

Volume 1, Issue 8

“WINGS OF VICTORY!”

DECEMBER 2007

Task Force XII hands over controls to Task Force 49, moves to Taji for new mission

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq - Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII officially transferred command of Multi-National Corps – Iraq’s key aviation asset to Task Force 49 during a transfer of authority (TOA) ceremony conducted on Logistics Support Area Anaconda Dec. 3.

This ceremony welcomed Task Force 49 into their new role, as well as marked the beginning of a new mission for Task Force XII.

“With this transfer of authority, we’re going to prove that Army Aviation has the same capabilities and flexibility as our ground forces,” said Maj. Gen. James E. Simmons, the deputy commanding general of Multi-National Corps – Iraq.

Instead of going home, the headquarters element of Task Force XII moved to Camp Taji to assume the command of the aviation task force for Multi-National Division-Baghdad.

The new task force is comprised of the 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, from Fort Hood Texas; the 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment; Air Traffic Services Soldiers from Company F, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment from Fort Campbell, Ky., a tactical unmanned aerial vehicle company and a Forward Logistics Element from the 412th Aviation Support Battalion.

“I am confident that (these battalions) designated in Task Force XII, at Taji, will exceed all expectations,” said Col. Timothy J. Edens, the commander of Task Force XII.

Headquarters, and Headquarters Company, Task Force 49 comes from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, and will assume command of these units:

- 2-159th ARB

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(Top) Col. Timothy J. Edens (left), the commander of Task Force XII, carefully furls the brigade’s colors with the help of the Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy during a transfer of authority ceremony held on Logistics Support Area Anaconda Dec. 3. (Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little)
(Bottom) Task Force 49 commander, Col. Chandler C. Sherrell (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Mitchell unfurl the brigade’s colors during a TOA ceremony. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt)

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Griffin 06 Sends ... continuing to Soldier on

Soldiers and Family members of Task Force XII:

A few months ago, I wrote in this column cautioning you against the dangers of complacency. It's amazing just how little opportunity we've had to become complacent since then.

Over the past month, the Soldiers of Task Force XII have become experts in the process of relief in place. Beginning with the arrival of Task Force 49 at Balad in mid-November, and ending with our farewell to the outstanding Soldiers of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade (ACB), now in their final days.

I hope you took the opportunity to learn something new during your interactions with your counterparts during each RIP. Whether it was through the fresh eyes of Soldiers who took over your jobs at Balad; adjusting to new missions and task organization changes at Balad; or lessons from the veteran ACB Soldiers on their way out, each had great information. I can guarantee you that I took every opportunity to pick the brains of both Task Force 49's Col. Skip Sherrell and 1st ACB's Col. Dan Shanahan.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Col. Shanahan, Command Sgt. Maj. Spiva and the Warriors of the 1st ACB. They did some truly amazing things during their 15 months here in Iraq.

Most of them sacrificed not one, but two holiday seasons in the name of service to country. Their tenure here saw a massive decline in violence and tremendous progress in the peace process, which was due in no small part to their outstanding dedication.

They also experienced the loss of seven



gallant troopers who paid the ultimate price for our liberties. The sacrifice of these Warriors, their Families, and the day-to-day sacrifices made by all the ACB Soldiers must not be in vain. We owe it to them, as well as to ourselves, to continue to build upon their legacy here in MND-B.

To Lt. Col. Todd Royar, and the Soldiers of the 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment; Welcome to the Task Force XII team! I am more than impressed with what I have seen so far.

I also would like to welcome the great Soldiers from all the MND-B brigade combat teams organized under our Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Company (G/TF XII-Provisional) and the Air-Traffic Services Company (F/7-101) from Fort Campbell to the team here at Taji.

To all the Family members back home in Germany, at Fort Hood, Fort Campbell,

and around the United States during this holiday season, the transition is complete. We are now finally planted, and ready to go about the business of providing the best possible aviation support for Multi-National Division-Baghdad. You should all be extremely proud of your Soldiers as the GRIFFINS now provide the critical Army Aviation needed to both a Division in Baghdad, and the Corps throughout Iraq.

I urge you to work to re-establish those routines that will help you make the remainder of this deployment bearable. I realize there is no tougher time than the holidays to be separated from loved ones. Continue to watch out for one another, and seek help if you need someone to talk too.

I personally would like nothing more than to celebrate this holiday season with my wife Leslie and our five beautiful children. But I also understand that they, like our fellow citizens, are able to celebrate the joys of the holiday season because Soldiers like us, and Families like yours and mine are willing to subordinate personal wants – even needs – to the defense of the principles that assure us the possibility of those and many other wonderful things.

I will always remember this deployment and the time I spent serving in both LSA Anaconda and Camp Taji with the fine Soldiers of Task Force XII.

Wherever you are this season, Command Sgt. Maj. Kennedy and I wish you the very best. Thank you for your continued service to our great nation.

Wings of Victory!

Griffin 6

COL Timothy J. Edens

Command Sergeant Major's Corner

Merry Christmas from Iraq to my wonderful Griffin Family!

Christmas time to me has always been about Family and friends spending time together and celebrating the birth of Christ our lord. I know that many of you have missed a few Christmases together; Deborah and I have missed 10 or more over the last thirty years.

I find that the separation makes my appreciation of being together that much more special.

My prayer is that you and your Family enjoy each other during this special season and lift each others' spirits as you celebrate.

The Griffin team has grown; Task Force 49 and Task Force XII Griffins now occupy Taji and Balad, Iraq. Your husbands and wives are doing some incredible work here, and they are known all over Iraq as the best darn aviation brigade in country.

It's an honor to serve on this team and to be part of an organization that cares

about each and every Soldier. America's best and brightest fill the ranks of this team; you see it everyday. Just doing their job is not good enough ... they want to be the best, and they are.

We miss you terribly, and we love you in our dreams. We count our blessings and they get us through the day. The smell of a newborn baby, the warm smile of a friend, the mischievous grin of our children and the touch of our spouses are the day-dreams that make us grateful for the next day to fly by.

The meaning of life is to love and to be loved; and we want you to know that we love you. Please take care of yourself and the children, be part of the FRG family, and ask for help if you need it. This will enable me to focus on the mission here in Iraq, which in turn will help me come home to you.

If I know you're strong and have help when you need it, I won't be distracted and it will make me a safer warrior. These are the words of your husband or wives;



they want nothing more than for you to be happy and safe.

Col. Edens and I wish each and everyone in the Griffin Family a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

If your Soldier needs some help or just someone to talk too, have them come see me please.

A moment with the Chaplain

Shedding light on the holiday season

By Chaplain (Maj.) David G. Waweru

I recently attended a Hanukkah menorah lighting ceremony at Camp Taji Iraq. The story of the menorah was explained as a miracle that happened in the year 168 BC. When the cleansing of the Jewish Temple took place, a small amount of consecrated oil inexplicably lasted for eight days - just enough time to consecrate the oil for holy use in the Temple.

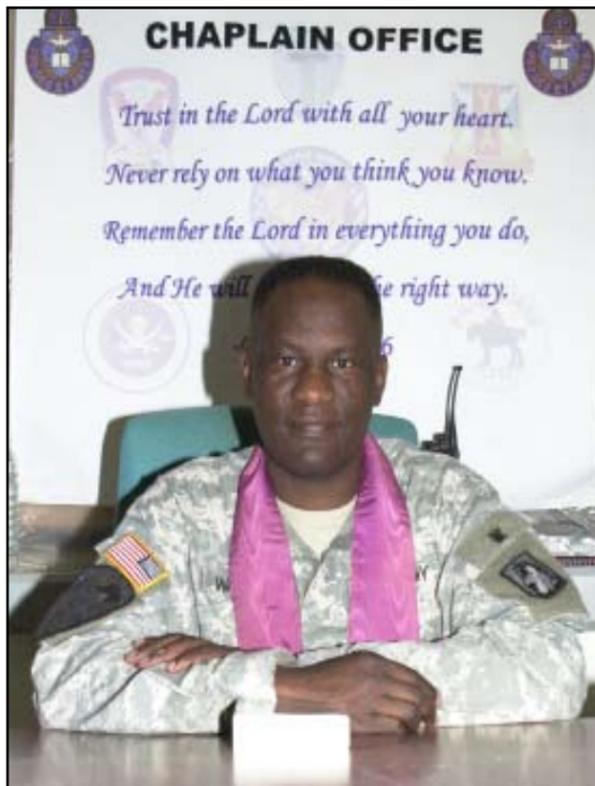
In this ceremony, the first lantern fueled by olive oil was lit as the rabbi led us in prayer. Light display is common in many religions in the world.

It's interesting that even though we are thousands of miles from home, some Christmas trees have found their way to Iraq; and the lights seem even brighter and more beautiful when there aren't as many.

Many religions of the world have some of their celebrations illuminated by celebratory lights.

These lights are even more visible as the hours of darkness come earlier and the nights seem darker than usual. At this time of the year whether you live in Ansbach-Illesheim, Germany or in Killeen-Fort Hood, Texas, you have to use your headlights a little earlier than usual in order to illuminate your way.

The festive lights on a Christmas tree illuminate and beautify their surround-



ings and drive the darkness away.

In other traditions, the candle lights in a menorah or at Kwanzaa illuminate the room with the same effect; the diwali lights in Hinduism and Sikhism in Asia signify the victory of good versus evil. In Christianity the light symbolizes the presence of God and, we can also say, the defeat of evil. When the light comes darkness goes away.

As the darkness falls upon the earth

earlier in this season, so the darkness of life falls upon men, women and even children. As you celebrate Christmas, or any other holiday apart from your loved ones, remember there are others who are not as fortunate as we are. Husbands and wives will be celebrating the holidays without their spouses; children without a parent and parents without children.

As we prepare for the holidays, let us be very deliberate in illuminating someone's darkness with our light of love and concern. Over this holiday season, some people are overcome by the darkness of loneliness; visit them, call them, talk to them, encourage them, wrap your arms around them and brighten their day.

For those of us who are leaders, we need to check on the single and young Soldiers who are here for their first time away from home.

How can you shed some light in this season?

- Sharing your friendship
- Giving a gift
- Supporting a charity
- Volunteering for a good cause
- Inviting someone for a meal
- Attend worship services

After all, the story of Christmas is about God visiting his people and redeeming them. I hope our Families had a wonderful time as they celebrated Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or Christmas. May you all have a happy and prosperous New Year.

Ask the JAG ... how to prevent identity theft

By The 12th CAB Legal Office

We all realize identity theft is a growing problem, but did you know that identity theft is the fastest growing crime in the United States?

The Federal Trade Commission reports that nearly 10 million American consumers have discovered that their personal information has been used to open fraudulent bank, credit card or utility accounts or used to commit other crimes.

Prevention is the key to stopping identity theft.

If you are deployed away from your usual duty station and do not plan to obtain new credit while you are deployed, you should consider placing an **active duty alert** on your credit report by calling one of the three nationwide consumer agencies listed below.

An active duty alert is effective for one year unless you terminate it earlier and can be re-initiated if your deployment lasts longer than one year.

This alert will ensure the safety of your personal information by alerting the creditors to the fact that you are deployed and it is unlikely that you are applying for new credit. It also requires creditors to take steps in order to verify your identity before granting credit in your name.

Although identity theft takes many forms; ensuring any and all documents containing your name, social security number, credit card, and bank account information are properly shredded or blacked out before disposing of them will help prevent unscrupulous perpetrators from acquiring your personal information in the first place.

If you've lost personal information or identification, or it has been stolen from you, taking the following steps quickly can help minimize your potential for identity theft.

Contact the Police: File a report with local law enforcement.

File a Complaint with the Federal Trade Commission: FTC's Identity Theft Hotline, toll-free: 1-877-ID-THEFT (438-4338); or use their online complaint form: [https://rn.ftc.gov/pls/dod/widtpubl\\$.startup?Z_ORG_CODE=PU03](https://rn.ftc.gov/pls/dod/widtpubl$.startup?Z_ORG_CODE=PU03).

Financial Accounts: Close accounts like credit cards and bank accounts immediately.

Social Security Number: Contact any of the three nationwide consumer reporting agencies and place an initial fraud report on your credit reports and review your credit reports.

Equifax: 1-800-525-6285; www.equifax.com;

TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com;

Experian: 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742); www.experian.com; P.O. Box 9532, Allen, TX 75013

Fraud Victim Assistance Division: P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834-6790

Drivers License/Other Government-Issued Identification: Contact the agency that issued the license or other identification document. Follow their procedures to cancel the document and get it replaced.

If you need assistance, or have any question do not hesitate to contact your servicing legal office.



The staff of the Task Force XII Legal Office.

Task Force XII continues 1st ACB's mission in MND-B

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – U.S. Army Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, organized in Iraq as Task Force XII, officially assumed the mission as the Multi-National Division-Baghdad aviation asset at a ceremony here Dec. 17.

The brigade, led by its commander Col. Timothy Edens, officially transferred authority from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cav. Div. at one minute after midnight Dec. 18.

Task Force XII had been serving in Iraq for the past five months at Logistics Support Area Anaconda as the Multi-National Corps-Iraq aviation brigade. In support of the initiative to bring troop strength in Iraq back to pre-surge levels, Task Force XII was directed to move a portion of its assets to MND-B, joining with Soldiers from the 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas to create a new aviation Task Force in theater.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Task Force XII commander, Col. Timothy Edens (left) unfurls the brigade's colors during a TOA ceremony held Dec. 17. The task force assumed the mission as the primary aviation asset for Multi-National Division-Baghdad at one minute after midnight Dec. 18.

"During our training prior to deployment, and our experience as the corps aviation brigade for the first five months in theater we've prepared for the flexibility and capability we are now called on to demonstrate," Edens said in remarks to Task Force XII Soldiers during the ceremony. "Think and execute ... You are ready and up to the task."

The 1st ACB, led by Col. Dan Shanahan, served 15 months in Baghdad. Their time in Iraq saw a notable reduction in violence, and tremendous progress in creating a stable Iraq, Shanahan said.

"The mission has gone better than any of us could have expected," he said. "Personally, I could not have been any prouder. I have a good feeling about the way aviation is postured here in Multi-National Division-Baghdad."

Edens expressed his gratitude to the Soldiers of the 1st ACB, and challenged his own Soldiers to continue their legacy.

"You've led a magnificent unit, and left huge 'cav. troopers' boots to fill," he said. "God bless you and keep you as you now return home to a well deserved First Team welcome."



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

1st Air Cavalry Brigade commander, Col. Dan Shanahan (left) cases the brigade's colors during a TOA ceremony held Dec. 17.

Task Force 49 takes charge of MNC-I aviation ops

Continued from Page 1

- Task Force Ready
- 2-147th AHB
- 412th ASB
- Task Force Hawk

"We are handing the controls to another outstanding brigade headquarters," said Edens. "I expect, and am fully confident, that the excellence of (the units that will remain here) will continue."

During the ceremony, the colors for Task Force XII were carefully furled and then cased in a blue canvas cover by Edens and Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy.

After the colors of Task Force XII were cased, Task Force 49's colors were uncased and unfurled by its commander, Col. Chandler C. Sherrell, and Task Force 49 Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Mitchell.

The Soldiers of this task force will make this TOA successful because of their continued hard work, dedication and the outstanding leadership they have received, said Sherrell.

"Each and every mission this brigade has undertaken has been done in a

professional and effective manner," said Simmons. "Just as (Task Force XII) has

succeeded; Task Force 49 will as well under their able leadership."

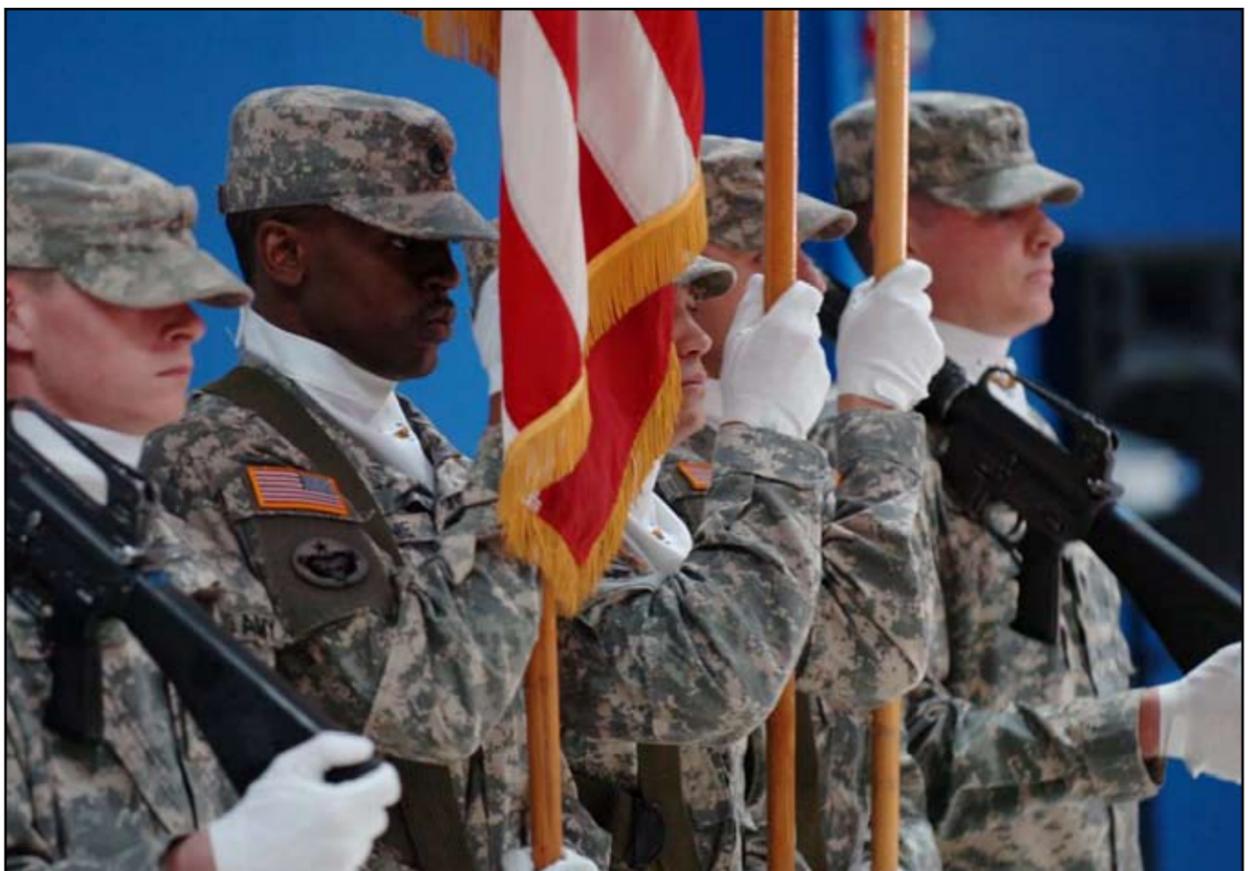


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Color guard Soldiers from Task Force XII and Task Force 49 stand motionless during a transfer of authority ceremony held on Logistics Support Area Anaconda Dec. 3.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Chief Warrant Officer Keith Langewisch gives a tour of an AH-64 Apache helicopter to Air Force Maj. Connie Johnmeyer, a psychologist for the 332nd Medical Group at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq Nov. 22.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Lt. Col. Jay Macklin (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Cuomo (right), the command team from 3-158th AHB, unfurl their battalion colors at a ceremony held on Camp Taji, Iraq Dec. 24.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Pfc Ayodeji Abioye, a human resources specialist for HHC, Task Force XII stands watch during a force protection exercise on Camp Taji, Iraq.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Williams, a food service NCO from 4th Squadron, 3d ACR takes on the DFAC mission at Camp Taji, Iraq.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Soldiers from Task Force XII work hard to deliver the holiday mail at Camp Taji. Package mail increased by about three times the normal amount.

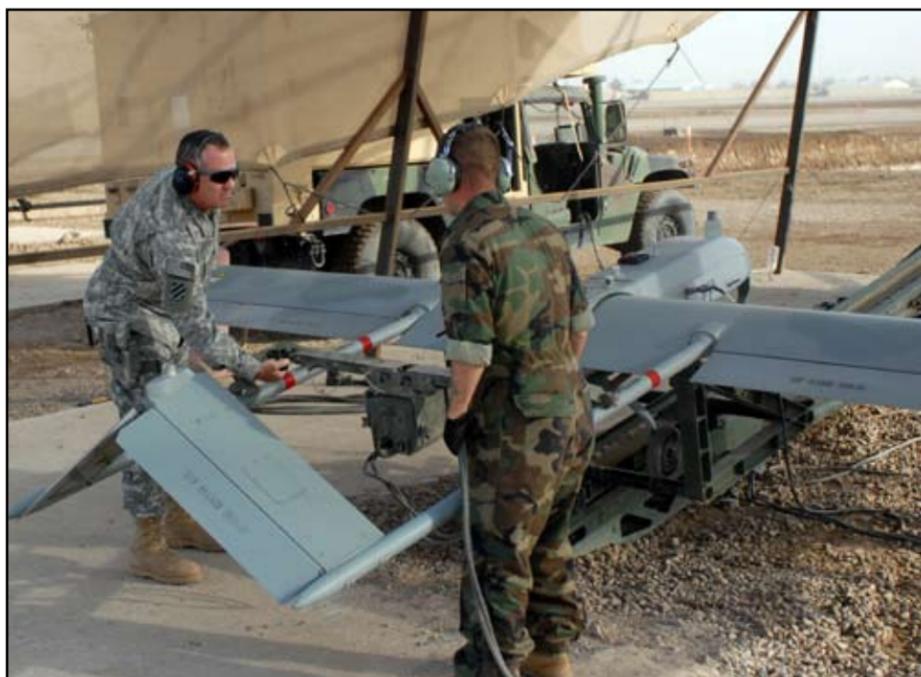


Photo by Staff Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Brig. Gen. William Grimsley, the incoming Multi-National Division-Baghdad deputy commanding general for Maneuver (left) helps a Task Force XII Soldier launch an unmanned aerial vehicle Dec. 14.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment commander, Lt. Col. Todd Royar unfurls his unit's colors during a midnight uncasing ceremony Dec. 11. 4/3 ACR joins Task Force XII to form the new aviation asset for MND-B.

A Soldier's Christmas Poem

Author Unknown

*Twas the night before Christmas, he
lived all alone,
in a one bedroom house made of plaster
and stone.*

*I had come down the chimney with pres-
ents to give,
and to see just who in this home did
live.*

*I looked all about, a strange sight I did
see,
no tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.*

*No stocking by mantle, just boots filled
with sand,
on the wall hung pictures of far distant
lands.*

*With medals and badges, awards of all
kinds,
a sober thought came through my mind.*

*For this house was different, it was
dark and dreary,
I found the home of a soldier, once I
could see clearly.*

*The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone,
curled up on the floor in this one bed-
room home.*

*The face was so gentle, the room in such
disorder,*

*not how I pictured a united states sol-
dier.*

*Was this the hero of whom I'd just read?
Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a
bed?*

*I realized the families that I saw this
night, owed their
Lives to these soldiers who were willing
to fight.*

*Soon round the world, the children
would play,
and grown-ups would celebrate a bright
Christmas day.
They all enjoyed freedom each month of
the year,
because of the soldiers, like the one ly-
ing here.*

*I couldn't help wonder how many lay
alone,
on a cold Christmas eve in a land far
from home.*

*The very thought brought a tear to my
eye,
I dropped to my knees and started to
cry.*

*The soldier awakened and I heard a
rough voice,
"Santa don't cry, this life is my choice;
I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,*

*my life is my god, my country, my
corps."*

*The soldier rolled over and drifted to
sleep,
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.*

*I kept watch for hours, so silent and still
and we both shivered from the cold
night's chill.*

*I didn't want to leave on that cold, dark,
night,
this guardian of honor so willing to fight.*

*Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice
soft and pure,
whispered, "carry on Santa, it's Christ-
mas day, all is secure."*

*One look at my watch, and I knew he
was right.
"Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a
good night.*



Pfc. Zenaida Limon, securing a building here.

Thank you for reenlisting, keeping us 'Army Strong'

1st Battalion, 214th Aviation Regiment

SPC TURPIN, AARON J.
SPC JOHNSON, CHRISTOPHER G.
SPC GRIESMAN, ERNEST A.
SGT BUCKLEY, JAY K.
SGT HARRISON, DUANE M.
SGT SANDOVAL, YVONNE M.

3th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment

SPC BRIGGS, STEVEN M.
SGT WOO, TIMOTHY M.
SGT SIMON, NATALIE J.
SGT CONNERBECK, BRADLEE S.
SGT BEURY, BRIAN L.

4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment

SFC HARPER, KENRICK
SFC MATIA, FERNANDO
SGT WEBBER, ADAM
SGT HENDERSON, SYLVIA
SGT ROBSEL, MARK
SGT JOHNSEN, JAMES
SGT COLON, JOSE
SPC COLON, FRANCHENSKA
SPC MAIZE, JAMES

3th Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment

PFC SELF, RAYMOND E.
PFC RAY, SONJA M.
PFC COX, MICHEAL J.
SPC LOPEZGONZALEZ, ELMER
SPC BONILLACANCEL, ROSE M.
SPC GOOD, ROY G., JR.
SPC HOLCOMB, TIMOTHY L.
SPC WELCH, APRIL M.
SGT BRANDMEYER, KIMBERLY M.

SGT JOHNSON, CHRISTOPHER M.
SGT BEVELL, TREMAINE L.
SGT HEARD, BRANDON R.
SFC CATE, RUSSELL L.

2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment

PFC DESHAZO, WESTON
PFC SHIPP, BRADLEY
SPC CALDWELL, JOHN I.
SPC CRIDER, SENICA C.
SPC JACOBSON, DAVID I.
SPC HERBINGER, ANTHONY M.
SGT PENROD, JOHN M.
SGT ACEVEDOGUZMAN, ALBERTO
SGT NORRIS, CHARLENE M.
SGT CONWELL, SEAN D.
SFC BATES, DIGHTON D., JR.

5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment

PFC ALLEN, ASHLEY S.
PFC HALL, JERROD F.
PFC GIRONURBANO, VERONICA
PFC KOEPNICK, ASHLEY M.
PFC MEJIA, JONATHAN R.
PFC CARPENTER, JENNIFER L.
SPC BATTLE, LONNAY A.
SPC JUVIER, ALEXANDER
SPC FRALEY, BRIAN C.
SPC COX, RUSSELL G.
SPC ELEBY, IASHA M.
SPC ROBINSON, AKEEM R.
SGT GIACOPPO, MICHAEL J.
SGT TANIELU, LEIMOMI N.
SGT DOUGLAS, MANDRELL J.
SGT BRIGGS, KRISTINA M.
SGT CHANQUIN, NELSON E.

SGT CROWLEY, MATTHEW J.
SGT VILORIA, EDMOND R.

HHC Task Force XII

SPC AVERETT, JEFFERY L., JR.
SPC BAKER, DOMINIC P.
SGT THOMAS, JERRY S.
412th Aviation Support Battalion
PFC MYERS, DAVID N.
PFC MCLAMB, JOSHUA L.
PFC GWIN, LUCAS A.
PFC BLAIR, BRADLEY M.
PFC WEIR, BRITT L.
PFC WARF, RYAN T.
SPC RICHARDSON, ELIZABETH S.
SPC WEIS, JONATHAN D.
SPC COX, VERNON E.
SPC POWELLROMERO, KARMA N.
SPC SAENZ, RAYMOND R.
SPC KIM, JOHN S.
SPC BARNES, CASSANDRA N.
SPC WILLIAMS, VERNON J.
SPC KNUTSEN, MICHAEL L.
SPC LEATH, TOMMY J.
SPC RANDALL, CAMERON A.
SPC KING, RENEE S.
SPC PEACOE, DAVID M.
SGT SESAY, BAI
SGT SAVAGE, ALHAJI A.
SGT THOMPSON, THOMAS A.
SGT PLAISIMOND, PIERRE L.
SGT LOCQUIAO, PAUL B.
SGT ALLEN, JUSTIN J.
SGT ORTIZCALIXTO, JOSE L.

UAVs provide 'eyes in the skies'

Remote operated planes help warn ground personnel about enemy forces, hidden dangers that lie ahead

Story by Sgt. 1st Class
Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Planting improvised explosives devices (IED) is a dangerous business in central Iraq.

Even the most experienced insurgent with a meticulous plan and a fool-proof hiding spot can quickly find himself face to face with the business end of a Hellfire missile.

It's not that they don't try to hide.

Most insurgents planning to attack a convoy, or lob a mortar at a coalition base, take great care in covering their intentions. But it's hard to fight a guy sitting in front of a monitor, miles away, flying an eight foot unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).

"You can tell we do a lot of good here," said North Ridgeville, Ohio native Spc. Eric Hansen, a UAV maintainer for 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. "When we got here, we were getting mortared a lot; that's really slowed down since we've been here."

In Multi-National Division-Baghdad, the small unmanned aircraft are launched and recovered by Company G, Task Force XII's "Guardian Angels."

"The UAV is a huge combat multiplier that provides a real time picture of the battlefield," said Company G commander, Capt. Shirwen Separa, a native of Brockledge, Fla. "It provides surveillance and reconnaissance for the maneuver units to identify terrorists in the act of terrorism."

Made up of Soldiers from seven brigades in the MND-B area of operations, Company G is the embodiment of cooperation between the local commands in Iraq.

While its headquarters is composed of Soldiers from the division's aviation brigade, Task Force XII, the six attached platoons each hail from one of the maneuver brigades.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

An unmanned aerial vehicle assigned to G Company, Task Force XII lifts off its launcher as UAV controllers Spc. Eric Hansen and Staff Sgt. Yancy Shattuck from 1st Bde. STB, 1st Cav. Div. watch over the operation Dec. 14. They are part of 52 Soldiers representing each of Multi-National Division-Baghdad's six maneuver brigades who are assigned to Task Force XII, and responsible for UAV coverage for the entire MND-B. The aircraft will fly surveillance and reconnaissance missions for troops on the ground in MND-B for up to six hours, and is one of about 20 missions to launch from Taji each day.

"Each brigade operating within the MND-B area of operations has a UAV platoon with about 24 people," said Company G 1st Sgt. Todd Venema who hails from Grand Rapids, Minn. "Seventy five percent of the platoon comes to us, and the other 25 percent stays with the brigade."

The Soldiers assigned to the "Guardian Angels" are responsible for maintaining, launching and recovering the aircraft, said Venema. The planes can be controlled either by the Soldiers at Taji, or by the forward controllers in the individual brigades.

"The platoons mostly work with their own brigades and their own aircraft, so the relationships are good," he said.

The pilots are also unique. While most Army pilots are commissioned or warrant officers, the Soldiers who patrol the Iraqi airspace from the ground are enlisted.

Sgt. 1st Class David Norsworthy, a UAV operator from Clarksville, Tenn.

says he has a special perspective for just how valuable the eyes in the sky really are. He's an 11 year infantry veteran who says he can appreciate his new job for several reasons.

"It's a whole new world," said Norsworthy. "The way I used to deal with infantry Soldiers doesn't work here. But after 11 years of sleeping in the rain, this is the life."

"This job is kind of a novelty too," he said. "About once a week, we've got (Soldiers from other units) coming around to ask about what we do. And about every other week, we've got VIP's walking through here."

"When I went to (a Soldier professional development school) pretty much everybody in the class wanted to do what I do by the end," said Hansen.

Company G launches several aircraft per day to patrol the skies over the Baghdad area. Once in the air, Soldiers

at Taji, and in the maneuver brigades, monitor the feeds sent back by the planes for flights lasting up to six hours.

"If an operator sees a threat they let the ground guys, or aviation close air support know," said Separa. "With the UAV, we can react to a threat almost instantly."

"I think they're a great asset to the Army," said Hansen. "You can fly them cheaply, and get surveillance 24 hours a day and in inclement weather."

"Most importantly, it minimizes lives at risk because they're unmanned," added Separa.

Unfortunately, despite the surveillance advantage the Guardian Angels provide to coalition forces, insurgents continue to threaten troops on the ground.

And even those who miss the quiet whirring sound of the tiny plane's single engine flying hundreds of feet above them are sure to notice its effect – no matter how hard they try to hide.

Task Force XII troops keep an eye on aircraft

Air traffic controllers monitor aircraft inside Taji airspace

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Imagine a municipal airport in the middle of a combat zone. At any given time, several American and Iraqi helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles are preparing for takeoff. As the crews get ready for a complex mission, they have to worry about everything from passenger safety to enemy attacks.

As long as that crew is flying in Camp Taji's airspace, one group of Soldiers is responsible for ensuring the last thing this crew needs to worry about is colliding with another aircraft.

The 26 Soldiers of Company F, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, from Fort Campbell, Ky., monitor the flight patterns and activities of every aircraft in the area from the air traffic control tower here.

It takes a long time to learn how to direct air traffic, and these Soldiers have done an outstanding job in keeping the aircraft of Task Force XII, and other coalition forces, out of harm's way, said Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy.

"Not only do we monitor the helicopters from Task Force XII, but we also monitor Iraqi aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)," said Capt. Nicole Dean, an OH-58 pilot and the commander of Company F. "The airspace we are responsible for monitoring extends as far north as Balad Air Base and as far south as Baghdad International Airport."

Monitoring airspace this large can be difficult especially when visibility decreases and air traffic increases, said Sgt. Matthew Lett, an air traffic controller in Company F.

"During the day it's usually easy for an aircraft to see things around them, but at night they rely a lot on our radar to guide them," said Lett, a native of Ashville, Ala. "Through the use of the technology we have, we can ensure aircraft are the correct distance away from



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Spc. Kristen Leicht, an air traffic controller and log maintainer in Company F, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, maintains communication with an inbound helicopter with a radio in the air traffic control tower. Leicht, a native of Hollister, Calif., is just one of the 26 Soldiers in this tower responsible for helping to direct all air traffic in this area.

each other."

This air traffic control tower also keeps a detailed log of aircraft in the area; including their location, how long they've been there and where they are headed.

"We try to keep as much information as possible about the (aircraft in our airspace) just in case something happens," said Spc. Kristen Leicht, an air traffic controller and log maintainer from Hollister, Calif. "We also keep in contact with the pilots to let them know about things such as bad weather, ranges firing and controlled detonations."

Since Camp Taji's airfield is also used for emergency landings when visibility drops quickly, the Soldiers in this tower have the capability to help guide pilots to the airfield, said Staff Sgt. Richard Lowe, a ground control approach radar chief.

"We help pilots with low visibility, and/or bad weather, orient their aircraft with the airfield because they can't see the ground," said Lowe, a native of Woodward, Okla. "When a pilot calls for assistance, we tell them which way to turn and give them altitude assessments to funnel them toward the air-

field. In some cases we have guided them all the way to touch down."

The Soldiers in the control tower can monitor and direct air traffic 24/7 just like a control tower at any major airport but they're much more mobile, said Dean, a native of Buffalo, N.Y.

"We have the ability to pick up and move anywhere to establish an area safe enough for aircraft to fly," she said. "We had less than 60 days from

the time we found out about the deployment to go through training, pack up our equipment and come to Iraq."

"We are one of the most deployed air traffic control companies in the Army, and we have proven we can fulfill any task give to us," said Dean. "We have a lot of dedicated Soldiers and noncommissioned officers. I have never seen a more professional group of Soldiers."



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Staff Sgt. Richard Lowe, a ground control approach radar chief in Company F, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, helps guide an inbound helicopter to a safe landing with the use of radar equipment in the air traffic control tower. Lowe, a native of Woodward, Okla., is just one of the 26 Soldiers in this tower responsible for helping to direct all air traffic in this area.

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 | 2-159th AVN | 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 | |
| | SSG Simmons | 467-4869 |

Troops from Task Force XII make Taji their new home

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

Some Soldiers may view a deployment as a never-ending case of déjà-vu, but for many Task Force XII Soldiers it's been the complete opposite.

In the last month, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII has trained and transferred the mission of providing direct aviation support to Multi-National Corps – Iraq to Task Force 49; then packed and moved to Taji.

Since their move to Taji, they have taken on the vital mission of becoming the aviation task force for Multi-National Division–Baghdad.

Each and every challenge placed in front of these Soldiers in the last few months has been taken on and successfully accomplished, said Col. Timothy J. Edens, the commander of Task Force XII.

The challenge of fulfilling this role, previously occupied by the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, from Fort Hood, Texas, must be accomplished with a significantly smaller group of personnel.

"This just means that our command has a lot of confidence in us," said Staff Sgt. Cedric T. Lowe, the human resource sergeant for 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment. "(We) have a lot of motivated people who are excited about their jobs, so we will definitely be just as successful here as we were in (Logistics Support

Area Anaconda)."

In addition to its headquarters company, Task Force XII is comprised of the 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, from Fort Hood Texas; the 3-158th, also known as "Task Force Storm"; and a Forward Logistics Element (FLE) from the 412th Aviation Support Battalion.

"Our job (in Camp Taji) is to help provide communication support for Task Force XII," said 1st Lt. Heidi Connelly, the Joint Node platoon leader for the FLE. "So far, our transition into this role has been pretty smooth and painless."

The FLE only has 74 Soldiers, and for many of these Soldiers, as well as the Soldiers from 3-158th, the move from LSA Anaconda will mean more than just a zip code change, said Connelly, a native of Allentown, Pa.

"There will be a change in the actual mission; I'm sure of that," said Lowe, a 13-year Army veteran and native of Shellman, Ga. "There won't be any change as far as our capability to accomplish the mission."

Lowe, and the other Soldiers of Task Force XII, will have to adjust to this change in mission as they perform a relief in place with the Soldiers from 1st ACB.

"I think everything is going great so far, and everyone is doing a good job," said Spc. Jackson Longchamp, a para-



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Staff Sgt. Cedric T. Lowe, a human resource sergeant for 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, works on a report for his battalion.

legal specialist in 4/3 ACR and native of Brooklyn, N.Y. "I also think the chow hall food is a lot better here than it is in Texas, and once I get the internet in my room this place will be perfect."

Although transitioning to Camp Taji might not have been easy for some of the Soldiers, they will surely exceed all expectations as they have done in the past, said Edens.

"Everything you have accomplished has come at a price," he said. "A great deal of that price has been, and continues to be, the sacrifices made by your Families. I am extremely proud of the Soldiers and Families of Task Force XII, and I hope all of you will continue to do great things."

Task Force XII Soldiers continue holiday traditions from home

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - As the holiday season approached, many Soldiers would have liked more than anything to receive just one simple present.

It wasn't a video game system, an mp3 player, or a new digital anything; it was the chance to be with Family and loved ones.

Instead of having a case of Humbugs, because they were away from home, some Soldiers decided to get together to spread some holiday cheer and help lift the spirits of those around them.

"Back home, my Family would get together and take time to decorate our whole house," said Pfc. Heather McKinnon, a supply specialist in Task Force XII and native of Biddeford, Maine. "That's why (we) decided it would be a good idea to decorate a tree and put it somewhere everybody could see it."

"I'm new to the unit, so helping set up decorations was a good opportunity for me to get to know some of the Soldiers I'm going to be working with a little better," said 1st Lt. Adam Samiof, the executive officer for Headquarters, and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII. "I guess I'm just trying to get into the holiday spirit."

Decorating this tree, donated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, is just one of the ways Task Force XII Soldiers



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Staff Sgt. Dorothy Washington, a Task Force XII human resources specialist, helps decorate a tree in the Administrative and Logistical Operations Cell here.

coped with being deployed during the holidays.

"My husband and I decorated our room," said Sgt. Lisa Riat, a COMSEC custodian from Lumberton, N.C. "Having my husband (Chief Warrant Officer Jasbir Riat) here makes it a little easier to be away from home during the holidays."

The Riats are one of several married couples in Task Force XII.

"This is our first deployment together," said Riat, a three combat tour veteran. "We had dinner together but we have decided not to exchange gifts this year."

There are, however, many Soldiers who have found ways to enjoy this holiday season without their loved ones.

"I just took the opportunity to be around some friends that I have; just like I did for Thanksgiving Day this year and last year," said Samiof, a native of Albany, N.Y. "Some of the friends you make in the military can become a different kind of Family for you when you're not with your real Family."

"Being away from close friends and Family members back home, during the holiday season, can really make you miss and appreciate the things you might have taken for granted," said Riat. "I really miss getting ready to cook a big dinner for me and my family."

Whether it's hanging decorations on a tree, or having a home cooked meal with Family members, Soldiers in Iraq have found ways to adjust to the things they missed this holiday season.

"This is my first holiday season away from home, and I think what I missed most is being around friends and Family and having a home cooked meal," said Samiof. "I know that being away from home, this year, will make

Cavalry Soldiers from Fort Hood join MND-B aviation mission with Task Force XII troops

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - In today's transforming Army, things can change quickly.

The 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment knows that as well as anyone.

Originally formed in 1846, the 3d ACR was the Army's first regiment of mounted riflemen.

They've fought in every major engagement the U.S. Army has participated in; including this, their third rotation to Iraq in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

In June, 2006, with the sands of Tal-Afar just three months removed from their Stetsons, 3d ACR packed up and left the mountain post at Fort Carson, Colo. for their current home at Fort Hood, Texas.

By August, 2007, the aviators of 4th "Longknife" Squadron had already done a rotation at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., and forged the relationships with their Cav. brothers in the 3d ACR's ground squadrons that would serve them well during their upcoming

tour in northern Iraq.

But northern Iraq was never meant to be.

A month before leaving Fort Hood, 4/3 ACR found out that it would separate from the rest of the regiment, joining Task Force XII to form a new brigade supporting Multi-National Division-Baghdad.

"When the Army tells you to do something, you do it," said 4/3 ACR commander, Lt. Col. Todd Royar.

"The mission set isn't different, but the customer is. Here in (MND-B) the number of (brigades supported) is significantly larger, but the fundamentals are the same."

Changing the mission was the logical choice to support the needs in MND-B said Royar.

4/3 is the only aviation organization of its kind in the Army today. With nearly 650 Soldiers in the fight at Camp Taji, its leaders say the squadron is more like a small brigade than a large battalion.

Most aviation battalions report directly to an aviation brigade.

They fly specific missions with only one or two types of airframe,



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Soldiers in 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment stand in formation during a midnight colors uncasing ceremony Dec. 11.

and rely heavily on a sister aviation support battalion within the brigade for extensive maintenance needs.

4/3 is different. Because they are the only aviation assets for their regiment, they fly AH-64 Apaches and UH-60 Black Hawks, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles.

They also keep a troop of maintainers that provides the maintenance support normally done at an aviation support battalion.

"We're a self-sustaining outfit," said 4/3 ACR Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Lindsey. "Most units have several levels of maintenance. We bring our own maintenance at all levels."

They were a custom fit when the Army said it needed to build a brigade in theater.

The Soldiers of 4th Squadron, while still very much loyal to their regiment, say they are proud of the unique capability they provide.

"We do whatever the Army needs from us,"

Lindsey said. "That's what aviation in the Army is all about ... supporting the guy on the ground."

"I'm just happy to be here in Iraq, whatever the role," said Portage, Ind. native, Sgt. Steven Renner, an Apache maintainer from 4/3's Tomahawk Troop. "It's nice to finally have a mission to do instead of just training."

In addition to its headquarters and headquarters troop, the squadron is made up of four flight troops.

"Nomad Troop," "Outlaw Troop" and "Pegasus Troop" fly the AH-64D Apache helicopters.

"Stetson Troop" flies the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, and will fall under the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade's Task Force Storm during the deployment.

In addition, the 4/3 has two maintenance companies.

"Tomahawk Troop" performs the line maintenance for the squadron and the "Air Raiders," the squadron's in-

termediate maintenance troop, takes on the functions of an aviation support battalion.

"Things are going very well for us on the maintenance side," said Lindsey. "It took us a while to work out the birds after sitting in the belly of a ship for a month, but now we're really working them out, and we have a high rate of fully mission capable aircraft."

"As far as I can see from my foxhole, everything's working great," he said.

And, says their commander, they still add to the legacy of a proud 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, even while the Army's ever-shaping modularity concept has them separated from their fellow Cav. Troopers.

"There's a lot to take advantage of while working with other aviators," said Royar. "It's good for the unit. We will do the regiment proud, and as aviators, we will walk away better for the experience."



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Portage, Ind. native Sgt. Steven Renner (left), Pensacola, Fla. native Staff Sgt. Jason Combs (center), and Sgt. Jose Colon from Ponce, Puerto Rico (right), members of the 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment's Tomahawk Troop perform diagnostic checks on an AH-64D Apache helicopter Dec. 21. The Soldiers arrived in Iraq in late November and are responsible for helping to maintain Multi-National Division-Baghdad's attack aviation fleet.

Partnership Day strengthens ties between U.S. and Iraqi military co-located on Taji

Task Force XII troops get introduced to Iraqi Air Force

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - You might be surprised to know that American Soldiers and Iraqi Soldiers have a lot in common. Besides the obvious fact that they both love their countries and volunteered to defend them; many of them have a love for aviation.

Soldiers from Task Force XII got a chance to learn this and more about the Iraqi Air Force when they exchanged aviation stories during Iraqi Partnership Day Dec 11.

"The main goal of this day is to continue to improve the relationship between the U.S. and Iraqi military," said Col. Timothy J. Edens, the commander of Task Force XII and an AH-64 Apache pilot. "It's important for us, as aviators, to have a strong relationship with our Iraqi counterparts."

This relationship between these coalition aviation forces began with 1st Air Cavalry Brigade and grew over the course of their deployment.

It has been a privilege to participate in this partnership day and continue to improve this special relationship with such a skilled group of soldiers, said 1st ACB commander, Col. Dan Shanahan.

The partnership day began with a visit to the Taji Wing, Iraqi Air Force area of operation. This is where the Iraqi Air Forces live, train and work.

"I would personally like to express



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Col. Timothy J. Edens, the commander of Task Force XII and an AH-64 Apache pilot, joins Brig. Gen. Sati, the commander of the Taji wing, Iraqi Air Force in the cockpit of an Iraqi MI-17 during an Iraqi partnership day Dec. 11. Members of both forces joined for dinner later at the Command Sgt. Maj. Cooke dining facility later that day.

my thanks to the U.S. military for all the help they have provided," said Brig. Gen. Sati, commander of the Taji Wing, Air Force. "Through our military relations, we have successfully achieved the targeted goals for the Iraqi Air Force."

During the tour, Sati, who is also a pilot, gave Edens and Shanahan a tour of the inside of an MI-17 and a few other Iraq aircraft.

"It's a great honor for me to have General Sati and his soldiers to take the time to give us a tour of their facilities," said Edens. "I'm confident that (our) pilots will learn as much from them as they will from us."

"I'm an old crew chief, and I think it's outstanding how much they take pride in their job," said Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H Lee Kennedy. "I'd fly with these guys any day."

After the tour, several Iraqi Air Force personnel were invited to Command Sgt. Maj. Cooke Dining Facility for a dinner with the leadership from Task Force XII and 1st ACB.

"These guys are just a wonderful group of soldiers, and I think they're very eloquent and total professionals," said Kennedy. "I'm proud to know that we will get the opportunity to work with such a wonderful bunch of guys."

During the dinner, Shanahan was presented with a plaque as a token of appreciation, from Sati and his soldiers, for all 1st ACB has done for them since their arrival in Iraq.

"I'm sure Col. Shanahan will not forget us but this gift is to ensure Taji always stays in the center of his heart," said Sati. "I would like to thank (Edens and Shanahan) for the invitation, and I hope that we will receive more invitations in the future ... and more ice cream."

This partnership day will be the last for 1st ACB, but the first of many for Task Force XII Soldiers.

"I really enjoyed the conversations Gen. Sati and I had," said Edens. "I think he is a well spoken man and a great leader. I wish him and his soldiers, nothing but the best."



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Task Force XII commander, Col. Timothy Edens talks to members of the Iraqi Air Force during a partnership day event Dec. 11. The event was a carry-over from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cav. Div. They began the events with the Iraqi Air Force to strengthen ties, and to get a chance for pilots from both nations to have a chance to learn from one another.

Guard mounts deliver mystery meals to Soldiers on duty in towers, at airfield ECPs

Story by Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - These delivery guys, equipped with M-16s and bulletproof gear, have never promised to bring you food in 30 minutes or less.

They won't knock on your door, or expect a tip; and the aluminum foil covered meals they carry are always a surprise.

The mystery meals they transport always arrive in a well-armored vehicle, so there's no neighborhood too dangerous.

The members of this heavily armed "Meals on Wheels" team are part of the Task Force XII guard mount; delivering hot meals every day to Soldiers performing guard duty.

"The Soldiers can't leave their posts to get chow, so we take food to each of the locations we operate," said Sgt. Gale Bever, a day shift rover for the Task Force XII guard mount. "I know if I was in their shoes I



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Sgt. Gale Bever, a guard mount day shift rover in Task Force XII, delivers lunch to Spc. Amanda Hodge at an Entry Control Point (ECP) to the airfield. Soldiers performing guard duty at an ECP, or in guard towers, are delivered meals because they are unable to leave their guard post during their shift.

wouldn't want to have to wait to get chow."

Task Force XII is responsible for manning five guard towers and one entry control point (ECP) to the airfield.

The guard shifts extend beyond the hours of the dining facilities here, so the Soldiers on duty would have to go several hours without food if not for these Soldiers.

"I would rather have them eat on shift and have their minds on the

mission instead of being hungry and having their minds on food," said Staff Sgt. Matthew Washburn, sergeant of the guard from 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. "It's not quite as large of a selection, like going to the DFAC, but we try to vary the choices of food (we bring) as much as possible."

Each guard shift receives four mystery meal plates, with four drinks, to last them the dura-

tion of their duty, but the Soldiers have plenty of water and are also allowed to eat snacks they brought with them.

"I don't think I would be able to perform my job if I was hungry because I would be cranky and a lot less alert," said Pfc. Iyana Jennings, an ECP guard from 4/3 ACR. "I think it's good that they take the time to deliver meals to us."

It's better for the Soldiers to have a meal from the DFAC instead of a Meal Ready to Eat because nothing helps improve morale like a hot meal, said Bever, a native of Raleigh, N.C.

This hot mini-feast they receive is prepared from four different meal menus provided by the DFAC; but not even the delivery guys know which plate is what because they are wrapped in aluminum foil.

"I'm happy when we receive the meal because I'm always hoping the mystery meal will be steak ... but most of the time it's not," said

Jennings, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y.

"I've been working for the guard mount for about 14 months as both a driver and a guard in one of the towers," said Spc. Lionel Sierra, a 1st Air Cavalry Brigade Soldier from Fresno Calif. "I know what we do for them is important and I think they appreciate everything we do for them."

In addition to delivering meals to Soldiers on duty, the guard mounts also keep the vehicles running; brief and debrief Soldiers performing guard duty; and they hold formations to inspect the Soldiers' weapons and equipment.

"When we deliver the food, it also gives us a chance to check on how the Soldiers are holding up," said Washburn, a native of Portland, Ore. "I was here during (the invasion in 2003) and when we pulled guard duty, they just left us out there and didn't check on us at all."

Safety measures to help Soldiers mitigate risks on Camp Taji

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

If we weren't the Safety guys it would almost be funny: If you sit outside the brigade administrative and logistics center for long enough, you'll probably see it too - there's a tank track out there that some well intentioned folks were nice enough to lay down to slow down traffic entering the parking lot.

It probably worked, but in the process it's managed to trip a lot of people... including one of your safety guys.

Of course, since we ARE the Safety guys, it's not funny at all. A stubbed toe can be funny, but we would have a hard time laughing at a broken ankle.

That brings us to the topic of this month's article: Camp Taji. We're finally here, and in case you haven't noticed it's a lot different than Balad for several reasons.

First of all, there are very few sidewalks here. This means you'll be walking through either gravel or, on some occasions, mud. Neither of these are the easiest things to walk on. I won't presume to tell you how to walk in gravel or mud, but I will tell you to keep it in mind as



Photo by Pfc. Heather McKinnon

A vehicle stuck in a ditch here earlier this month.

you travel to and from work each day. If you're running, find as stable a surface as possible.

Second, because there are no sidewalks, you're now traveling down the same roads as the vehicles. While it's dry, of course, you'll walk on the shoulder of the roads, but as the rainy season progresses, the ditches will begin to fill with water, and you'll find yourself walking down the middle of the road. Just be careful... stay dry, but stay out of the way as much as you can.

Speaking of ditches, I've noticed that they're everywhere. When the rains

come, they'll help drainage, but they'll also create a hazard that we're not used to. We're doing what we can to make sure that they're well marked and blocked off. We call it "operation swimming pool denial." You can help us by trying not to fall (or drive) into the ditches.

Finally, you'll notice that it's darker here. There aren't as many street lights to light the path for us at night. There are obvious safety concerns with walking around in darkness. You can help mitigate that risk by paying attention to where you're walking, and by continuing to wear your reflective belts at night. Besides being very smart, wearing a reflective belt is now, once again, brigade policy.

The bottom line is that we want everybody to go home with 10 working fingers and 10 working toes. If you have all those, that means that every thing in between probably stayed safe along the way.

And by the way, we're working on the tank track outside the ALOC. It should be gone soon... in the mean time, please don't trip over it.

Have a SAFE and happy New Year!

Missouri Army pilot, Air Force doctor help Iraqi child

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq - Thanksgiving, 2007 was a holiday to remember for Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Langewisch; the brigade aviation maintenance officer and a pilot for Germany's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade. It was the day he got an opportunity he considered special.

Langewisch is one of 32 graduates of New Franklin, Mo. class of 1980. He joined the Army six years later to become a helicopter pilot.

More than 25 years later, he found himself at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq, preparing for yet another Thanksgiving holiday away from his home and his family.

In early November, Langewisch picked up a "Stars and Stripes" newspaper and read about Maj. Connie Johnmeyer, an Air Force psychologist helping to treat traumatic brain injuries at a hospital on LSA Anaconda. The article said that Johnmeyer was from Fayette, Mo. - just a few miles from his own hometown.

"The school district line runs through the middle of my parents' farm," he said. "I'm actually from New Franklin, but I got to know the Fayette folks through 4-H and things like that.

"I thought it was neat that she was from my area, so I contacted her just to see if she knew any of the same people I know," said Langewisch. "I even clipped the story out to send to my parents to see

if they knew her."

Johnmeyer, a 1970 graduate of Fayette high school, works on a ward that sees Americans and Iraqis with head trauma. She primarily does evaluations for traumatic brain injury. Among the people on the ward was a young boy, recovering from injuries, who told the ward



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Langewisch, a pilot for Task Force XII lifts an Iraqi boy out of the seat of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter after a tour of the cockpit. Langewisch, and fellow Missouri resident, Air Force Maj. Connie Johnmeyer worked together for the rare tour on Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq Nov.22

nurses he wanted to be a pilot.

"I called her first, but when she found out I was a pilot she thought I could help out," said Langewisch.

So, Thanksgiving Day, Dr. Johnmeyer and a staff of hospital workers brought the boy to meet Mr. Langewisch, and tour three of his unit's helicopters, an AH-64 Apache, a UH-60 Black Hawk and a CH-47 Chinook.

"Over the course of a rotation here (in Iraq) there are different kinds of notable moments," said Johnmeyer. "I bet this will be a very special memory for the staff and for him."

The staff watched as the boy climbed over, under and through the aircraft; his expression, which had been more solemn than any young face should be, now was alive with the exploration and wonder of any normal child.

"It was very cool to see him do this," said Johnmeyer. "He was very excited. He'd been pretty lethargic up till now. This is the most animated I've seen him get."

On this one Thanksgiving Day, two people, thousands of miles from Missouri, had a chance to help - even if it was only for a day.

"I just think it's neat to put a smile on somebody's face," said Langewisch. "We don't get the opportunity to do this kind of stuff very often. It's a great thing for all of us."

Task Force Storm becomes prototype for Army's plan for aviation

By Sgt. Brandon Little

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - In theory, any UH-60 Black Hawk crew can get into any Black hawk, cleared for duty, and fly it because both the crew and the aircraft are built and held to the same standard throughout the Army.

This type of 'plug and play' strategy is being applied to aviation units as the Army continues to transform into a more mobile fighting force.

Task Force Storm is one of the first aviation battalions to plug a borrowed flight company into their operations to replace a company that's been given another mission.

"We're almost like a prototype," said Task Force Storm Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Cuomo. "The Army has been doing (plug and play) for a long time in combat arms units, but this is fairly new to aviation."

Although the plug and play strategy might be fresh to many aviation units, this isn't the first time this Task Force XII battalion has incorporated another company into its operations.

"In Germany, we had an AH-64 Apache company and a CH-47 Chinook company attached to us during our mission readiness exercise," said Cuomo, a career crew chief and native of Troy, N.Y. "And at Logistics Support Area Anaconda we had Company B, 5th Battalion, 158th

Aviation Regiment, a Chinook company, attached to us for operational support."

The decision was made to leave Company B, 5-158th and Company B, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment at LSA Anaconda, to help support operations, and make Stetson Troop, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment the newest addition to the task force.

Stetson Troop, the only Black Hawk flight company from 4/3 ACR from Fort Hood, Texas, is still working to figure out its role in Task Force Storm, said 1st Lt. Delvin Goode, the executive officer for Stetson Troop.

"Making adjustments is just part of the Army," said Goode, a Black Hawk



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Pfc. Patrick McDaniel, a crew chief in Stetson Troop and native of Ozark, Ala., works on the rotor of a UH-60 Black hawk. Stetson Troop, a flight company from 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, is the newest addition to Task Force Storm.

pilot from Fort Walton, Fla. "We're still going through our relief in place, but we are eager to help anyway we can to do the mission."

This flight company, along with 3-158th's Company A and Company C, will rotate through the battalion's three mission sets.

"One will do air assaults; one will take care of the air mission requests; and one will do VIP support," said Cuomo. "It's a positive aspect, to me, because that will give all the aviation people experience in doing the different missions."

Staff Sgt. Eric Holmes, the battalion standardization instructor, was sent down to help train and progress some of their inexperienced crew chiefs and door-gunners, he said.

"Pilots have always been taught the same across the board, but crew chiefs were put on the back burner," said Holmes, a native of California. "Now, with the Army getting more involved with crew chief and door-gunner training, their standards are the same as ours."

Since aviation standards are the same throughout the Army, Stetson Troop is one of the flight companies used to test the strategy of plug and play for Army aviation.

"Stetson Troop is fully capable of doing everything that is asked of them," said Holmes.

Holiday celebrations on Camp Taji



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Santa Claus and his faithful elf "Buddy" don Kevlar helmets and trade their magical sleigh for a Humvee to visit Task Force XII Soldiers Christmas Day.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Service members and civilians joined for a traditional Christmas Eve candlelight service at Task Force XII's Tigris River Chapel at Camp Taji.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Task Force XII operations Sgt. Maj. Samuel Tyre puts the finishing touches on a Christmas tree in the task force tactical operations center.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

A Christmas tree donated by the veterans of foreign war stand in an open area outside HHC, Task Force XII.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Human resources specialist, Pfc. Ana Gomez decorates a Christmas tree at the Task Force XII administrative and logistics center.



Photo by Sgt. Brandon Little

Santa Claus and his M16-toting elf "Buddy" pose for a picture with four Task Force XII Soldiers preparing for Christmas Day guard duty.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

This gingerbread house was one of several cakes and decorations on display at the task force's CSM Cooke dining facility on Christmas Day.

Retention Corner

By Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Organ

Finally, Task Force XII has arrived at Camp Taji and is getting settled.

There have been a few changes in the Retention Program, not only the movement of retention support but also in the Enhanced Bonus Message. Dec. 13, the Army released MILPER Message 07-344, Enhanced Reenlistment Bonus Program.

While none of the prior MOSs listed were removed, a total of 19 were added, seven of those being aviation MOSs. Here is a list of the MOSs that were added:

09L,15B,15F,15G,15H,15J,15T,15U,21B,21W,25L,25N,25V,42R,42S,62B,63H,63M and 68R.

Another change that effects Company C, 5-158 Avn, is that until Feb '08, Soldiers who are within 120 days of redeployment are now authorized to reenlist for the bonuses listed in the MILPER message paragraphs four and five.

As we enter the new year, the 12th CAB deployed units can now start requesting movement options with their reenlistment. If you would like to check the availability of an assignment and you

are within your reenlistment window and have less than 10 yrs AFS, please contact your servicing Career Counselor.

Currently these assignments are available for Soldiers in their reenlistment window and within 12-18 months from DEROS:

Fort Bragg, N.C.
Fort Carson, Colo.
Fort Campbell, Ky.
Fort Drum, N.Y.
Fort Lewis, Wash.
Fort Polk, La.
Fort Stewart, Ga.
Fort Hood, Texas

The Soldiers of 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment arrived here in late November, and have been busy completing the relief in place process with the Air Cav. Now that it's almost the new year, and the squadron is getting settled in, several Soldiers have chosen to reenlist.

Because of the Life Cycle restriction, Soldiers of the 3d ACR will not be able to reenlist for movement or reclassification options until early spring.

In the meantime, there are still Sol-

diers taking advantage of the current station stabilization option and also opting to receive a bonus now as opposed to waiting until the spring when other options will open up.

If there are any questions about your reenlistment options, or any questions in general, I encourage you to contact your servicing Career Counselor or unit Retention NCO.



The 12th CAB Retention Team

Chronicles of the Griffin Brigade: History of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade (Part 5)

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

As the Headquarters of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade settles into its new mission at Taji, we welcome on board the Griffin team the 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment "Longknife Squadron" from Fort Hood, Texas.

This great unit was transformed out of another attack helicopter battalion that many of us in the brigade know well and once served with- the 1-1 Aviation Regiment Gunfighters.

You may all remember that 1-1 redeployed to Germany with the rest of 4th Brigade from OIF II, and immediately conducted a unit move from Katterbach to Fort Hood, where they met a new commander, Lt. Col. Todd Royar, new personnel, and new AH-64D Longbow Apache helicopters.

After the Unit Fielding and Training Program, they were redesignated 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, and assigned permanently to Fort



An artist's conception of a Scout / Attack "Pink" team in action over the Vietnamese jungle (Hawk Magazine, August 1969)

Hood.

This is not the first time that an Air Cavalry Squadron has fought under the Griffin flag. That first happened in Vietnam, when the 3-17 Cavalry "Red Horse Squadron" made a name for itself over and in the jungles surrounding Saigon. 3-17 CAV supported the 25th Infantry Division during its tour of duty from 1967 to 1972, conducting armed reconnaissance, air assaults, search and destroy

missions, and troop movements out of Bien Hoa Airbase.

Red Horse was a true combined arms unit, with AH-1 Cobra attack, OH-6 Cayuse scout, and UH-1 Iroquois ("Huey") lift helicopters, as well as infantry "Blue" platoons used as Quick Reaction Forces all over central Vietnam.

These air cavalry units routinely tallied the largest enemy kill ratios of any U.S. forces during the war; another squadron, the 1-9 Cavalry "Headhunters," had the distinction of the highest kill ratio of any battalion-sized unit in the Vietnam War.

During its tour, 3-17 CAV earned the nation's highest unit award, the Presidential Unit Citation. They currently Soldier on at Fort Drum, N.Y., as an element of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade.

Our current Cavalry element, the 4/3 Longknives, carries on the storied traditions of their ancestors in the skies over Baghdad. Wings of Victory! See you in 2008!

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

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