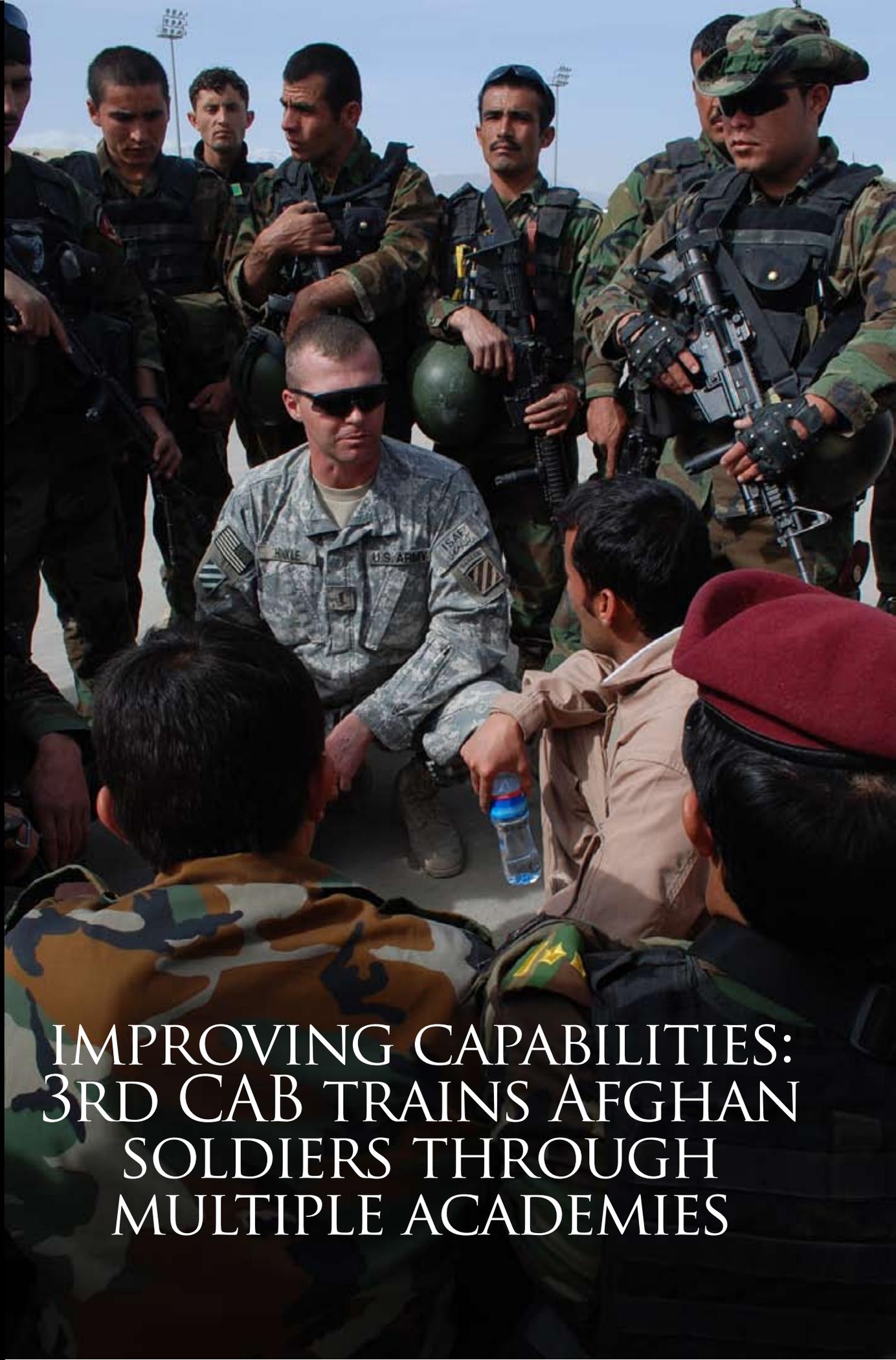




FALCON FLYER



IMPROVING CAPABILITIES: 3RD CAB TRAINS AFGHAN SOLDIERS THROUGH MULTIPLE ACADEMIES

April 2010

FLIGHT SCHEDULE - APRIL 2010



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FALCON FLYER

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COVER PHOTO

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Chris Hinkle talks with Afghan National Army Commandos after their first day of performing air assaults March 10 at Bagram Airfield.

Photo by Spc. Monica K. Smith
Full story on page 12



Sgt. Matt Gagnon, C Co., 4-3 Avn., TF Lighthorse, conducts a preflight inspection on a Black Hawk, March 30 at FOB Fenty.

FALCON 6 SENDS...

Col. Don Galli
CAB Commander

Soldiers, Family Members, and Friends of Task Force Falcon – Greetings from Bagram! The Marne Air Brigade is in the thick of our deployment – with many missions completed and many more successes ahead. Our Soldiers are showing great courage and bearing great sacrifice to accomplish our mission. The terrain of Afghanistan is stern, but Dog Face Soldiers are made of sterner stuff.

Last month, President Barack Obama visited Bagram. Our brigade was given the honor of escorting our commander in chief's flight from Bagram to Kabul and back. While speaking at Bagram, Obama praised our mission "to help Afghans forge a hard-won peace while realizing the extraordinary potential of the Afghan people, Afghanistan's sons and daughters, from the soldiers and the police to the farmers and the young students."

We have taken on that mission and set the standard by which all aviation brigades will be measured. We have flown 20 percent more than any aviation brigade that served before us in Afghanistan. But the numbers only tell a part of the story. Our aircrews have flown in red illumination conditions since day one. We have provided unparalleled reconnaissance, security and firepower to Special Operations and Coalition Forces.

We have forged a historic and enduring relationship with the Afghan National Army Air Corps (ANAAC) through our Crew Chief, Air Assault and MEDEVAC Academies. We are now fighting shoulder to shoulder with our Afghan allies. And, together, we will defeat the enemies of Afghanistan.

Already this month, we've graduated a second class of the ANAAC Air Assault Academy. We're working with the best Afghan pilots, crew chiefs, and commandos to make them even better. They will soon be leading combined-action missions to help their fellow Afghan citizens.

Meanwhile, our Soldiers demonstrated their belief in our mission by reenlisting in great numbers. We reached our yearly reenlistment mission by the first of February.

In order to do all we have done, the Soldiers of the Marne Air Brigade work long days, weeks, and months. They do this because of their superior inner discipline. Every day I am privileged to witness our Dog Face Soldiers thrive in missions large and small. I am filled with pride and admiration at the fighting spirit of every Dog Face Soldier here in Afghanistan.

To the Soldiers of this Task Force: you've fought superbly and accomplished every mission with determination and pride. Keep up the great work! To the Falcon Families and loved ones back home: your support is critical to keeping our morale high and our focus on the mission.

Marne Air! Rock of the Marne!
Falcon 6



Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Green

Col. Don Galli (left), commander of TF Falcon, presents a Purple Heart to CW2 Ryan Boehringer, March 29 at Bagram Airfield. Boehringer was wounded during a mission in January.

FALCON 7 SENDS...

Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley
CAB Command Sergeant Major

Greetings once again from Bagram Afghanistan.

Time is passing us quickly as the brigade finds itself leaving behind the first third of the deployment. In that time the Soldiers of the Marne Air brigade has made a name for themselves within the military community and with the Afghan population.

In the past month we have seen the completion of the inaugural classes of the Afghan National Army Air Corps Crew Chief Academy, the Afghan National Security Forces Air Assault Academy and the start of the Afghan National Army Air Corps Flight Medic Academy. Our Soldiers worked hard to design, launch and teach the academies which will aid the Afghan National Army in securing their country.

I'd like to take the time to recognize the below listed senior non-commissioned officers who were selected for promotion to sergeant first class. These 17 NCOs earned their rank through perseverance and commitment to bettering themselves and their subordinates and serve as an example to all.

The weather is beginning to heat up and our operational tempo will also rise creating the opportunity for tension to rise. As we near the middle of the deployment I encourage everyone to deepen lines of

communication. I thank all the families and friends back home who have worked to support our Soldiers through letters, emails, care packages, Facebook notes and much more. Keep up the great work.

- SSG(P) Corey Ketner – TF Knighthawk
- SSG(P) Gregory Sparkman – TF Lighthorse
- SSG(P) Frederick Boyles – TF Workhorse
- SSG(P) Ronald Mitchell – TF Talon
- SSG(P) Kevin Hubbard – TF Knighthawk
- SSG(P) Kevin Bailey – TF Brawler
- SSG(P) David Jones – Home Detachment
- SSG(P) Daniel Addison – TF Brawler
- SSG(P) Daniel Enus - Home Detachment
- SSG(P) Tremayne Gilchrist – TF Talon
- SSG(P) Christop Mackenzie- TF Knighthawk
- SSG(P) Derek Wirkki – TF Lighthorse
- SSG(P) Lakeis Walkermooore – TF Workhorse
- SSG(P) Daniel Garcia – TF Knighthawk
- SSG(P) Jesse Patch – TF Workhorse
- SSG(P) Idina Garcia – TF Lighthorse
- SSG(P) Wesley Townsend – TF Knighthawk

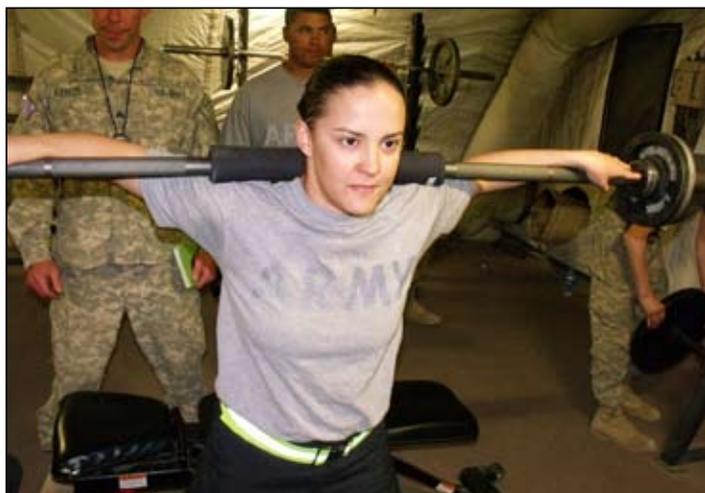
Marne Air! Rock of the Marne!
Falcon 7



Spc. Monica K. Smith

Task Force Falcon Commander, Col. Don Galli (left) and TF Falcon Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley (right) stop to pose with U.S. Army Materiel Command, Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey J. Mellinger, March 14 at Bagram Airfield.

SIGHT & PICTURE



Sgt. Scott Tant

Spc. Mylene Graulau, HHC, TF Brawler, sets her focus on a new record for squats during the Regulator Olympics, March 31 at the Hercules Gym on FOB Shank.



Warrant Officer Robert Renny

Staff Sgt. Mark Smith, A Co., 2nd Bn., 238 Avn., with TF Knighthawk, prepares a Black Hawk for flight, April 9 at Bagram Airfield.



Courtesy Photo

Soldiers from TF Hippo work on an Mi-17 March 5 at FOB Sharana.



Sgt. Spencer Case

A Chinook with B Co., TF Falcon carries a sling-loaded I-beam from the New York World Trade Center and displays an American flag above Parwan province Afghanistan, March 31.

HEY (MRS.) DJ PUT A RECORD ON

TASK FORCE
ODIN-A SOLDIER
MOONLIGHTS AS DJ

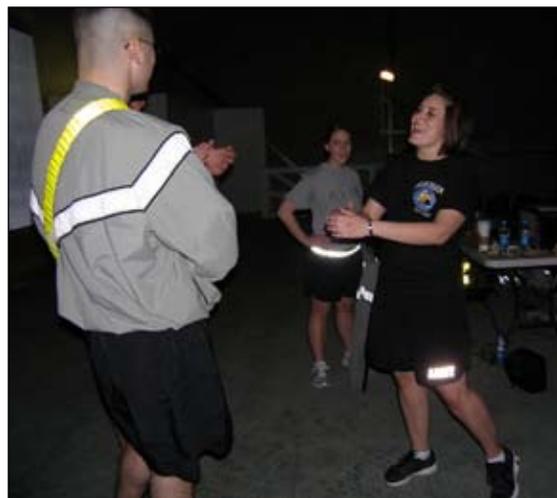
STORY AND PHOTOS BY
STAFF SGT. FRANCISCO SALAS

Having served as a disc jockey for three weeks at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation's "Country Night", Spc. Katie Starkey, an administrative clerk in Headquarters and Support Company, Task Force ODIN-A [Observe, Detect, Identify, Neutralize-Afghanistan], 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, has found a fun way to give back to all the deployed personnel of Bagram Airfield.

"I love to dance, and it feels so awesome to be able to create [an opportunity] for Soldiers to forget they are in Afghanistan for a little while" said Starkey, from Lipan, Texas.

Starkey is her company's MWR representative and took the opportunity to fill in while the regular DJ, Shane, a civilian contractor took leave.

"I didn't want it to end," said Starkey. "It's a way to get out when you get off work. If you don't have MWR events, what are you going to do? Go back to



(Top) TF ODIN-A (Observe, Detect, Identify, Neutralize-Afghanistan), Soldiers dance to crowd favorite: Steve Earl's "Copperhead Road" at the MWR's "Country Night" March 6 at Bagram Airfield. (Bottom left) Spc. Katie Starkey, HSC, TF ODIN-A, announces the next song, a waltz, to slow the tempo down at the MWR's "Country Night" March 6 at Bagram Airfield. (Bottom right) Spc. Katie Starkey, HSC, TF ODIN-A, praises a Soldier after learning a new step at the MWR's "Country Night" March 6 at Bagram Airfield.

your [quarters] and play video games?"

Also involved in the MWR events is Pfc. Jon Richie, a Kiowa Warrior crew chief in Company D, TF Knighthawk, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon.

"I was a general manager of a country club for four or five years, and needed a way to get away from the same old bump and grind of the job, so I went and asked if they could use any help and [Starkey] was there," said Richie. "Since she took (country night) over, more people get involved

with the line dance lessons and [song] requests, and interact with [us] more."

Both Starkey and Richie agree that country night is a fun way to let loose and encourage everyone to come out to see what the buzz is about.

Country night, which is held Saturday nights, averages 300 people who come out for a variety of country music, including old, new and remixes; dancing and even dance lessons, which take place just before the "party" starts.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March was Women's History Month; a time to celebrate the contributions of women to the United States Army. This year's theme was "Writing Women Back Into History." The women of TF Falcon play a vital role in our organization. They are the Soldiers on the front lines of battle; they are the leaders, officers and NCOs who have made sacrifices for our nation above their own. Today there are more than 250,000 women in uniform serving as role models and leaders in the U.S. Army. In celebrating Women's History Month, we emphasize the values we place on these women and the diversity and strength they bring to our force as they continue to contribute to the annals of the Marne Air Brigade's history.



TASK FORCE TALON

Chaplain (Maj.) Grace Hollis-Taylor, brigade chaplain

"She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate." Proverbs 31:25-31

TASK FORCE VIPER

2nd Lt. Rachel Penny, battalion logistics officer

"My advice to females who are thinking about joining the Army is to go for it! Do not let someone tell you "you are a female and therefore you cannot accomplish said task" and do not allow yourself to perform at a substandard level because you feel that due to your gender you can get away with it. As with anything in life if you plan on doing something you should plan on doing it 100%, especially when it is a commitment like the Army. Most importantly respect and hold yourself to a high standard, as a result others will too."



TASK FORCE KNIGHTHAWK

1st Lt. Mickala Henson, Kiowa Warrior pilot in F Troop

"I think my most memorable experience as pilot was my first combat engagement. The ground unit we were supporting started taking fire and we were able to support them in a close-combat attack which allowed the ground unit to safely disengage with no casualties. It was rewarding to be able to directly help our fellow Soldiers."



TASK FORCE LIGHTHORSE

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Melissa Huber, Apache pilot with HHC

"You have to have thick skin no matter what your gender or race is in the Apache community. Don't pull the 'girl card.' The females that use their gender to get what they want and avoid doing their jobs ruin it for the rest of us. It doesn't matter what your race or gender is. If you can do your job, that is all that matters."



“Your legacy is more than your own service. I hope you know that your legacy will be measured in the service of every woman who follows in the trails that you’ve blazed - every woman who benefits from your daring and determination.”

- First Lady Michelle Obama

TASK FORCE BRAWLER

Capt. Sarah Reynolds, Black Hawk pilot and air mission request OIC

“I’d like to think that a conglomeration of moments, decisions, flights, people and experiences have made me and my career what it is today. By pulling from the positives, learning from the negatives, and always seeking improvement, I have yet to get bored with Army Aviation and see it as a limitless, challenging adventure. I feel so blessed to have been given the opportunities I’ve been given and to be working alongside our country’s finest men and women.”



TASK FORCE WORKHORSE

Sgt. Crystal Bryant, cook with HSC

“As a child I liked cooking. I trace my passion back to my great auntie who instilled in me you can reach people’s hearts through your cooking. It makes me feel like it’s worth it to say, interact with other Soldiers. It’s a joy to work with each of them. I wouldn’t change my job for anything right now. I enjoy expressing my love to family and friends through my cooking. Good food means happy hearts, and healthy people. I hope that our cooking at our DFAC can make someone happy here.”



TASK FORCE ODIN

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Lois Christensen, Warrior Alpha pilot for Company B

“I enlisted in 1975 and was an air traffic controller at Fort Bragg. I quickly realized that I wanted to be on the other end of the radio and applied for flight school. I’ve been fortunate enough to raise a family while serving in the military for the past 35 years. I plan on staying in uniform as long as I can, or until the fun runs out, whichever comes first.”



TASK FORCE DARK KNIGHT

Col. Monica A. Harwig, commander of Task Force Dark Knight

“My only regret is that I wanted to originally remain on Active Duty but that was not possible because the Army could not station my husband and I together. The Reserves allowed me to support my spouse’s military career, let me continue to work in military intelligence, provided a great deal of flexibility to have a family and later a civilian job as an intelligence analyst.”



HEAVY LIFTING

National Guard Chinook unit moves thousands of passengers and tons of cargo for TF Viper.

Story by 1st Lt. Kaden Koba



Air Force Tech Sgt. Stephen Otero

Soldiers from 3rd BCT, 101st Abn., Div., TF Rakkasan, exit a Chinook with B Co., 1st Bn., 169th GSAB, TF Viper, on an air assault operation Feb. 24 at FOB Salerno.

When needing a little more muscle moving thousands of passengers and tons of cargo through the Paktya, Paktika and Khowst areas of operations, Task Force Viper, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon calls upon Company B, "Vertical," 1st Battalion, 169th General Support Aviation Battalion. A National Guard Chinook unit proudly based in Birmingham, Alabama, B Co., 169th GSAB is attached to TF Viper as a lift asset for their deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Though based in Alabama, the make-up of the company is diverse, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Thomas Johnson, B Co., 1-169th GSAB.

"Our personnel also come from the Georgia and South Carolina Guard, and Hawaii," said Johnson. "We also have active duty augmentees, (called) "Big Windy", from Germany."

The National Guard company expands the repertoire of capabilities of TF Viper, which was originally solely an attack helicopter battalion. Characterized by their submarine-like shape and double rotors, the Chinooks are the Army's heavy lifters for rotary craft. Playing several roles, the Chinooks add to the ground unit's combat power through air assaults, combat support through resupply missions, and even winning hearts and minds with humanitarian support and leaflet drops. When large numbers of Soldiers are needed on a mission, Chinooks deliver them to their destination in both deliberate and hasty operations. They can deliver a force capable of securing entire villages.

"This war would grind to a screeching halt without Chinook heavy lift assets," said Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Whittaker, a member of Big Windy, Company B, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, currently assigned to B Co., 1-169th GSAB.

Every night the Chinook pilots plan resupply missions and by day they fly those missions to dozens of forward operating bases and combat outposts in the AO. In a dangerous region, the Chinooks are able to move almost anything. Roads are often unusable due to terrain or improvised explosive devices. Everything Soldiers need is delivered by the "Vertical" Chinooks: food, water, ammunition, Soldiers, working dogs, fuel, building materials, generators and even vehicles. The Chinooks can carry thousands of pounds of cargo in extremely high altitudes that cannot be reached by other helicopters. If the loads don't fit inside the massive helicopter, the Chinook crews can sling load it underneath and go.

"I love the aspect of being able to fly and perform missions to help other FOBs," said Spc. Eddie Pearson, a door gunner who also works flight operations for B Co., 1-169th. "It's the little things that make people happy. Example: Mail."

Many Soldiers make the company successful: pilots, maintainers, crew chiefs, flight operations personnel and the door gunners. The pilots plan and fly the missions. The maintainers constantly work to ensure the heavy loads don't put the helicopters out of commission. The crew chiefs on Chinooks do numerous jobs. They guide the pilots onto landings that are hard to see, control the flow of passengers and cargo on and off the aircraft, they are capable of sling loading the cargo themselves, and sometimes train the ground forces to do so. The door gunners man automatic weapons and provide security to the Chinooks on their missions.



Spc. Brandon Johns



Spc. Brandon Johns



Air Force Tech Sgt. Stephen Otero

(Top right) A Chinook with B Co., 1st Bn., 169th GSAB, TF Viper, sling loads a 20-foot container across a mountain range, March 5 near FOB Salerno. (Middle) Sgt. Paul Phillips (left) and Staff Sgt. Lori Perry (right), crew chiefs with B Co., 1st Bn., 169th GSAB, TF Viper, load ammunition on a combat resupply mission, March 5 at FOB Salerno. (Bottom) Soldiers from 3rd BCT, 101st Abn., Div., TF Rakkasan load onto a Chinook with B Co., 1st Bn., 169th GSAB, TF Viper in preparation for an air assault mission, Feb. 24 at FOB Salerno.

IMPROVING CAPABILITIES

TF Falcon trains Afghan soldiers through multiple academies
 Story by: Spc. Monica K. Smith

Last month the leaders from the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, and Afghan National Army Air Corps celebrated the inaugural class of five ANAAC crew chiefs graduation from the Afghan National Security Forces Crew Chief Academy. This month TF Falcon Soldiers celebrate two more academies designed to future partnerships between the Afghans and the U.S.

On the heels of the ANSF Crew Chief Academy's first graduation, the ANSF Air Assault Academy opened its doors during a ceremony March 6 at Bagram Airfield. The five members of the ANAAC crew chiefs who graduated the ANSF Crew Chief Academy joined 22 Afghan National Army Commandos, along with four pilots as the first class of the air assault academy.

The academy taught subjects such as map reading and how to conduct air assault briefs and included both classroom instruction and flying. The members of the academy executed their first air assault mission, March 10, in Qual ' Ehye Beland and Khanjarkhel, Afghanistan, both outside of Bagram Airfield.

During the assault, the 22 commandos spilled out of the Mi-17s securing a perimeter around the aircraft. After the Mi-17s took off the commandos softened their tone and turned from performing an air assault to carrying out a material assistance mission.

"This was the first time that the ANA Commandos planned purely with Afghan air crews," said tactical operations officer and primary trainer for the academy Chief Warrant Officer 3 Chris Hinkle, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon. "This was also the first time they performed an air assault from their own Mi-17s and the first time the commandos executed a ground tactical plan without following a U.S. Soldier. They planned it, they briefed it, they executed it on their own."

Both the air and ground crews worked two days prior to the air assault. On the day of the mission, the Mi-17s landed and the commandos moved into the village to meet with the elders and the other villagers. From the air, the Afghan crew chiefs watched as the villagers hesitantly approached the soldiers, however once realizing the soldiers were ANA Commandos, their hesitation dissipated

as the villagers began to cry and reach out to touch and talk to them.

"We just dropped the soldiers off and the people stayed away but when we landed to pick them up, we saw the people coming around the aircraft," said Abdul Wali, one of the ANAAC crew chiefs. "They were proud of their Afghan brothers helping Afghanistan. They were so happy and it made me happy too."

The commandos handed out radios and school supplies spending 30 minutes on the ground talking with the local people, including children at school. They then moved to the pick-up zone and prepared for extraction.

After two weeks the class made history with their graduation ceremony, March 20 at Bagram Airfield.

"These 31 students were the first of 100,000 Afghan National Security Forces to graduate from the course," said Hinkle. "This class signified a turning point in history for the ANSF and served as a milestone for the Afghans to take control of their country."

"The academies were good," said Wali. "We learned how to fly and how to work with others (to conduct) air missions. We flew to villages and helped them. I am glad to be part of (these academies) so I can help my country."

The graduation ceremony included speeches from Col. Don Galli, commander of the 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, Brig. Gen. Mohammed Barat, the Kabul wing commander of the ANAAC and Brig. Gen. Dadaan Lawang, Afghan Commando brigade commander.

"We have learned that even though we come from different countries and different armies, we share many values and ideals in common," said Galli. "The Afghan soldiers here today displayed these values and ideals throughout the weeks of training. Because they did, each of them is more than deserving of the graduation certificate and badge they are about to receive."

Just a few days before the ANSF Air Assault Academy graduation the 3rd CAB began it's third academy with the ANAAC Flight Medic Academy, March 15 at Bagram Airfield.

"You are the difference between life and death for those soldiers on the ground," said flight medic Sgt. Keith Rudd, Company C,

TIMELINE



Capt. Jason Quash

March 10 - Afghan National Army Commandos work with village elders to distribute school supplies to children in Khanjarkhel, during the first day of air assault missions.



Capt. Jason Quash

March 10 - ANA Commandos wait for their Mi-17 to land after their first day of performing air assault missions in Khanjarkhel, Afghanistan, outside of Bagram Airfield.



Spc. Monica K. Smith

March 15 - Sgt. Chris Rigby, flight medic, C Co., MEDEVAC, TF Knighthawk, shows two students and an interpreter how to use a bag valve mask to assist a patient in breathing at Bagram Airfield.



Villagers watch as ANA Commandos load their Mi-17 after conducting their first air assault mission, March 10, in Qual 'Ehye Beland, Afghanistan, outside of Bagram Airfield.

MEDEVAC, Task Force Knighthawk, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, during the first day of classes. "Not just soldiers but also the local population. We are here to help get them to medical facilities so they can receive the best medical care available."

The first class consisted of two ANAAC medics and one interpreter who will study the history of medevac, loading and unloading patients and in-flight care. Flight medics from TF Knighthawk, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon will instruct the class which includes both in-class instruction and flying.

"There are three phases to the academy," said Capt. Erika Noyes, C Co., MEDEVAC, TF Knighthawk, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon. "Phase one is classroom instruction where we teach the basics and lay the foundation. Phase two is a three week crew chief academy where they become familiar with the aircraft, learn crew coordination and learn to become an integral part of the crew. During phase three our flight medics team with them to conduct advanced training – advanced circulation, extractions, hoist and how to use the Jaws of Life."

The academy began a week before the ANA officially announced a flight medic position. Prior to the announcement, medics served in an unofficial position without in-depth training. At the completion of the course, the ANA medics will be qualified as flight medics. Master Sergeant Abdur Rahim, an ANAAC medic partici-

pating in the course, said he is honored to be one of the first medics to participate in the class.

"I feel happy because now we can help our people," said Rahim. "When we were in our own facility, we didn't have the equipment we needed but we are getting it. We need to learn and train on how to use the equipment we will be receiving and also learn more information about medevac."

"This academy gives us an opportunity to work combined actions and to work skill sets between our flight medics and their flight medics," said platoon sergeant Staff Sgt. Joseph McCormick, C Co., MEDEVAC, TF Knighthawk, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon. "The ability to increase our capabilities to treat all Soldiers on the battlefield both coalition and Afghan soldiers, plays a huge role in our overall success."

As Rudd explained the history of medevac to the ANA medics, he shared stories of medevac units flying into landing zones under enemy fire and staying until they received their patients.

"I don't tell you these stories to scare you but to show you the amount of integrity and the amount of honor it takes to get (the patient) out (of harm)," said Rudd. "These are our stories and now you have the opportunity to write your story. We are humbled and thankful to have you here, to teach you these skills and to help you write your story."



Spc. Monica K. Smith

March 15 - ANAAC medic, Sgt. Abdul Mlik, prepares to insert a nasopharyngeal airway tube into a medical dummy during the first class of the ANAAC Flight Medic Academy, at Bagram Airfield.



March 20 - Col. Don Galli (left), commander of TF Falcon, presents Abdul Wali, an ANAAC crew chef, a certificate during the ANSF Air Assault Academy graduation, at Bagram Airfield.



Sgt. 1st Class Beverly Wolf

Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Green

March 20 - The inaugural class of the ANSF Air Assault Academy poses for a photo following their graduation ceremony at Bagram Airfield.



AROUND THE TASK FORCE



Sgt. Scott Tont

1



Air Force Tech Sgt. Stephen Otero

2



Warrant Officer Robert Renny

4



Sgt. Jason Gonzales

3

(Clockwise from top left) 1. A Chinook with B Co., 1-169th Georgia National Guard, TF Brawler, sling loads a container to a smaller forward operating base in the Logar Province, April 6 from FOB Shank. 2. Pilots Chief Warrant Officer 2 Lance Brennan and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeff Bahr, B Co., 1st Bn., 169th GSAB, TF Viper, prepare for takeoff Feb. 24 at FOB Salerno. 3. Sgt. Kevin Thomas (left), and Sgt. Wesley Morris, both C Co., 5-159, TF Viper return from a medevac mission in Sabari, April 13. 4. Spc. Sean Noonan, A Co., TF Knighthawk watches the engines start on a Black Hawk April 16 at Bagram Airfield.



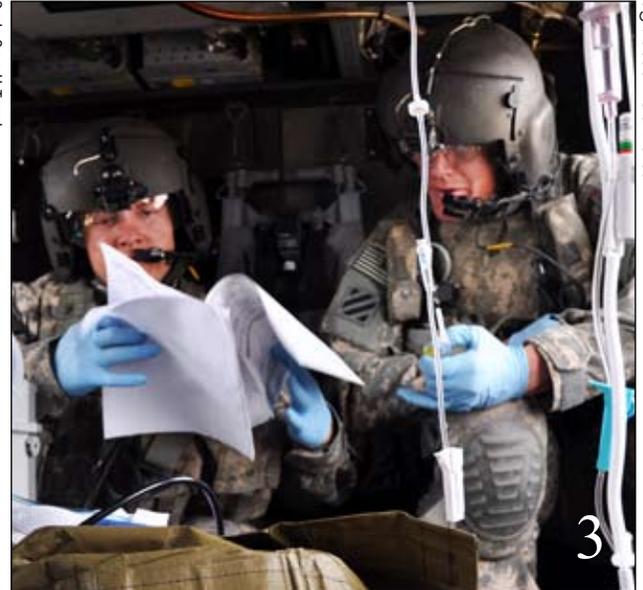
Lt. Col. Katrina Hall



Warrant Officer Robert Renny



Sgt. Scott Tanti



Sgt. Jason Gonzales



Spc. Grant Marzoff

(Clockwise from top left) 1. President Barack Obama, greets Soldiers, March 28 at Bagram Airfield. 2. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Hammond, A Co., 2nd Bn., 238th Avn., TF Knighthawk, conducts a preflight check on a Black Hawk, April 9 at Bagram Airfield. 3. Sgt. Pedro Lopezcolon (left), HHC, TF Viper and Sgt. Mike Anderson from C Co., 5th Bn., 159th Avn., TF Viper, conduct a patient transfer in eastern Afghanistan April 16. 4. A Chinook with B Co., TF Knighthawk, flies over the Afghanistan mountains March 11. 5. Sgt. Christopher Morse instructs Spc. Brandon McNeal, both members of D Co., TF Brawler, on proper firing techniques during a range April 9 at FOB Shank.



Sgt. Thomas Wilson, Troop E, TF Lighthouse, organizes materials Jan. 21 at FOB Jalalabad.

Task Force Lighthouse NCO is 'out front' in his field

Story by
Capt. Raymond Reed
Photos by
Air Force Tech Sgt.
Brian Boisvert

In battle, time is of the essence. Aircraft fly to a forward arming and refueling point like a racecar stops in the pit. Time is critical and an operational FARP is essential to winning the battle. In the same way, Sgt. Thomas Wilson, a petroleum supply specialist, Troop E, Task Force Lighthouse, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, has proven he is essential when it pertains to what and how the troop conducts its day to day FARP operations.

"He has proven to this command time and time again that he is without a doubt one of the reasons that this troop is as successful as it has been," said 1st Sgt. Patricio Cardona, first sergeant of E Troop, TF Lighthouse. "First, Wilson took the time to help cross-train other Soldiers whose occupational skill was not that of fuel or armament. He helped get them certified. Second, he was one of the first NCOs to serve in an outlying (forward operating base) helping to establish the FARPs, refitting and reconstituting it to beat the standard when it comes to force protection



and operational standards of the FARP.”

Wilson, who has served in the Army for 10 years, has been a member of E Troop for three years and manages the refueling and rearming operations of the FARP. This means Wilson and his Soldiers are responsible for refuelling and rearming aircraft in northeastern Afghanistan. In addition to pumping “cold fuel” which is pumping fuel when the aircraft is not running, the FARP Soldiers pump “hot fuel” which is when fuel is pumped while the aircraft is still running.

“Fueling aircraft is the most rewarding of jobs that you can have as a fueler,” said Wilson. “We support any and all aircraft that stop at any FARP under our control. It is important that we have 24-hour operations not only for the aircraft that land at the FARPs but also to provide cold fuel for other aircraft that do not refuel at the FARPs.”

In addition to serving as a fast-acting gas station, the FARP Soldiers are responsible for reloading the aircraft with ammunition when they have run out. When aircraft are in a troops-in-contact situation where troops are under attack, they do not have the time to fly back to their home base in order to re-arm their aircraft. Wilson and his team quickly provides ammunition for attack helicopters.

“We load munitions for the Kiowa and

Apache aircraft which includes, Hellfire missiles, illumination rounds, rockets, .50-caliber ammunition and 30-mm ammunition,” said Wilson.

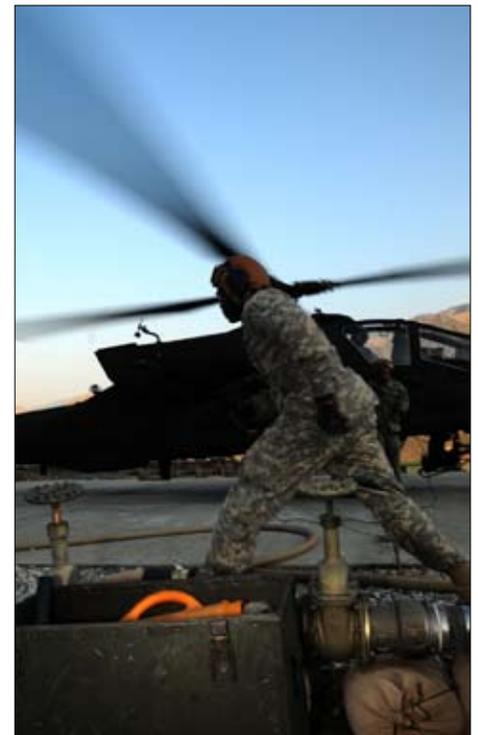
It is with this knowledge of responsibilities that Wilson performs his duties. In addition to refuelling and re-arming aircraft, Wilson must also ensure the equipments on the FARP are fully operational – such as the 350 gallons per minute pump which can push out nearly 100,000 gallons in a single day if that is what is needed, said Wilson.

Despite the hard work put in each day and with each aircraft, Wilson says the hardest part of the deployment is the distance from his wife, Tiffany and his two daughters, Elysia and Alexis. Still, Wilson says the deployment isn’t completely insufferable.

“The best part of the deployment is I am doing what I love,” said Wilson. “I am a doer. I get done what needs to get done.”

And with that attitude Wilson’s first sergeant says Wilson epitomizes the true warrior spirit and is what Soldiers should strive to be like.

“He is a valuable asset when it comes to the knowledge and the efficiency of the FARPs,” said Cardona. “I couldn’t ask for a better attitude on a day-to-day basis when it comes to engaging his job and engaging Soldiers. If I could clone him I would. He doesn’t complain about his job no matter how hard it gets.”



(Top) An Apache takes off after refueling at FOB Wright, Jan. 21 (Above) Sgt. Thomas Wilson, E Troop, TF Lighthorse, conducts refuel operations on an Apache, Jan. 21 at FOB Wright.

COIN ACADEMY: A new way of operating in theatre

Story and photos by Sgt. Scott Tant

A new program designed specifically to help undermine local support for the insurgency is being taught now at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan. The program, called the COIN Academy, is a new line of reasoning and planning requiring battlefield commanders to rethink the use of conventional warfare tactics.

On FOB Shank, Lt. Col. Robert Ault, commander of Task Force Brawler, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, formally began the COIN Academy, which stands for 'counter insurgency,' more than a month ago. The setup for the COIN Academy is simple: A conference room, a few PowerPoint slides, and a whiteboard with markers. The meetings typically last an hour and are open to all task force members. To keep the discussion moving, each COIN meeting covers one particular aspect of the task force's involvement in combat.

The main topics of each COIN session vary. One week covered a Public Broad-

casting Service documentary showing a behind-the-enemy-lines view of how the insurgents receive aid from a local villager and how the insurgents use psychological warfare to undermine support for the government and the coalition forces. The next week entailed a walk-through on how detainees are handled, processed, and eventually released, stressing treatment of detainees and how their treatment impacts whether or not they will rejoin the insurgency once released. Each topic is designed to have the participants of the meeting involved in open discussions.

"Having an actively participating group is one of the key aspects to a successful COIN session," said Ault. "It keeps these meetings flowing and gets everyone interested."

Ault, or another member of the command staff, acts as the session's moderator, keeping the conversations going while writing key points on the dry-erase board. Ault encourages all Brawlers to

express their opinions throughout the meeting. This engaging dialogue has a dual effect: First, it allows key leaders to understand how their subordinates feel and think. Second, the attendees are given a chance to voice their agreement or disagreement with any new direction the task force is taking.

"I believe that in the short term or immediate, COIN can work," said 2nd Lt. Erik Bernard, platoon leader for Company C, 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, TF Brawler, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon. "It is the long-term effects that are unclear. (Counter insurgency) has worked in other conflicts; we will see if it can work here."

The overarching goal of the COIN Academy is to have key leaders understand there are more effective ways to undermine the enemy and possibly win over the population's opinion of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, or GiRoA, and the coalition forces. With the realization that every ac-



Lt. Col. Robert Ault (standing to the right), commander of TF Brawler, describes the focus of the COIN meetings to key leaders and staff during the first COIN session, Feb. 23 at FOB Shank.



Capt. Chad Bennett (left), company commander of HHC, TF Brawler, and Master Sgt. Darvin Cloin, also with HHC, TF Brawler, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, recap the night's topics after a recent COIN meeting, April 13 at FOB Shank.

tion taken on the battlefield has both good and bad consequences, commanders will have to rethink certain decisions, such as when the use of deadly force is necessary.

One COIN session exemplified this principle: An AH-64 Apache gun tape review. In this particular instance, a suspected insurgent was witnessed late at night burying an object on a road commonly used by coalition forces. In the past, the standard procedure was to fire upon the suspect because he appeared to be burying an improvised explosive device, or IED, which is viewed by U.S. forces as a hostile act. However, the ground commander opted to call off the authorization to fire on the insurgent, and ordered the helicopter to keep 'eyes on' the suspect. Three hours of following the insurgent eventually led to him being detained by Afghan-led coalition forces.

Once the tape review was completed, Ault asked the room for their opinion of how that particular operation was handled. Though opinions varied, the

vast majority seemed to understand that even though in the past the insurgent would have been shot, the shooting of the insurgent now could make a bad impression of Apaches and coalition forces among the local populace.

According to International Security Assistance Force doctrine in relation to COIN, force application will be changing from the 'hunter' role to the 'defender' role. The task force will assist in defending the population rather than taking the fight to the enemy. This shift in tactics is aimed at removing resources the insurgents would receive from a population sympathetic to the insurgency. If the population sees the coalition forces are not here to conquer but rather to help the country develop then by virtue the population will not trust and help the anti-Afghan forces.

Though originally instituted three years ago in Iraq, the current policy in Afghanistan was implemented by ISAF Commanding General Stanley A.

McChrystal. The reason behind COIN's implementation is a concentrated effort by the United States military command group to avoid repeating mistakes made during the Iraq insurgency of 2003-04. During that time, the armed forces continued using conventional battlefield tactics against the insurgents. The outcome of doing so was an isolated local populace which did not trust the coalition forces, according to a Washington Post article. The ripple effect was the fortification of the bond between the population and the insurgents.

"The Soldiers of Task Force Brawler face a challenging time ahead," said Task Force executive officer Maj. Larry Halsey. "Counter insurgency tactics have the potential to work, as displayed by its success in Iraq. But COIN can only work if both leaders and Soldiers apply it with every mission. With each one of these sessions, the Brawlers realize that to do their part to help win the war in Afghanistan, the COIN principles are the way to go."

Supporting the mission around the battlefield through maintenance

Story and photos by
2nd Lt. Ronald Howze

A forward arming and refueling point is vital to the success of the aviation combat mission. Attack, air assault, and support aviation units all depend on a FARP to provide fuel and ammunition where and when they are needed.

Headquarters and Support Company, Task Force Workhorse, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, maintenance Soldiers, Sgt. Byron Ruise and Spc. Nathan Buchholz are currently at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, maintaining the 350 gallons per minute pumps at the FARP located there.

The maintenance platoon Soldiers of HSC, rotate consistently every 6-8 weeks to different FOBs to ensure the FARPs are 100 percent combat ready. The most important component of a FARP is the 350 GPM pumps, which are as vital as the heart to a human.

On a recent visitation, 2nd Lt. Ronald Howze, maintenance platoon leader observed the morale, welfare, and work environment of the Soldiers. The morale, welfare, and work environment for each of the Soldiers supporting the fight across the battlefield must be assessed often.

Staff Sergeant Jimmy Lewis, the motor sergeant for HSC maintenance platoon, conducted battlefield circulation and inventories recently. In addition to conducting an inventory, Lewis checked on the welfare and morale of Soldiers, and verified the status on all the 350 GPM pumps in that area of operation. This is done to ensure that the FARP's equipment is fully mission capable in order to support overall operations on each FOB. Lewis personally inspected each pump and carefully documented each number for recording purposes. He also ensured that these FOBs had additional parts so that in the event something should



Staff Sgt. Jimmy Lewis, motor sergeant in HSC, TF Workhorse, inventories a 350 gallons per minute pump, Feb. 9, at FOB Ghazni.



Sgt. Byron Ruise, maintenance Soldier in HSC, TF Workhorse, inspects the operation of a 350 gallons per minute pump Feb. 9, at FOB Ghazni.

malfunction on a pump, it would be easily and rapidly repaired in order to continue refueling our aviation and ground units.

"This FARP mainly supports all of our aviation and ground units as well as all members of NATO," said Lewis. "As for our Soldiers here, they really enjoy it and for the most part they try to extend their rotation here. (Headquarters and Support Company's) maintenance is best platoon to be part of."

If the FARP has inoperable pumps or parts are unavailable to repair malfunctions, operation can be halted thus disabling air and ground equipment to be refueled.

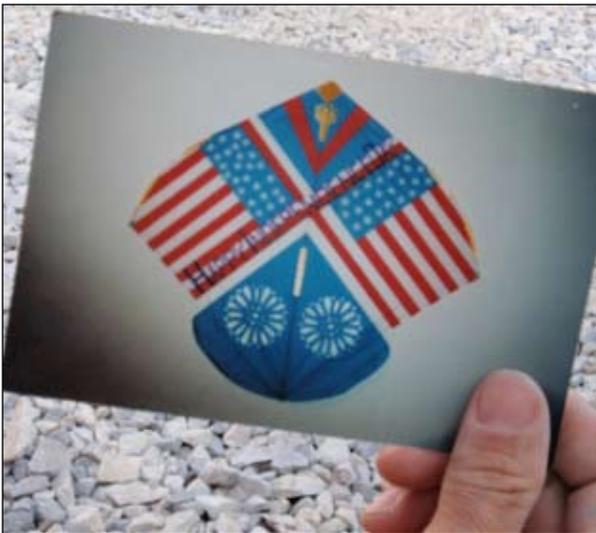
Morale appeared high said Howze and Soldiers are being cross-trained in addition to supporting the fight through maintenance while battlefield circulating. Most of the Soldiers within HSC, TF Workhorse maintenance platoon have either

one of three military occupation specialties: quartermaster and chemical equipment repairer, wheeled vehicle mechanic, or power generation equipment repairer. The maintenance platoon Soldiers cross train directly and receive on the job training with one of each of the three above mentioned subject matter experts. Ruise, a wheeled vehicle repairer, is cross training as a quartermaster and chemical equipment repairer while supporting the fight at FOB Ghazni.

"I enjoy being here, supporting the mission," said Ruise. "I get more hands-on experience here, than any other FOB. I repair roughly four 350 GPM pumps a week on average. One of the main issues we have with these pumps is the electrical system, which isn't always an easy task to troubleshoot, but still needs to be done."



Staff Sgt. Samuel Petruno



Master Sgt. Mark Ligget



Master Sgt. Mark Ligget

(From Top) 1. Task Force Dark Knight, interpreter Kabir shows a Soldier how to select a kite Feb. 13 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. 2. A post card shows the myriad of designs Afghan kites can be created into. 3. TF Dark Knight interpreter Kabir tests the flexibility of a kite, Feb. 13 at Bagram Airfield.

“Go fly a kite!” might be a mild put-down back in the states but to a Task Force Dark Knight, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, interpreter, Kabir, it would be a challenge, if not a battle cry. Kabir, an Afghan-American, not only flies kites, he fights them.

While other countries like China created kites to fly for relaxation, their grace, and serenity, here in the warrior culture of Afghanistan, kites are taken to a whole new level. As one might expect, considering some of the country’s other games, such as dog fighting, kite flying can also be fierce. The art of kite flying is called *gudiparan bazi*.

Afghans build or buy elaborate but delicate kites that resemble stingrays, then coat the kite strings with glass particles. As they fly close to another person’s kite, they try to maneuver so as to

Go fly a kite

STORY BY MASTER SGT. MARK LIGGET

contact the other man’s kite strings and cut them.

The battles take place all over and up and down the sky, with colorful kites darting and spinning away on string up to two miles long. The flyer may be thousands of feet away, in a different neighborhood, and may never know who his opponent is.

If a player’s kite string is cut, he may be a loser in more than one way when the kite flutters to earth, since errant kites are traditionally up for grabs. That is, unless he employs a kite-runner to go and try to retrieve the kite.

A recent movie set in Afghanistan employed the metaphor of kite flying and was even entitled the “The Kite Runner”. Kabir sold the producers many of the kites used in the film and has been a kite flyer since childhood.

Kabir has a personal collection of more than 2500 kites, many of which he made himself. It can take several hours to create a quality kite. The best bamboo, -- fresh only please--, for the frame comes from Thailand; the best tissue paper for the body, comes from Germany. Only children’s kites have tails. Much like carpet weaving, making the best kites is usually a collaborative effort. One man may be good at painting the kites, another adds fancy lettering, another cuts and constructs the frame, and so forth.

The alignment of the frame is crucial. If warped, the kite will veer to the right or left, a condition called

"ponk." A perfect, fancy kite can sell for up to \$200.

The ground glass used to be applied to the string by hand. Now it's possible to buy factory-made string from other countries. Still, Kabir laments that the market is becoming glutted by cheap kites made elsewhere.

"They're taking over our own sport," said Kabir.

Kite flying suffered a serious decline during the years of Soviet occupation due to the conflict, and then again under the puritanical Taliban. It's recreational activity associated with Afghan boys and men is still off limits to girls and women.

"The Taliban said kites were a waste of time," said Kabir. "Men were beaten for flying kites because they should be studying the Koran in a madrassa or school."

Kite flying used to be popular all year, but is now associated with warmer weather. Still, on a pleasant Friday, five to ten thousand people may be flying kites in some of the larger towns. Often there are tournaments, with prizes for the winners, who are called 'shar-ti' or 'survivors'. The object, of course, is to knock down as many kites as possible and keep your kite flying. More than one shar-ti has been awarded a new car, and there is also a strong possibility of side bets, on sums of typically 100 to 100,000 Afghans, or about \$2 to \$2100 in U.S. dollars.

Kabir said it normally takes years to become a master kite flyer. He scoffed at those who think kite flying is just a kids' pastime.

"Kite flying takes physical and mental skill," said Kabir.

"The flyer may have to maneuver the kite up or down thousands of feet in seconds."

Kabir, who is now 51 years old, moved to the U.S. when he was 22. When not in Afghanistan as an interpreter, he imports

kites for not only Afghans living in the U.S. but others who appreciate a beautiful kite as well. The kites, which are very fragile and absorb moisture must be air freighted, so he travels to Pakistan to pack and ship them for transit to America, where people will bid up to several hundred dollars for a unique kite at an auction.

Kite flying can be hazardous to kites, but it can also be an extreme sport for some kite flyers.

Kite flying is often done from roofs to minimize interference from trees. Often as many as nine or ten different people will fly kites off the top of a single roof. Every year, people get caught up in the activity and fall off the edge of a roof.

Kite runners often crash into cars in a frenzied effort to retrieve the fallen kites. Low flying kites have tangled with motorcyclists causing spills, caused electrical wires to shorten, and the sharp kite strings have cut people. The accidents, naturally, only add to spectator excitement.

Kabir has returned to his homeland as an interpreter for TF Dark Knight where he works with a team who talks with the locals to obtain information, which could prevent threats to friendly forces and the community. Gifts for the local nationals encourage them to share information.

"Giving kites to the Afghans shows that we pay attention to their culture," said Carla, a Dark Knight team member. "We have learned about them, we are not just here to tell them what to do."

And soon, kite season will be back again.

"I look back on the days when I used to fly kites as a kid in Kabul," said Kabir. "I look forward to getting back into the fight and showing my fellow Americans a different type of battle."



Staff Sgt. Samuel Petruno

Army interpreter Kabir, Task Force Dark Knight, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, shows a visiting Soldier how to wind kite string beside a large box of new kites, Feb. 22 at Bagram Airfield.

Analyzing the Fight

Story by: Pfc. Krystina Saft

Company D, 3rd Battalion, 214th Aviation Regiment, Task Force ODIN-A



Spc. Monica K. Smith

Somewhere in Afghanistan is a dark room filled with rows and rows of computers. From the glow of the computer screens Soldiers can be seen analyzing the information gathered from various airframes.

It is the Soldiers of Company D, 3rd Battalion, 214th Aviation Regiment, Task Force ODIN-A (Observe, Detect, Identify and Neutralize – Afghanistan), that make up the Aerial Reconnaissance Support Team. As part of the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, it is the responsibility of the ARST to efficiently provide the analyzed information to ground units

to help seek and destroy enemy insurgent operations in Afghanistan.

The ARST is the central point of multi-source intelligence, conducting the initial exploitation of photographs and video, providing actionable information to tactical level maneuver units upon request. The ARST is comprised of teams of real-time full motion video analysts, as well as a team to analyze the intelligence collected by TF ODIN-A's aerial assets. There is also a quality control production team to ensure all products created in the ARST are accurate and disseminated in a

timely manner.

"There are teams conducting anywhere from five to six tasks at any given time," said Staff Sgt. Loyd Smith, a senior imagery analyst and ARST NCOIC of D Co., 3rd Bn., 214th Avn. Regt., TF ODIN-A. "ARSTs are not common in the Army. There are at least two units that use them: ODIN-A, here in Afghanistan and Task Force ODIN-Iraq."

The All Source Analysis Team provides situational awareness to the ARST and other intelligence teams, by tracking and gathering intelligence, products, and



(Above) Sgt. Travis Campbell, D Co., TF ODIN-A, scans his computer monitor for information as part of the Aerial Reconnaissance Support Team, April 22 at Bagram Airfield. (Opposite Page) Staff Sgt. Neil Royal, D Co., TF ODIN-A, inputs data into a computer, April 22 at Bagram Airfield.

assets in related areas of operation. All of the teams in the ARST work in unison to illustrate the most accurate, near real-time picture to the warfighter.

"We are not like any intelligence unit I have ever seen," said Staff Sgt. Christopher Ryan, also of D Co., 3rd Bn., 214th Avn. Regt., TF ODIN-A. "I've never heard of so many imagery analysts in one unit. [Compared to] a division's typical Analysis Control Element, we are much smaller and mission specific. But we are customer driven, in that we do not [task] our own assets. The main purpose of the ARST is to provide (intelligence) to the ground forces."

The assets of TF ODIN-A are requested by ground units to perform a variety of

jobs ranging from providing reconnaissance images to providing real-time updates of their environment. Many of their additional tasks and duties remain classified to prevent the enemy from further evolving their tactics.

Because of this novel concept of operation, the ARST is a point of interest to distinguished officials across the battlefield. Task Force ODIN-A has hosted multiple visitors, from general officers of all branches, to foreign militaries, to civilian government officials and agencies; all curious to see what the ARST and TF ODIN-A is bringing to the fight. These capabilities briefings are almost always delivered by privates first class and specialists.

"VIPs want to hear from the (junior

enlisted Soldiers," said Smith of why his Soldiers are the voice of the ARST. "It helps to prepare (junior enlisted Soldiers) for their next assignment [where giving briefings will be] a part of their job."

From the time TF ODIN-A set foot in Afghanistan in 2008 and established the ARST, new ARST teams have developed into a vital and reliable source of intelligence making quite a name for themselves.

"With our multi-sourced assets and personnel, the ARST truly lives up to our company name: the Delta Company Death Dealers," said Staff Sgt. Robert Martinez, shift NCOIC of D Co., 3rd Bn., 214th Avn. Regt., TF ODIN-A. "The enemy might never see our face, but they will always fear our name."

Task Force View



Sgt. Scott Tant

2



Sgt. Scott Tant

1



Sgt. Candice Peppie

3



Sgt. Jason Gonzales

4

(Clockwise from top left) 1. Members of the ANAAC discuss the upcoming mission on the TF Brawler flight line, April 2 at FOB Shank. 2. Leading the run down the TF Brawler flight line, Sgt. Freddie Gonzalez sets the pace for Spc. Joshua Nichols (right) and Pfc. Morgan Pattern (left) all with E Co., TF Brawler, while an Apache from C Co., 1-3 Avn., TF Brawler prepares to land, April 3 at FOB Shank. 3. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeff Roberts, C Co., 2-3 Avn., TF Lighthouse, conducts maintenance on a Black Hawk, March 16 at FOB Fenty. 4. Staff Sgt. Jason Cox, C Co., 5th Bn., 159th Avn., TF Viper, conductd a routine preventive maintenance on a Black Hawk April 15 at FOB Salerno.



1



2



3

1. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rick Campbell, A Co., TF Knighthawk and Maj. Daniel Rice, HHC, TF Knighthawk, conduct a preflight check on a Black Hawk, March 11 at Bagram Airfield. 2. Sgt. Patrick Stark, crew chief with B Co., 1st Bn., 169th GSAB, TF Viper, keeps a sharp lookout for enemy forces in the treacherous mountain passes of Afghanistan, March 5. 3. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Irving Velazquez-Ramos, A Co., TF Knighthawk, pre-flights the main hydraulic deck of a Black Hawk, April 16 at Bagram Airfield.

Parting Shot



Warrant Officer Robert Renny

A Black Hawk from A Co., TF Knighthawk kicks up dirt while taking off April 16 from Kabul International Airport.