that process has been, and continues to be, crucial.

Thank you all – Soldier and Family Member alike - for volunteering to be part of this important mission. I admire your determination and sacrifice, and encourage you all to hang in there.

Edmund Burke said, "All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing."

Thank you for choosing to do something, something good and extremely important. You are doing a fantastic job Griffins, keep it up!

"Wings of Victory!"

COL Timothy Edens

Commander, Task Force XII

Command Sergeant Major's Corner

Hello Griffins

Sounds like our Family members are having a great time with the Family Readiness Groups. All kinds of amazing work is being done and planned. I'm very proud of each and every one of you.

You guys made our Christmas great; the stockings and hats picked up spirits and put a smile on everyone's face. Seeing Col. Edens and Lt. Col. Hoff wearing Santa Hats would have made you choke on hot coffee. Funniest thing I've seen in years. Santa did come to visit us and he was great. The guys tell me he's a civilian that works over at the UAV maintenance site, but I don't believe it ... I think he really was Santa Claus.

Your husbands and wives are doing great work. In the words of my HERO, Larry the Cable guy, they really know how to "git 'er done." Every day someone, from a four star General down to a Pfc., thanks this brigade for all their hard work and bravery.

When my Infantry brothers are in a fight and they call on 12th CAB they know we're coming. When they hear the helicopters coming they call that "the sound of freedom." The enemy has also learned, the hard way of course, to get his butt out of the area, or be prepared

to pay the price. You and your husbands and wives make this the best Combat Aviation Brigade in the military bar none ... at least the best I've seen in my professional career.

I do need your help; I need you to love your Soldiers and tell them to keep their focus on the fight. Warn them that complacency will get them hurt. These guys and girls sometimes work so hard, and get so tired, that the world seems surreal. When this happens, important things don't seem to matter as much because they become routine. Give them a new focus and some drive for the next few months. Ain't love grand?

Got a question for all of you wonderful Griffins. Mrs. Deborah, my better half, turns 50 years old on the 22nd of April of this year. I want to throw the mother of all birthday parties and she just wants to ignore that day like it never happened. Shall I honor my child bride's wishes and not throw a party, or should I have a wonderful birthday party for this beautiful woman? Tell Deborah and Mrs. Edens what I should do. I'll ask Mrs. Edens for advice when I get back. I already have two votes for the birthday party. Nicky, my grandson, suggests we get a pony for Nana to ride on during her birthday party.



I'll leave you with some words of wisdom: It's easy to become a turtle in life, you just withdraw to your shell and wait things out till they're safe for you. It takes courage and strength to develop a strong community that can care for itself and others. That is the principle that America was built on, and that is why we are the greatest nation in this world.

I aspire to inspire before I expire -
Kinky Freeman.

A moment with the Chaplain

Suicide is not an answer to problems

By Chaplain (Maj.) David G. Waweru

One of the worst things I have to deal with as a chaplain is the issue of death. It's a subject that none of us feel comfortable dealing with. Human beings have been able to conquer kingdoms and send vehicles into space to explore our universe; but we still can't conquer death.

We work so hard to prolong life and make ourselves and others comfortable. Scientists and medical personnel work hard to alleviate pain and improve the quality of life.

And while we cannot completely avoid dying, there are causes of death that we can avoid and control. The risk of dying in an auto accident can be avoided by exercising safety precautions. Diseases can be avoided by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We can also reduce the risk of one of the ugliest and most common causes of death in the military: Suicide.

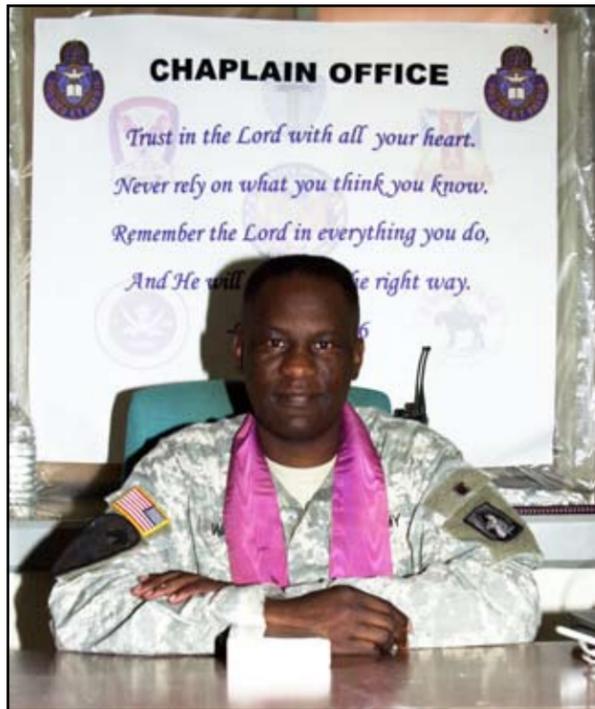
In 2007, we lost 110 Soldiers to suicide. Soldiers of all ranks and jobs fell victim. The youngest was a 19-year old private, the oldest was 62.

Why do people commit suicide?

The following are some of the triggers of suicide.

- The breakup of a close relationship
- Witnessing death
- Financial stressors
- A bad evaluation
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Reunion from a long field training or isolated tour
- Leaving old friends and Family
- Being alone with concerns about self or Family
- New assignments/deployments

These are issues we deal with all the



time in one way or another. Problems and hardships are part of life. Keeping things to ourselves and "bottling" them up only adds pressure.

Like air in a rubber balloon, we keep pumping in more and more stress until we're ready to explode. That is why it is important to have someone that you can talk to when things get tough.

As leaders, it's important to cultivate an atmosphere of trust within our ranks in which Soldiers can feel comfortable talking about the hardships of life. As Soldiers, we need to have friends or buddies who we can share our burdens with and feel free to talk to.

As parents and Family members we have a responsibility to keep the lines of communication open so that our children can talk about the issues they are going through in life. The situations your kids

or other adults are dealing with in their lives may seem insignificant to you; but they may feel like they have reached the end of the road.

Of every 100 completed suicides, 80 victims indicated to someone that they were thinking about killing themselves. We can intervene and hopefully save a life by paying attention to what is going on in other people's lives, and by communicating that we care.

Some of the visible triggers include:

- Continuous depression
- Sudden change of behavior
- Giving away valuable possessions
- Talking about suicide, and eventually planning when and how to complete the act.

What can you do if you notice any "suicidal red flags?"

You need to ask clearly "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

Stay calm, don't leave the person alone and seek help. Some good places to start are with a chaplain, social worker or mental health personnel. You can call the military police or the emergency room. You may want to notify the chain of command in order to get the assistance you need. But whatever you do, don't keep the information to yourself and do not leave the person alone.

Those Families in the civilian community need to identify the local resources like the social workers, the emergency room or the police and fire department. Our emergency responders have resources that they can refer you to.

All life is valuable and a gift from God. Although we cannot avoid death, we can definitely prevent those deaths caused by suicide. Sometimes a human relationship is all it takes to save life.

Ask the JAG ... about handling debt collectors

By The Task Force XII Legal Office

If you have debts and fall behind on payments, you may be contacted by a debt collector. A debt collector is a person whose job is to collect debts owed to others. *The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act* is a federal law that regulates the methods used by debt collectors to collect debts. *The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act* covers personal, family, and household debts.

What are some of your rights regarding debt collectors?

Debt collectors may not engage in unfair practices when they try to collect a debt.

A debt collector may contact you in person, by mail, telephone, telegram, or fax. However, the debt collector may not contact you at inconvenient times or places unless you agree. The debt collector cannot harass or abuse you in any way while attempting to collect a debt.

A debt collector must send you written

notice telling you the amount of money you owe, the name of the creditor to whom you owe the money, and what action to take if you believe you do not owe the money.

How can you stop a debt collector from contacting you?

If you send a collector a letter stating you do not owe the money within 30 days of receiving notice from the debt collector, the debt collector must stop contacting you. However, the debt collector can continue its attempts to collect the debt if you are sent proof of the debt.

You can also stop a debt collector from contacting you by writing a letter to the debt collector telling them to stop. This does not make the debt go away, it just stops the debt collector from contacting you. In this case, the debt collector may contact you again to inform you of specific action the debt collector intends to take regarding the debt.

Can a debt collector contact third

parties about your debt?

A debt collector may contact other people, but only to find out where you live, what your phone number is, and where you work. The debt collector usually may not tell anyone other than you or your attorney about the debt.

In any situation, if you actually owe the debt, you must pay it. If you have any questions about debt collection, contact the legal office.



The staff of the Task Force XII Legal Office.

Famous artist begins production of 12th CAB print

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of how the print should be designed.

"After a long discussion, outlining the pros and cons, the general consensus was to go with a flight line scene that involved a more personal look at the troopers who fly in (these aircraft) and the support personnel who make it possible for these operations to take place," he said.

"I'm definitely going to get (a print) because we're all part of one big team and that's a good thing to remember," said Babin. "I feel like we're creating a scene that will be remembered throughout history; it's a great honor to be part of that."

After taking enough photographs to have a solid grasp on how to begin his 12th CAB project, Dietz thanked everyone for their help and he participated in a group picture for his own personal memories.

"My wife once asked me if coming to Iraq made a difference in the painting, instead of having someone else shoot pictures and try to make them fit; whether it made the paintings intrinsically deeper



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - James Dietz, an award-winning military and aviation artist, takes a photograph of two 12th Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers. Dietz set up many scenes like this one to get an idea of how to begin the 12th CAB commemorative print.

that I was here," said Dietz. "I have to say of course it does. And if it helps with

the end result, then the unit who brings me here is better for it too."

Task Force Ready leaders lighten load for tower guards

Story by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam, Task Force 49 Public Affairs

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq - The tower guards of Company E, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment received a different kind of gift this holiday season.

Officers and senior noncommissioned officers of 5th Bn., 158th Avn. Regt. took to the towers so that Company E guards could take some much needed time to enjoy the holidays and call their Families.

"Leaders really show the Soldiers how much they care when they're willing to place themselves in their shoes and tell them that they can share the burden," said Capt. Eunice Sorrell, the Company E commander.

When the opportunity to cover down for the guard Soldiers was presented to the leaders, 32 Soldiers came forward to answer the call. Lt. Col. Jack Bone, the commander of 5th Bn., 158th Avn., and battalion Command Sgt. Major John Moore led a team of volunteers, with representatives ranging from chief warrant officers all the way down to two junior enlisted volunteers.

The tower guards were not notified that the senior leaders would be taking their shifts. Many Soldiers, like Spc. Cade Gibson and Pfc. Corlieus Moss, went to the towers like it was just any other day.

"I was pretty surprised," Gibson said. "I really didn't expect it. It definitely put me in a better mood."

Moss said he really enjoyed getting the extra time to relax.

"It helped morale a lot," Moss said. "It was real good to have my platoon sergeant take over the hardest shift for me."

Bone not only participated in the event,



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Photograph from the window of a guard tower.

but insisted he take the first watch.

"It was an eye-opening experience for the majority of [the Soldiers]; to include me," Bone said.

A few individuals, like Capt. Joshua Hawkins, took as many as three shifts, the normal workday for a regular tower guard.

"I can't imagine having that duty daily," Hawkins said. "Complacency, exhaustion, and boredom are your greatest battles. It's the perfect opportunity for leaders to see the execution of policy at the lowest level and the results of their guidance and hopefully inspire them to make improvements."

Staff Sgt. Michael Wischnack, the 5th Bn., 158th Avn. Force Protection Non-commissioned Officer, was there at the beginning and end of every shift change to sign equipment over. He also made sure the volunteers completed all the necessary training.

Before climbing the tower, each volunteer received training on rules of engagement, individual expectations, uniform requirements and other information related to guard duty. After that, the individuals reported to the tower for

their shifts.

It was a logistical challenge to change out so many different volunteer Soldiers during a 24-hour period, Wischnack explained, because there were so many leaders who volunteered.

"It'd be quite a headache if I had to do it everyday," Wischnack said.

Despite the challenge, Wischnack said it was important to give the guard Soldiers some downtime and, as a whole, the operation went as well as planned.

"Considering some of these senior leaders had never pulled tower guard duty before, I'd say it went smoothly," he said.

Bone said he makes it a point as a commander to get out there and see his Soldiers in action so he can better understand what they're experiencing.

In this instance he not only got to see what they were dealing with to accomplish the mission, but he got to experience it.

Pulling guard duty gave him the opportunity to evaluate what was going right and what could be improved in the towers, he said.

"It was a dual purpose mission," Bone said. "The overall intent was to give the Soldiers a break during the holidays, but anytime I can kill two birds with one stone, it's a good day."

Sorrell said she was pleased with the event and is very proud of what the leaders contributed.

"The holidays could have been a lonely and challenging time for our Soldiers due to being away from loved ones," she said. "But our leaders gave the gift of comfort, and made them feel a little closer to home."



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Sgt. Lisa Riat is congratulated by her husband, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jasbir Riat, after he reenlisted her during a ceremony Jan. 1. Jasbir was promoted during a ceremony only minutes before Lisa reenlisted.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Gen. Benjamin Griffin, the commanding general for the U.S. Army Materiel Command, shakes hands with Spc. Bobbie Washburn, a Soldier in 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, during a visit with Task Force XII.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Capt. Jerome Johnston (center) receives the Company C, 412th Aviation Support Battalion colors from Lt. Col. George Hamontree during a Change of Command ceremony Jan. 13.



Photo by Spc. Asad Khan

Task Force XII Commander, Col. Timothy J. Edens, places a patch on the shoulder of Capt. Nicole Dean the Company F, 101st Aviation Regiment commander, during a combat patch ceremony.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Derrick L. Mims

Maj. Heidi Ridenhour (right) passes the Company D, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment colors to Lt. Col. James Macklin during a Change of Command ceremony Jan. 13.



Photo by 1st Sgt. Willie Austin

The Soldiers from Company F, 101st Aviation Regiment, an air traffic control unit from Fort Campbell, Ky., pose for a picture after a combat patch ceremony Jan. 5.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Williams

Pvt. Danielle Muro, a food service specialist in Renegade Troop, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas, poses for a picture with Multi-National Force - Iraq commander, Gen. David Petraeus.

Apaches still need crew chiefs

Crew chiefs help pilots, helicopters continue missions by performing vital maintenance every time they land

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — AH-64D Apache Longbow crew chiefs are proud of their aircraft. They're quick to tell you it's one of the most advanced pieces of equipment in the Army's arsenal.

They boast that the 58 foot-long war-fighting machine travels up to 227 miles per hour and is armed with as many as 16 Hellfire rockets, up to 75 (2.75 inch) aerial rockets; and can carry 1,200 rounds for its 30 mm machine gun.

They'll tell you about their pilots, who are expertly trained in maneuvering and engaging the enemy; pilots who can make an insurgent's day turn really bad ... really fast.

The one thing most of them can't tell you is what it's like to ride in one.

Unlike the UH-60 Black Hawk, or CH-47 Chinook, Apaches are designed to carry only the two pilots; but it's the crew chiefs, on the ground, who keep this aircraft in the fight and running at top performance.

"The crew chiefs are constantly repairing and servicing these aircraft," said Capt. Chad Corrigan, the Tomahawk Troop, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment commander and an Apache pilot. "Even though they don't fly with us, they play a vital role in launch-recover-launch operations."

"Launch-recover-launch" refers to an aircraft taking off on a mission, coming back, being serviced and taking off again; all within a small window of time.

"Apaches may all look the same, but they definitely don't act the same," said Staff Sgt. Jason Combs, a maintenance supervisor and crew chief in Tomahawk Troop. "I don't mind not being able to fly with the helicopters, because I know my



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Spc. Christopher Kell, crew chief in Tomahawk Troop, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, checks the tail rotor on an AH-64D Apache before it takes off on a mission. Kell, a native of Spring Hill, Fla., is qualified to be a crew chief on an Apache and a UH-60 Black Hawk.

job is still important to the pilots."

For every hour these helicopters are flown, says the commander, crew chiefs perform an average of seven hours of maintenance.

"There are usually two crew chiefs assigned to each (helicopter); one per shift," said Combs, a native of Pensacola, Fla. "This allows us to fly these birds 24/7."

"When the aircraft comes to us we check it, double check it and then check it again," said Spc. Christopher Kell, a crew chief in Tomahawk Troop from Spring Hill, Fla. "They wouldn't be able to fly without us taking care of the birds while they're on the ground."

Kell is qualified to be a crew chief for Black Hawks as well, but he says he prefers to work with Apaches because working on them comes more naturally to him.

In addition to performing maintenance on the aircraft, crew chiefs also help guide the aircraft to an area they can takeoff.

"The pilots can't see behind them, and can't tell if their rotors are too close to something," said Spc. Charles Ballato, also a crew chief in Tomahawk Troop. "Helping the helicopters back up on the parking pad can be scary because the aircraft can sometimes turn a little wide and you get pretty close to the tail rotor."

Once the helicopter is cleared for takeoff, the crew chief renders a sharp salute and watches as the pilots take off toward uncertain danger.

"We salute the pilots as they leave to show them honor, because we don't know if this will be the last time we ever see them," said Kell. "We lost some pilots last time we were here, and we know that's part of the job, but I just hope the pilot and the aircraft come back safe."

"I get a little nervous every time I watch my bird take off, because I always wonder what if I didn't do something right or what if something breaks," said Ballato, a native of Wheeling, W. Va. "The pilots trust us to take care of these birds and I don't want to let them down."

Even though the crew chiefs aren't flying with the aircraft, their job is just as important as the pilots, said Corrigan, a native of Rehoboth, Mass.

"If I had the opportunity, I wouldn't mind taking a flight with them," said Kell. "Even if I never do, I still feel proud knowing the aircraft I just fixed is about to go save lives and do great things."

Why I Serve: Soldier joins Army to travel but becomes 'go-to guy'

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Staff Sgt. Derrick Mims, a native of Shreveport, La., has become the “go-to guy” whenever Company D, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment needs something done.

“I do a little bit of everything,” said Mims, the Shops Platoon maintenance supervisor for Company D.

In addition to being the maintenance supervisor, he is also the unit movement officer, the company equal opportunity liaison, the unit historian and the unit photographer.

He has been married to Tamara Mims for almost six years and they have a 5-year-old son named Derrian. Mims says he had no idea exactly where joining the Army would take him.

“I joined the military 13 years ago because I wanted to travel, see different things and just get away from Shreveport,” he said. “Most of my Family thought going into the military wasn’t a good (idea) but, being a rebel, I decided I’m getting out of this place.”

He hoped to become a photographer in the Army, because he had been taking photographs since he was in high school; when that job was unavailable, he chose to pursue his second love ... aviation.

“Growing up, I did a lot of research on aircraft,” he said. “My recruiter had a background in aviation maintenance,

and once he explained his job to me, I knew that’s what I wanted to do.”

He was first stationed in Korea, for five years, and then he moved to Germany where he’s been ever since.

“I’ve known (Mims) since August of 1999,” said Company D 1st Sgt. Ronald Pickens, a native of Abilene, Texas.

The two kept in touch over the years, and Pickens says, he even received a call from Mims before he went to Iraq in 2003 because he had some questions, and needed a little mentorship, on how to handle his first deployment.

Mims, now on his third deployment, is giving the same mentorship he received from Pickens to the younger and less experienced Soldiers of Company D.

“He’s been married for quite some time, and this is his third deployment,” said Pickens. “One of the things the junior Soldiers, who are married, need is that faith and confidence that a marriage can work through these deployments. He gives them a little advice here and there on how to handle situations, because everything seems to magnify while you’re apart.”

As for his dreams of becoming an Army photographer, Mims says he has accomplished just as much as any military photographer.

“I’ve had photos published in Freedom Watch Magazine, the Anaconda Times,



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Staff Sgt. Derrick Mims, the Shops Platoon maintenance supervisor for Company D, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation, enjoys taking pictures of activities that happen in the Company D area.

EURARMY Magazine, Army Aviation Magazine (Quad-A) and on various web pages (USAREUR, V Corp, U.S. Army, etc),” said Mims. “I’ve also had non-military related photos published in the “Girls of Lowrider Magazine” and various webzines.

Ever since he’s known Mims, Pickens says, he’s been his “go-to guy” to get things done.

“Whether it’s handling unit equipment movement or temporarily filling in as platoon sergeant, he’d be the guy I would turn to,” he said. “I know he can perform any job asked of him, and someday soon he’s going to make a great platoon sergeant.”

Why I Serve: Attorney enlists for the money, but sticks around for the adventure

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – More than four years ago, Sgt. David Williams decided to join the Army because he owed a lot of money.

Williams, a native of San Diego, was more than \$100,000 in debt; not from over charged credit cards or gambling, but from student loans.

“After I graduated from the University of Notre Dame, with a degree in political science, I went to the University of Southern California School of Law and earned a Juris Doctorate,” said Williams, a production control manager for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in Company G, Task Force XII. “My friends from college went on to become lawyers, and I have cousins, who followed in my footsteps to law school, who are lawyers.”

Although he passed the California bar exam, and his family felt he should practice law, the Army was willing to provide him with something that law firms in his area could not.

“I lived near a naval base, and I saw all of these signs that said the military would pay up to \$65,000 of your college loans,” he said. “So I talked to a recruiter and he told me that the Army could pay that amount of money and could also send me to Europe.”

Being able to be stationed in Europe played a vital role of his decision, he said.

“I spent my junior year of college in Toledo, Spain, and I just fell in love with



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Sgt. David Williams, a production control manager in Company G, Task Force XII, briefs Soldiers on the status of unmanned aerial vehicle maintenance.

Europe,” said Williams. “It gave me a taste for foreign cultures and made me appreciate how much there is outside of the U.S.”

The guaranteed money to help pay his student loans and the opportunity to return to Europe would not have been available if he had decided to join the Army as a commissioned officer.

“It’s not a big deal to me because I love my job,” he said. “I probably get asked once a week why I’m enlisted if I have a law degree.”

“I’ve known (Williams) for about a month and a half, and I was kind of

shocked when I found out about his college background,” said Sgt. Aaron Mertens, the lead UAV maintainer in Company B, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. “I was shocked because I don’t think I would have chosen to enlist in the military with that kind of a degree.”

Being in the Army has changed his goals in life because it has provided him with many wonderful experiences and the opportunity to meet really amazing people, said Williams.

“Growing up, I thought (being a lawyer) would be the greatest thing, and I didn’t think that much about the Army,” he said. “Now I think the opposite, I think that (practicing) law isn’t that great, and the Army turned out to be a lot more than ever I expected it to be.”

When he returns to Germany, Williams says, he plans to apply for Special Forces selection or to become a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot.

It’s great that he’s going after what he loves to do instead of what everybody expects him to do, said Mertens, a native of Jefferson City, Mo.

“Most of my classmates have jobs that pay well and they get to go home at the end of the day,” he said. “If I could live more than one life then that choice would be great, but I’ve got to be Special Forces, a pilot or something cool because I just like that adrenaline rush. I want to be at the tip of the spear and have a long and distinguished Army career.”

It's a 12th CAB Wedding in Iraq



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Sgt. Alhaji Savage (left) and Spc. Karma Savage, both Soldiers in the 412th Aviation Support Battalion, exchange vows during their wedding Jan. 15.

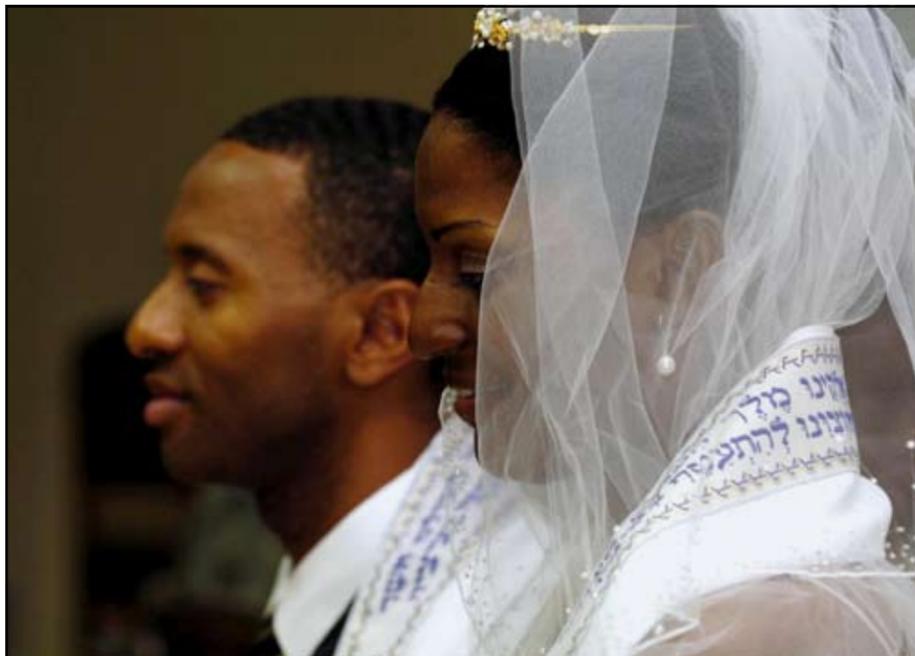


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Sgt. Alhaji Savage (left) and Spc. Karma Savage at the altar during their Jan. 15 wedding at the Freedom Chapel on LSA Anaconda, Iraq.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Sgt. Alhaji Savage (left) and Spc. Karma Savage, both Soldiers in the 412th Aviation Support Battalion, share a piece of cake after their Jan. 15 wedding at the Freedom Chapel on LSA Anaconda, Iraq.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

412th Aviation Support Battalion Chaplain (Capt.) Gabriel Mizerani guides Spc. Karma Savage and Sgt. Alhaji Savage in a candle-lighting ritual during their Jan. 15 wedding LSA Anaconda, Iraq.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Sgt. Alhaji Savage (right) and Spc. Karma Savage pose for a few wedding photos in front of one of their unit's fuel tankers decked out for the occasion by their fellow 412th Aviation Support Battalion Soldiers.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Soldiers from the 412th Aviation Support Battalion line up to congratulate one of their own, Sgt. Alhaji Savage, after his wedding to Spc. Karma Savage, also a 412th Soldier, Jan. 15 at the Freedom Chapel on LSA Anaconda, Iraq.

Air Force weather forecasters in Task Force XII aid aviation operations by watching skies

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – In the midst of all the black and white maps and radar images that litter the office, hangs a photo of a beautiful beach setting with crystal blue waters and palm trees gently swaying in the breeze.

This depiction of perfect weather seems oddly out of place for a weather office in a country where the weather is anything but perfect.

The members of the Task Force XII staff weather office are used to feeling a little out of place.

The eight non-flight Airmen, working amongst a few thousand Soldier-aviators who patrol the skies of Baghdad every day, are proud of their unique role.

“Providing support for the Army, or going to work on an Army base, there’s a lot of misconceptions about what we know about the Army, or what they know about us,” said Texarkana, Ark. native, Technical Sgt. David Ivey, a battlefield weather forecaster.

“It’s a good experience, and when it comes down to it, we’re all pretty much the same.”

Ivey has been working with the Army for two of his six years as a weather forecaster.

He says that despite the obvious uniform differences, he and his fellow Airmen live and work amongst the Army just like any Soldier in the brigade.

There is one minor difference.

While the Soldiers of the brigade will serve 15 months in Iraq, the Airmen are here and back in five months, in accordance with Air Force policy.

“Our co-workers (in the Army) tease us about the shorter tours, but teasing is pretty much all it is,” said Ivey.

“The Soldiers in this brigade are great people. They’re aviators, so they’re about as close to the Air Force as you can get,” said staff weather officer, Capt. Shawn Beskar. “We get good support from them, and I think we provide good support in return.”

The mission for the



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Texarkana, Ark. native, Technical Sgt. David Ivey records weather data from the roof of the Task Force XII tactical operations center. Ivey, or one of his fellow Airmen, climbs to the top of the roof at least once per hour to observe the current weather conditions and visibility in order to help forecast weather conditions for Army aviation operations in support of Multi-National Division-Baghdad.

Airmen of Task Force XII is a key element to flight operations, he said.

“We take weather observations, looking out for hazardous weather, so if a warning needs to be issued, we’ll take care of that,” said Beskar, who hails from Egan, Minn. “We also provide mission services, which are the flight weather briefings for the crews.

They also deliver updated weather forecasts in person to the pilots, answer the radio when pilots contact them for updates, and they provide the weather briefs for the leadership to help them plan missions, said Egan

In addition to the immediate support they provide for the brigade, they also send their weather data through an automated network to the Air Force Weather Agency in Omaha, Neb.

Their work is available on computer networks around the world.

Much of their weather collection is done through internet weather hubs that produce analysis of weather, and with their own sophis-

ticated equipment that takes automated measurements.

One of their most reliable pieces of equipment, though, is the ladder outside their window.

“At least once an hour, one of our observers goes up to the roof of the building and takes the weather observations,” said Beskar. “We’re looking for known markers at certain distances to see how far we can see.

They’re looking at the sky’s condition, the kinds of clouds and the altitude of those clouds, he said.

“For the most part the weather’s pretty good, so the job’s not too stressful,” said Ivey. “Bad weather here usually has to do with dust or smoke.”

“When (bad) weather’s coming it gets a lot more stressful,” he said. A lot of people are asking a lot of questions and you want to give them the right answer.

“You want to make sure that your warnings are correct because a bad report can have

a pretty negative impact on operations,” said Ivey.

When they leave their current assignments, the Airmen assigned to Task Force XII may return to Air Force bases, concentrating on weather that affects an F-16 Fighting Falcon or C-130 Hercules instead of a UH-60 Black Hawk or AH-64 Apache.

“Weather is weather, of course,” said Beskar. “Most of the Air Force assets are flying a lot higher, and maybe a lot faster, so the things they’re going to be affected by are going to be different.

“Helicopters are flying lower. They’re in the weather,” he said. “So we have to be especially attentive to the details.”

Although on this wet, cold January day, the weather in Taji is nowhere near as perfect as the photo in their office, the Airmen of the Task Force XII weather office assure the Army there’s good weather on the horizon ... and if anything changes, they’ll be the first to know.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Egan, Minn. native, Air Force Capt. Shawn Beskar updates pilots on the current weather conditions in the area here. Beskar is one of eight Airmen who provide weather forecasts for the Army’s aviation operations in Multi-National Division-Baghdad for Task Force XII.

Soldiers participate in casualty exercise

Task Force XII troops train for worst possible scenario

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – It was Spc. Lisett Chaparro's day off, and she decided to ride her bike to the post office to mail some souvenirs home to her family.

For Chaparro, and most of the people here, this day was just like any other ... at least until the alarm sounded.

"It was extremely loud and everybody could hear it," said Chaparro, a combat medic in Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment from Los Angeles. "I grabbed my bike and rode all the way (to the clinic); I had two minutes to get on all my gear."

After she put on her protective gear, and everyone went to their posts, the Task Force XII Aviation Medicine Clinic was ready to carry out its mission of receiving and treating injured personnel during the simulated massive ca-

sualty exercise.

During this exercise, attacks on the base produced several simulated casualties who needed to be treated, said Capt. Joe Dominguez, a physician's assistant in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII.

"We were subsequently told over the radio what types of injuries we had and we sent out medical help," said Dominguez, a native of Amarillo, Texas. "The ambulances went out and sorted the patients according to their urgency for medical care."

While the Soldiers in the ambulances were picking up patients, several Soldiers were assigned the task of guarding the medical facility.

"Our job is to guard the clinic and control the flow of personnel inside," said Spc. Trinidad Arzate, a medic in HHT 4/3 ACR and native of Yuma, Ariz. "Limiting the number of personnel



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Spc. Lisett Chaparro, a combat medic for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, checks the heartbeat of a patient during a massive casualty exercise. She was enjoying a day off when the attack alarm sounded.

inside reduces chaos, and helps the medics concentrate on their job."

After patients were taken off the ambulance, they were taken to their respective areas, where they received the best medical treatment available, said Spc. Micah Barley, a medic in 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment.

"Everyone seemed to be willing to pitch in and do the job that needed to be done," said Barley,

a native of Marion, Ind. "We were ready to do whatever was needed to treat those patients and make sure they received the best care possible."

Working together, like this, during an unexpected emergency helps prepare Soldiers to handle the real thing, said Chaparro.

"It could happen in the middle of the night or on your day off," she said. "We always have to be prepared to come in, no matter what time

it is, to do what we are trained to do ... and that's save lives."

Even though the events and the injuries were simulated, the knowledge and experience gained by the Soldiers were real.

"It was good training for new medics who have not seen any casualties," said Dominguez. "It was good for those of us who've been there before to get reacquainted with the types of events that could happen."

Try to incorporate safety into your everyday life

Story by Master Sgt. Jef Fisher and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Curtis Bell

The Army's big on safety. They must be, or they wouldn't pay guys like us hundreds upon hundreds of dollars each month to follow you around, telling you to slow down and put on a reflective belt. But it doesn't stop with us. Safety warnings are all around you. You just have to look in the right place.

The next time you're curled up next to the heater in your container housing unit, engaged in reading your favorite Army technical manual or regulation, pay attention to all the warnings.

What? You mean you don't do that?

A good example is AR 58-1. It's the regulation for management, acquisition, and use of motor vehicles. Basically, it talks about how vehicles should and shouldn't be used in the Army. Inside its 64 pages, you'll find the words "safe" or "safety" mentioned a total of 73 times. For those of you doing the math at home, that's an average of 1.14 mentions of safety per page.

For the most part, we do a pretty good job of being safe with vehicles considering just how dangerous operating several



thousand pounds of metal on four wheels could potentially be ... but what about other everyday tasks?

Take a look at the user's manual you have buried in the cabinet under your copy machine. You'll see phrases like "carefully remove", "use caution when" or "gently place" throughout the manual. A copy machine seems like a fairly safe piece of equipment to use, but apparently the California Department of Transportation experienced such a rash of injuries that they felt the need to publish their own "2007 code of safe practices for using a copy machine."

Even that bottle of Pert Plus shampoo I took to the shower this morning felt the need to tell me that I shouldn't put it in my eyes or swallow it.

Most of this stuff seems laughable enough. You certainly don't need us to tell you not to swallow shampoo or dump toner in your eye. But inevitably, someone reading this will be at the clinic before the end of the deployment explaining an injury that could have easily been avoided if they had taken the time to read the instructions.

Accidents happen; it's a fact of life. For example, if you break your leg because you accidentally fell off a ladder, nobody will blame you. But if you fell because you were standing on top of the sticker that said "do not stand on this step", you can feel free to blame yourself.

Above all, be safe. Read the regulations, and look for the safety precautions. They're there to protect you. In the meantime, keep an eye out for the safety guys. All the preaching about safety belts and trip hazards doesn't mean much if you don't take action to prevent accidents.

Thanks for all you do to keep us all safe!

On the Streets of Taji ... What's your '08 New Year's resolution?



Spc. Marquitta Lino-Wood, a human resources specialist in 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment and a native of Norfolk, Va.



My New Year's resolution is to be an all-around better person, and it's coming along so far. I want to continue to communicate more and be a more understanding person in my personal life and at work.

Sgt. John Yang, a supply sergeant in Company C, 412th Aviation Support Battalion and a native of Vailoatai, American Samoa



My New Year's resolution is to try to get the supplies that our Soldiers, at Camp Taji and LSA Anaconda, need as soon as possible. As long as the supply warehouse keeps the items we need in stock it should be easy to make this happen; I just want to find a faster way to transport the supplies.

Spc. Martin Hooker, a radio traffic controller in Company F, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment and a native of Interlaken, N.Y.



My New Year's resolution is to keep in touch with my Family and friends back home more. The last time I was deployed, I didn't do a good job but this time I'm calling a lot more and sending cards as much as possible; I want to try and keep this up for the rest of my deployment.



Spc. Dominic Baker, a radio and telephone operator in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII and native of Fontana, Calif.

My New Year's resolution is to study for the promotion board and get promoted. I've been studying, and I think that with my NCO's continuing to help me study, I can make it happen.



Spc. Paul Porter, a flight operations monitor in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment and a native of Tuscaloosa, Ala..

My New Year's resolution is to get promoted to sergeant and prepare myself to go to the staff sergeant board. I would also like to make time to take a few online classes, and continue communicating with my wife and two children as much as possible.



Spc. Danielle Wriedt, the mailroom clerk for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII and native of Milwaukee.

My New Year's resolution is to try to be more optimistic than pessimistic, and to get over the past so I can move toward the future. I would also like to maintain my weight-loss goals and continue to cut back on smoking; I really would like to live healthier.

Got a photo you want to share? How about a story 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.

Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy is awarding a \$50 gift certificate to the best "Mean Warrior Griffin" digital drawing. The drawing will be used for the 12th CAB CSM NCO/Soldier Leadership Award.



The deadline to submit your drawing will be 4 FEB 08 at 2200. For more information, or to submit a drawing, contact SGT Jimenez at DSN 843-3026 or zaida.jimenez@iraq.centcom.mil. Best of luck to all artists!

Task Force XII troops stay ready

Force protection drill helps keep Soldiers on their toes

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Spc. David Leopold sat in the break room of the brigade air defense operations center. A fuel handler for Company E, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, Leopold is used to working hard.

For the past few days, he'd been doing just that while manning a guard tower on his forward operating base just outside Baghdad.

It's part of the job for Soldiers of all military occupational specialties while stationed in Iraq.

For days at a time, they leave their flight lines, motor pools and offices to gear up and watch a fence line.

On the inside of the fence is the Iraq they know; sand bag covered container housing units, dining facilities, rocks and mud.

On the other side, an Iraqi city bustles with street vendors, children playing soccer and an ever-increasing flurry of activity signaling new life in a war-torn country.

For many, like Leopold, watching the city from a tower is as close as they'll get to life outside the FOB.

For now, sitting in the break room, he and others were watching a movie



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Spc. Bryan Coffey, a nodal network operator from Company C, 412th Aviation Support Battalion, stands guard on the roof of a Task Force XII building center during a base force protection exercise. Coffey, a native of Anderson, S.C., is one of several Soldiers in Task Force XII who rarely leave the base, but stand ready in case of an attack.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Pfc. David Hochnedel (left) leads a litter team, carrying an injured Soldier, into the Task Force XII Aviation Medical Clinic during a force protection exercise. Hochnedel, a combat medic in 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, was one of the Soldiers tasked with sorting casualties according to their urgency for medical care.

between shifts.

A voice broke over the radio with a single code word that instantly told the Soldiers, "We are under attack!"

Leopold sprang to life. His body reacted before his mind could process the next steps, and before he knew it he was standing in full body armor waiting for instructions.

He was sent to guard an important tactical operations center.

"When an attack happens, everybody (on tower guard duty) not manning the tower is sent to areas on base to guard sensitive property," said Leopold, a native of Lawton, Okla. "There's no set time limit for how fast we have to be in place, we just move as quickly as we can to secure the area."

This one was just an exercise. The base was still secure, and all was well at Camp Taji. But training like this is important for a lot of reasons, say those who participated.

"It's a good reminder that we're still in a combat zone," said Leopold. "The war doesn't stop on a FOB just because we put up a fence. Anything can happen."

"The attack exercise simulates what would happen if the base were overrun," said San Antonio, Texas native Sgt. 1st Class Shon Skinner, the Task Force XII force protection non-commissioned officer. "In an aviation unit, we've got a pretty important task of protecting this airfield."

During the exercise, organizers watch to see how people will react. They have goals for what should happen if a base is attacked. The exercise lets them see

what actually happens.

"We put a lot of emphasis on getting it right, and I put a lot of stress on Soldiers," said Skinner. "We have to see what happens, and what their attitudes are when we start inducing stress."

Statistics in the global war on terrorism say the chances of a forward operating base being attacked by anything beyond the occasional mortar or indirect fire are low.

And Taji's brigade combat team Soldiers, who regularly patrol the streets of Baghdad, tell stories and bring back photos of reconciliation and improved security.

But insurgents in Iraq have tried the coordinated attacks on other bases. So far, none have succeeded. The idea of practicing the attack drill is to keep it that way.

"Personally, I don't see (an attack on Taji) happening, but it's comforting to know we have a plan," said Task Force XII network systems operator, Spc. Bryan Coffey, who hails from Anderson, S.C. "It could definitely save lives by getting us into place if something did happen."

"We are ready (for something to happen), and we'll always be ready," said Skinner. "If not, we'll continue to train until we are."

For Leopold, the message was clear. Whether or not he's seen it in his six months of pumping fuel in Iraq, the war that his hard work supports outside the fence is very real.

"I guess anything can happen inside or outside," he said. "We're going to be ready for either one."

On the Home Front



Photo by Ronald H. Toland Jr.

Rachel Butera, an intern from University of Northern Iowa, consoles Justin Britton and Major Roundtree during playtime at the Katterbach Child Development Center, where she works with 3 to 5 year olds. She plans to become a social worker and later work on she masters in social work.



Photo by Ronald H. Toland Jr.

Rachel Gonzales, an intern from The University of Toledo in Ohio, helps toddlers prepare for snack-time by pouring milk for Dylan Dempster and other toddlers at the Katterbach Child Development Center. She plans to return to college after this internship to complete her classes for graduation.



Photo by Ronald H. Toland Jr.

Capt. Stephen Short, USAG Ansbach Provost Marshall, receives a handmade gift from Varinia Bulut from the Walburgisheim Von Feucht Kinderheim; 43 children from the home shared some holiday cheer at USAG Ansbach.



Photo by His Mommy

Norman Hoff enjoys a friendly game of bowling with Family and friends at the Katterbach Kaserne Bowling Alley. Hoff, 3, is the son of 12th Combat Aviation Brigade operations officer, Lt. Col. Bryan Hoff.



Photo by Jim Hughes

Maximus Brandel, Katterbach Commissary store work leader supervisor, was recently recognized for his outstanding customer service. Brandel helped a woman, who was shopping in the store with her four children, when her 4-year-old became ill and collapsed face down on the floor.



Photo by Ronald H. Toland Jr.

Sandy Nunez-Miller and her son Christopher, observe the static display with Michael Butul from the Walburgisheim Von Feucht Kinderheim during the children's annual visit to the garrison right before Christmas.

MNC-I Deputy visits Taji

General thanks Soldiers for a job well done

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Maj. Gen. James Simmons, the deputy commanding general for Multi-National Corps – Iraq, made a special visit to the Task Force XII area of operations Jan. 15.

Simmons, who has been a distinguished guest at several Task Force XII ceremonies, presented awards to the senior leadership of Task Force XII.

“I came here to present some awards to some great leaders,” he said. “You’ve (earned) an incredible reputation because of your standards and discipline.”

He presented Air Medals to Col.

Timothy Edens, the commander of Task Force XII, Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy and the executive officer, Lt. Col. Charles Bowery; the operations officer, Lt. Col. Bryan Hoff, was presented a Bronze Star.

In addition to presenting the awards, Simmons had lunch with all the company commanders, battalion commanders and staff officers in Task Force XII.

“You play a huge and significant role in the operations being conducted in Iraq,” he said. “I call this war the second helicopter war because I don’t know any (brigade combat team) commander who would take on a combat mission when you can’t fly.”

Simmons, who is also a pilot, has flown numerous times with Task Force XII helicopter flight crews.

“Those door-gunners, crew chiefs and pilots are the ones whose shoulders you are standing on,” he said. “You have to continue to maximize every hour you have to get every hour of effectiveness out of those blades.”

He also talked about leaving Iraq in a few weeks, because his replacement had arrived, and his plans to retire this summer.

“This may be the last time I talk to some of you,” said Sim-



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Maj. Gen. James Simmons, the deputy commander for Multi-National Corps – Iraq, makes a speech thanking the Soldiers of Task Force XII for their commitment and service. After his speech, he presented awards to several of the senior leaders in Task Force XII.

mons. “I’m going to ride off into the sunset; you are the future, and you have to continue to take charge of that future.”

Edens presented Simmons with a cyclic grip, a helicopter control stick, attached to the end of a staff as a going away present and thanked him for all that he has done for the Soldiers of Task Force XII.

“All of you have done an absolutely magnificent job and I’m proud to even be associated with you,” said Simmons. “We’re winning this war because you are doing good stuff ... but there’s still more to get done.”



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Maj. Gen. James Simmons, the deputy commander for Multi-National Corps – Iraq, presents an Air Medal to Task Force XII commander, Timothy Edens. Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy and executive officer, Lt. Col. Charles Bowery, were also awarded Air Medals; the operations officer, Lt. Col. Bryan Hoff, was awarded a Bronze Star.

TASK FORCE XII
WINGS OF VICTORY

For the latest news and photos...

Photo by SPC Khanh Quach

www.12cab.army.mil

Do you have questions about your reenlistment options, or any retention questions in general? If so, please contact your unit Career Counselor or Retention NCO, listed below, for more information.

Task Force XII Senior Career Counselor	SGT Bercher 483-2444
SFC Organ 483-4161	2-147th AVN
HHC Task Force XII	SFC Wahlberg 483-2446
SSG Ruffin 483-4071	3-159th AVN
412th ASB	SGT Warren 467-4869
SFC Britton 483-7072	1-214th AVN
5-158th AVN	SGT Leon 382-4415
SSG Lemon 483-2687	3-58th AOD
3-158th AVN	SGT Wacker 467-4983
SSG Olivo 483-2487	12th CAB Rear Detachment Career Counselor
2-159th AVN	SSG Simmons 467-4869

USAREUR's Commanding General visits Task Force XII, answers questions from Soldiers

By Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Making his rounds to his units deployed to Iraq, U.S. Army Europe Commander, General David McKiernan, paid a visit to the Soldiers of Task Force XII Jan 18.

McKiernan and members of his staff, including Command Sgt. Maj. Iuniasolua Savusa, took the opportunity to meet with leaders and Soldiers and to talk about the way ahead for the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade.

"The 12th CAB's future is pretty solid in Europe," said McKiernan during a briefing with the brigade commander, Col. Timothy Edens, and his staff. "We're trying to put some money in your facilities while you're gone."

McKiernan pointed to ongoing upgrades in the brigade's home station com-

munities of Katterbach and Illesheim, Germany, and talked about projects, such as new housing, that will continue as the 12th CAB makes its home in Europe more permanent.

Visiting Soldiers and leaders on the flight lines and dining facilities, McKiernan and Savusa mostly listened to what the Soldiers had to say and answered questions on a variety of topics.

"The backbone of our Army is noncommissioned officers and junior officers," said McKiernan. "If we don't keep that group in the Army, fighting this war and transforming our Army can't happen."

The USAREUR leaders assured the Soldiers on the ground that there were ongoing talks within the Army's leadership to try to reduce the tour length, and get Soldiers as much time as possible at

home.

"I'm very proud of what you're doing here," he said. "Your communities are proud of you too, and are doing well."



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - U.S. Army Europe commander, Gen. David McKiernan takes a moment to visit with Capt. Eric Halstrom and other Soldiers in Task Force XII over lunch Jan 18. This was one of many stops for McKiernan and his staff while paying a visit to Task Force XII and other units based in Europe who are currently serving in Iraq.

The Griffin Brigade Chronicles: History of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade (Part 6)

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



While most of the current elements of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade trace their lineages to units that served in Vietnam, few have as storied a history as our Company A, 3rd Battalion 158th Aviation Regiment "Blue Stars."

This unit was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia on 5 July 1965 as the 48th Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Light), and was part of the initial airmobility tests that formed the 11th Air Assault Division, later renamed the 1st Cavalry Division.

The Blue Stars shipped out for Vietnam in November 1965, becoming one of the first Army Aviation units to deploy to Southeast Asia.

During their long and distinguished time in Vietnam, they earned several unit awards for gallantry, participated in sixteen major campaigns, and were one of the last helicopter companies to leave the country at war's end, carrying with

them their hard-earned motto, "Skill Not Luck."

In August 1972 the Blue Stars redeployed from Vietnam to ... where else, Katterbach Army Airfield!

They became an element of the 223rd Aviation Battalion, a VII Corps asset, and in a few years' time moved to Stuttgart, where in 1982 they were the first USAREUR aviation unit to field the UH-60 Black Hawk.

In the midst of moves to Weisbaden and then Giebelstadt, the Blue Stars participated in the Beirut Air Bridge from 1986-1988, and deployed to Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm with Task Force Griffin.



In August 2000, the Blue Stars became part of the Storm Rider Battalion, reflagged as A Co., 3rd Bn., 158th Avn. Regt. After distinguished service in OIF I and OEF 3, the company moved back to its old Franconian home at Katterbach along with

the rest of 3rd Bn., 158th Avn. Regt., becoming part of the 12th CAB.

As Mark Twain once said, "History doesn't repeat itself, but sometimes it rhymes."

See you next month!



Photo from <http://www.raydon.com/48ahc/default.htm>

Soldiers in Company A, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment "Blue Stars" pose next to the tail of a UH-1 Huey.

Task Force XII Commander
Col. Timothy J. Edens

Task Force XII Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy

Task Force XII Public Affairs Officer
Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

The Griffin Editor
Sgt. Brandon Little



To contact Task Force XII PAO
Building 127
Camp Taji, Iraq
DSN: 318 843-5320
christopher.seaton@iraq.centcom.mil
brandon.little@iraq.centcom.mil

This edition and all others can be found online at:
www.12cab.army.mil

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