

April 2009 - Camp Buehring, Kuwait

KEYSTONE

28TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

The Next Chapter of the Deployment

By Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

The main body of Task Force Keystone was officially recognized April 9 at Fort Sill during a farewell ceremony.

The speakers at the ceremony include Brig. Gen. Jerry

Beck, commanding general of the Pennsylvania National Guard's 28th Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Mark

Graham, commanding general of First Army Division West, and Col. Teresa Gallagher, Task Force

1/150th Assault Battalion and 628th Aviation Support Battalion have been training there since January

and headed to Kuwait for two more weeks before arriving in Iraq where they are expected to remain

for roughly nine months.

The other two battalions in the

See The Next Chapter, Page 4



Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

Task Force Keystone commander, Col. Teresa Gallagher speaks to her soldiers during the farewell ceremony April 9 at Fort Sill, Okla.



Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

Brig. Gen. Jerry Beck, commanding general of the 28th Infantry Division, greets Angela Altabef, a C-2/104th communication specialist.

IN THIS ISSUE

Capstone for Keystone
One Last Shot
News In Brief
A Thousand Words
Scrapbook

Pg 2
Pg 3
Pg 4
Pg 5
Pg 6



One Last Shot

Pg 3



KEYSTONE

Col. Teresa A. Gallagher
Commander

Col. Robert P. Samborski
Deputy Commander

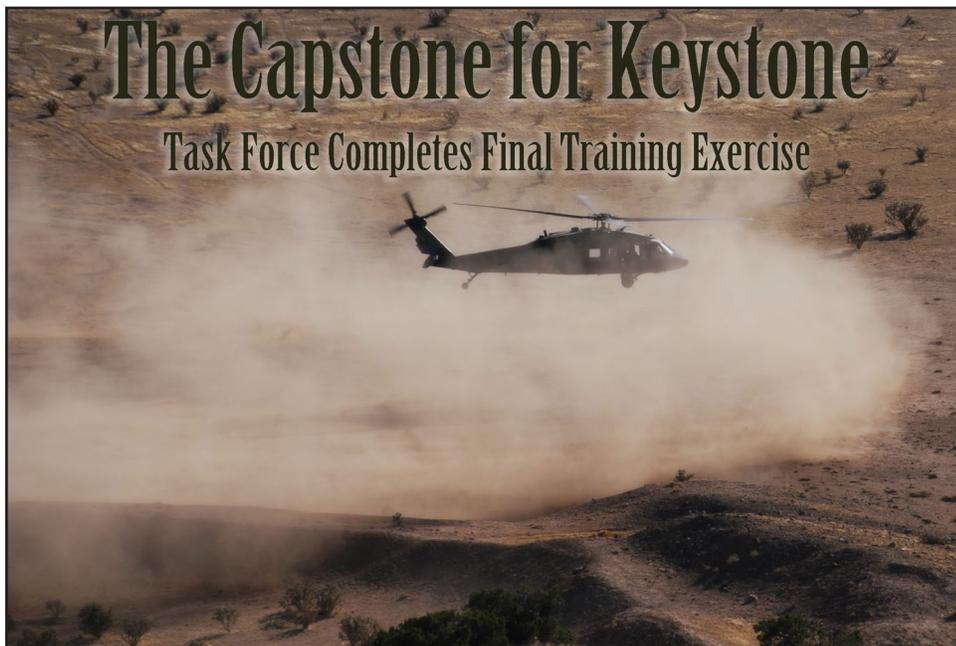
**Command Sgt. Major
Michael F. Wevodau**
Command Sergeant Major

Sgt. 1st Class Dale E. Shade
Sgt. Matthew E. Jones
Public Affairs

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A 28th CAB UH-60 Blackhawk takes off in a cloud of dust near Albuquerque, N.M. on Apr. 2.

By Sgt. Aaron Gott

The 28th Combat Aviation Brigade completed newly-implemented training designed to give them a head start on the dusty flight conditions the unit will encounter in Iraq.

The training, which occurred near Albuquerque, N.M. from Apr. 1-7, was suggested and supervised by the 166th Aviation Brigade, in order to acclimate pilots to the heavy dust, lack of illumination and low-contrast desert environment of Iraq.

The 166th Aviation Brigade identified the need for Reserve Component aviation units to conduct environmental training because desert landings can engulf helicopters in clouds of dust, which reduce visibility to zero and disorient pilots as they descend. The brigade, which is responsible for training Reserve and Guard aviation units, introduced the new event this year, in time to appear on the 28th CAB's mobilization training schedule.

166th Aviation Brigade and 28th CAB leaders scouted several areas for a suitable base of operations, discovering Double Eagle II, a small airport approximately 20 minutes outside of Albuquerque. Bode Aviation runs the airport and previously hosted the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment for similar train-

ing.

Bode provided all the infrastructure necessary for successful training, including the airfield, classrooms, hangar space, internet connections and staff support as a token of their appreciation and support for the Army and Reserve Component aviation. Kevin Fredekind, the company's general manager, said the team members are happy to do what they can. "Most of us have a background in the military or law enforcement, so we understand what it means to serve and the importance of the [28th CAB's] mission," he said.

The 166th Aviation Brigade provided mentorship, guidance and logistical support for the exercise, but the training itself was internal to the deploying unit and was supervised by Chief Warrant Officer 5 Dale Yoder, 28th CAB standardization officer.

"Desert environments feature low contrast and light conditions" said Yoder, who helped select the site of the training, "New Mexico provides an environment that allows pilots to prepare for the hot, arid air and low ambient conditions that can be among the most dangerous to fly in."

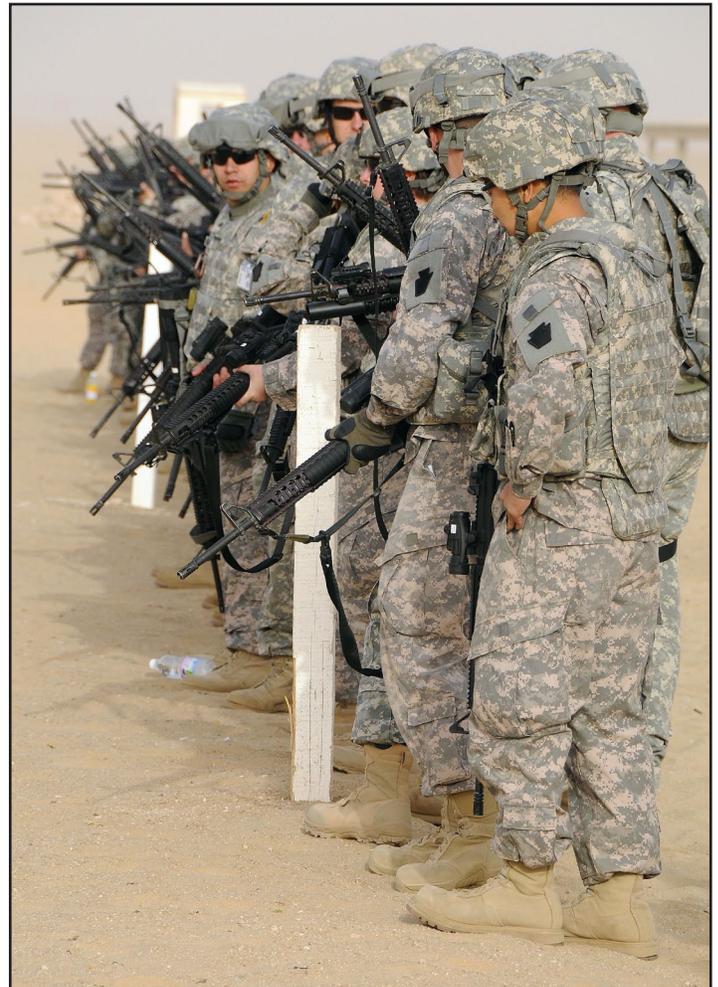
See Capstone Exercise, Page 5



ONE LAST SHOT

Photos by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

On April 17 at a shooting range outside of Camp Buehring, Kuwait, the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company took their final shots before they head across the border into Iraq. Every soldier was required to fire ten rounds from their assigned weapon, the M-9 pistol, the M-16 rifle or M-4 rifle. The purpose of this exercise is to verify the functionality of the weapons.





NEWS IN BRIEF

Task Force Keystone Adjusts Sights With New Change in Mission

In mid-April, shortly after beginning movement into Kuwait, word began to slowly trickle down the chain-of-command that Task Force Keystone's mission while in Iraq would be changing quickly.

The task force was on course to be used as a corps asset, based mainly out of Joint Base Balad, about 50 miles north of Baghdad.

Now, the brigade will fall under the 34th Infantry Division and be based mostly at Camp Adder in southern Iraq. Elements from the task force will still be spread around the country.

The actual mission of brigade will still run the full spectrum of aviation operations. The focus, however, will likely be shifted now that the brigade is a division asset.

Training Continues In Kuwait

Although Task Force Keystone left behind Fort Sill, Okla., the training continued at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Task force units were required to complete a follow-up suicide prevention class. The class was similar to the one the task force underwent at Fort Sill.

Soldiers also attended improvised explosive device detection class where they were taught about the current techniques insurgents use to make and impliment IEDs.

Other classes included a security class, a briefing about fratricide, and a close-quarters marksmanship course.

Soldiers also fired their personal weapons and their units' crew-served weapons to test their functionality.

The Next Chapter

Continued from Page 1

task force trained separately. The 1/137th Assault Battalion trained at Fort Sill, but left for Kuwait in February. They are currently in Iraq. The 1/130th Attack Battalion began training at Fort Hood, Texas, in March.

Task Force Keystone will eventually be spread throughout Iraq and Kuwait. The task force headquarters will primarily be located at Tallil, in southern Iraq.

"We're closing the chapter on our post-mobilization training, and as the leader of this tremendous group of soldiers I couldn't be more proud," said Gallagher. "The soldiers' dedication to duty and willingness to put forth extra effort and time has paid off. We are well prepared for our mission."

Task Force Keystone will provide complete aviation operations for coalition forces in Iraq to include peacekeeping operations and the seamless transfer of security responsibilities to Iraq Security Forces during the transition to a safe, secure and independent Iraqi government.

This mission requires the operation and maintenance of the CH-47 Chinook, AH-64 Apache and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. Specific missions may include close air support, medical evacuation, and transportation of troops, ground vehicles, supplies or dignitaries.

One other important focus of this deployment is safety, Gallagher said during her speech.

"There are four hats that we all wear during some point in our lives," she said. "We are leaders, followers, teachers and stuents," she continued. "But there is one hat we all must wear during this deloyment and that is the hat of safety manager, every minute of every hour, of every day."



Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

Task Force Keystone soldiers stand at the position of parade rest during the task force farewell ceremony April 9 at Fort Sill, Okla.



A Thousand Words

On the way to the MWR building on his first day in Iraq, this TF Keystone soldier was delighted to find out that Balad isn't the only base with a pool.



Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

Have a photo that's worth a thousand words? Send it to TFKeystone@gmail.com

Capstone Exercise

Continued from Page 2

According to Maj. Natalee Birdsell, 166th Aviation Brigade executive officer, she couldn't have asked for a better base of operations. "Working out of Double Eagle II allowed the unit freedom to conduct their missions without hassle, maximizing training time," she said, adding "it couldn't have been done without Bode Aviation."

In addition to helping meet the mission requirements, Bode Aviation offered Soldiers a fun break from training. John R. "J.R." Bode took Soldiers in his Pitts acrobatic biplane for loop-de-loops and barrel rolls.

Bode's long and diverse history with aviation began as a fighter

pilot who volunteered to fly the OB-10 in Vietnam, where he earned the prestigious Air Force Cross. After the war, he was sent to graduate school in aerospace engineering, which, along with his other accomplishments helped land him a job at the Pentagon as lead designer for the A-10. Bode. The founder of the company, has since handed the reigns to his son, John H. Bode, and at a healthy and vibrant 80-years-old, flies almost as often as he conducts fitness training.

Upon completion of the training, the 166th Aviation Brigade

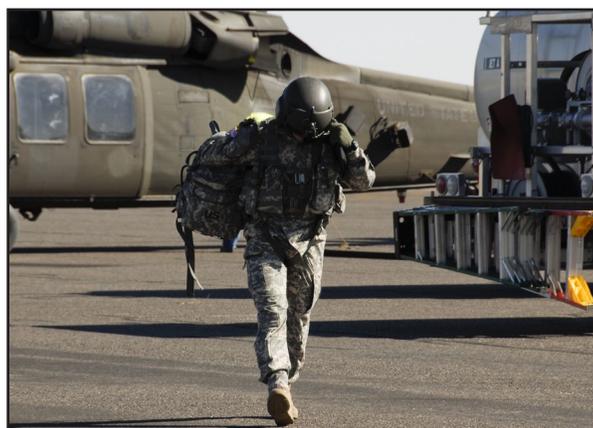


Photo by Sgt. Aaron Gott

A 28th CAB pilot walks away from his UH-60 Blackhawk during a hot crew swap at Double Eagle II Airport.

and 28th Combat Aviation Brigade thanked the company and its employees for their support with a poster full of pictures from the event and a small plaque.



Task Force Keystone Scrapbook

Photos by Sgt. Matthew Jones, Sgt. Aaron Gott, Spc. Michael Ili

