

# KEYSTONE

28TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

## Task Force Keystone Kicks-Off ...History Being Made in The Keystone State

By Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

The Pennsylvania Army National Guard is one of the largest Army National Guards in the country and as such they shoulder a tremendous amount of responsibility. Roughly 15,000 members strong, the commonwealth's soldiers have seen their fair share of deployments.

Between 2005 and 2006, thousands of members of the state's 2nd Brigade deployed to Iraq. In 2007 and 2008, more than a thousand soldiers with the 104th Cavalry and 103rd Armor Regiments were sent to Egypt and Afghanistan respectively.

But the state's readiness has never been more evident than now. The state is facing it's largest mobilization into a combat zone since World War II.

### THE HISTORY

Late in 2007, nearly 1,200 Pennsylvania National Guard members of the 28th Infantry Division's 28th Combat Aviation Brigade were alerted for deployment. It was a general assumption the unit would begin mobilizing early in 2009.

The brigade consists of soldiers from several other states and is more than 2,500 strong. But this

wasn't the only impressive fact surrounding the deployment. The Pennsylvania National Guard's 56th Stryker Brigade, the only brigade of its kind in the National Guard, had been alerted for deployment only months prior and the brigade's 4,000 soldiers were expecting to mobilize late in 2008. This meant more than 5,000 soldiers from the Pennsylvania National Guard would be deployed simultaneously.

Sure enough, in September 2008, the soldiers of the 56th reported for duty and their brethren in the 28th CAB were eager for their turn.

### GETTING READY

Due to the unique mission of the 56th Stryker Brigade, many of the soldiers anticipated the deployment, said Capt. Cory Angell, 56th Brigade public affairs officer. As a whole, the brigade was trained and ready to go. Angell said the training was definitely turned up a



Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones  
**Soldiers in the 1/137th perform evasive action during a training exercise Feb. 10.**

notch, but the advance notice was merely confirmation of what was expected. It afforded soldiers the opportunity to transform the way they thought about things from 'probably' into 'definitely.'

It's possible that some members of the 28th CAB may not have been so certain about the likelihood of deploying until the alert order was issued.

But it wasn't long before the

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**Under Attack!**



# KEYSTONE

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Commander

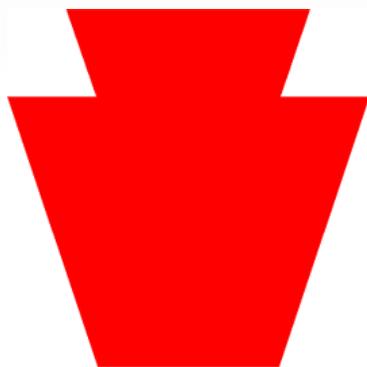
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Public Affairs

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## Keystone Kick-Off

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*Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones*

**Soldiers work on the flightline at Henry Post Army Airfield, Fort Sill, Okla. They are preparing the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade's Chinook, Blackhawk and Apache helicopters.**

leadership began ramping up the training. Before they knew it, the soldiers were having extended drill weekends and extra periods of annual training just like the Stryker Brigade had. The soldiers may not have realized how valuable that training was until they arrived at Fort Sill, Okla., where they will spend the majority of their pre-deployment mobilization.

"After the Secretary of the Army made it official that National Guard units could only deploy for 400 days, the Army had to find a way to extend the boots-on-ground time, or time in country, versus the time spent training on active duty status," said Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Wevodau, the 28th CAB sergeant major.

According to Wevodau, it's the pre-mobilization training that allows the Army to shorten National Guard deployments to roughly 12 months, which includes the time spent mobilizing.

### NOW WHAT?

In February, the 56th Stryker Brigade began its mission in the Middle East. After spending some time in Kuwait acclimating to the weather, among other things, they prepared to move into Iraq where they will temporarily work side by side with the unit that they are

replacing.

The brigade will conduct a spectrum of missions to include conducting security patrols, training Iraqi soldiers and meeting with local dignitaries.

While the 56th is getting started in Iraq, the 28th CAB is getting started in Oklahoma. The training conducted here includes a mission readiness exercise which will test the ability of the soldiers to conduct their individual jobs effectively.

After training at Fort Sill, they will follow in the Stryker Brigade's footsteps and head to Kuwait. Their mission in Iraq will include aviation-related peacekeeping operations with the ultimate goal of ensuring the seamless transfer of security responsibilities to Iraqi Security Forces.

Because of the advance notice both units received, it is likely they will return home to their families and friends roughly one year after they had left them, but the soldiers are thinking about more than that, said Wevodau.

"We're still at home in our heads and it might take a few weeks for people to begin to primarily focus on the mission," said Wevodau. "We never truly put home out of our minds, but there's an important job to be done and people know that."

# ABOUT FACE!

What has been your most enjoyable experience at Fort Sill so far?



**Sgt. 1st Class Joann Tresco**  
HHC-28th CAB - Harrisburg, PA

*"My most positive experience has been the camaraderie, teamwork & support of the HHC soldiers."*

**Capt. Chad Lubas**  
HHC-28th CAB - Reading, PA

*"I enjoy forming new friendships during my daily PT."*



**First Sgt. David Dodge**  
A-628th - New Cumberland, PA

*"I am very proud of how our soldiers have been coming together, despite their disparate backgrounds."*

**Staff Sgt. Shawn Rutledge**  
HHC-2/104th - Harrisburg, PA

*"I am very much enjoying the leadership challenges of being here on an active-duty status."*



**First Lt. Scott Gliebe**  
C-628th - Harmony, PA

*"As a backfill soldier from a separate unit, I felt I was immediately taken in and included in the unique camaraderie and 'family' atmosphere of the 628th."*



**(Left to Right) Spc. Susan Zbegner, Spc. Tracy Ackermann, Staff Sgt. Lindalee Killian, Sgt. Lisa Draper**  
HSC-628th

*"We're really enjoying the camaraderie of being together full time in a mobilized status."*



*Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Dale E. Shade*

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE

UPARs - they link their unit with the outside world. Does your unit have a UPAR? UPAR stands for Unit Public Affairs Representative and sometimes the UPAR is the only person who stands between your unit and the vast desert of untold stories.

In these days of 24-hour news operations and more media choices than you can shake a remote control at, it takes effort for your unit's message to be heard. UPARs make that happen.

The Army has an energetic and vibrant public affairs branch, but only has enough soldiers and officers to assign trained public affairs personnel to brigade-level units and above. So what's a smaller unit and above. So what's a smaller unit to do?

Assign a UPAR, that's what.

The Army Public Affairs Handbook says, "Unit Public Affairs Representatives, or 'stringers,' are assigned through additional duty

appointments to represent their units for PA functions." Sure, it's an additional duty, but few additional duties can have a greater impact on how your unit is seen by the outside world; or be this much fun!

UPARs find the stories that a public affairs officer or soldiers in a higher headquarters might never become aware of. The UPAR can write a story and/or take a picture that could get theater-wide or even world-wide exposure.

*Written by Sgt. 1st Class David McClain*  
*Expeditionary Times*

*For more information about the UPAR program, please contact the Brigade PAO at TFKeystone@gmail.com*



# Under Attack!

## Getting Fired Up at the Aerial Gunnery Range



*Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones*  
**A Blackhawk helicopter from the 1/137th flies past a field as a surface-to-air missile launches in its wake. This is the beginning of the second lane in the aerial gunnery range in which pilots and crewmembers must react to a variety of dangerous situations on the ground.**

### By Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

The field was mostly covered in grass, which came thigh-high, and waved in the Oklahoma breeze. Several gentlemen stood around in the clearing, casually sipping their coffee and discussing football. Justin Robertson was speaking of his individual accomplishments as a quarterback when he was abruptly interrupted.

"Get into position," barked Capt. Ian Anderson. Robertson began running for the tree line waving his fists wildly into the air. Sgt. Donald Newsome picked up his M-240B machine gun and started firing toward the Blackhawk helicopters that were zooming above his head. Sgt. Angel Jaca hopped onto the back of a rusty pickup truck and started firing his machine gun in eerily long bursts as if it would be his last time firing the weapon.

The exercise had begun.

These gentlemen are role players and it's their job to help the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade train for their mission in Iraq, and on this particular day, it was the pilots and crew of the 1/137th going through the lanes.



*Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones*  
**Brad Harris (left) and Bob Gardner play the role of Iraqi insurgents.**

The first lane, which Anderson is in charge of, allows the soldiers to react to a surprise attack while performing a reconnaissance mission.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Turning up the HEAT in a Humvee

The Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer was one of the first true training scenerios that soldiers of Task Force Keystone were able to take part in at Fort Sil.

After piling into the mock Humvee body, the soldiers were tilted between 25 and 30 degrees to experience how far the vehicle can tilt before being subjected to a rollover.

The soldiers were then spun entirely around and eventually had to escape an upside-down vehicle twice.

### Being at Fort Sill Super After All

Football fans in the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade Headquarters Company and 1/137th may have gotten nervous about whether they would be able to watch the big game on the Sunday after they arrived at Fort Sill.

Lt. Col. Dominick Nati, the brigade executive officer, took care of his troops and made sure the Super Bowl would be airing in two locations for the units

The post Morale, Welfare and Recreation office generously donated money so the brigade could have plenty left over for the farewell ceremony scheduled in April.

### New Jersey TAG and Gov. to Visit

On March 12-13 the New Jersey adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Glenn Kieth, governor Jon Corzine, and several employers of New Jersey National Guard members will be visiting the 1/150th as part of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program.

In addition to being TAG, Kieth is a pilot and has spent much of his military career in the aviation field.

## Under Attack

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"They're supposed to lay down suppressive fire and execute evasive maneuvers, but they could have been more aggressive," said Anderson. "It's all about the right combination of suppressive fire, maneuvering and avoidance."

In the second lane, which is controlled by Capt. Kevin Hughes, the pilots and crew are expected to actively engage the enemy and encircle them in a special formation, with the door gunners firing as they pass by. This lane starts with a surface-to-air missile launch which ends with a mission update over the radio.



*Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones*  
**Sgt. Angel Jaca, who is playing the role of an Iraqi insurgent, fires on a 1/137th Blackhawk during a training exercise Feb. 10. According to Capt. Ian Anderson, officer-in-command of the lane, the clothing, weapons, techniques and vehicles used are meant to be as authentic as possible, resulting in realistic training.**

According to Hughes, the third and final lane is all about a "fallen angel," or a downed aircraft.

"The pilots get the situation update and a grid coordinate, and off they go," he said.

According to Anderson, the training is very effective because the trainers blend doctrine and personal experience together.

"There's the clothing, the weapons, the older model cars... down to the way the taxis are painted with orange corner panels," said Anderson. "We bring them together to add the elevated level of realism necessary for effective training."



# Task Force Keystone Scrapbook

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Dale Shade, Sgt. Aaron Gott, Sgt. Matthew Jones

