

The Lightning News

News from the front for Soldiers, families and friends of HHC, 359th Signal Brigade

HHC, 359th Signal Brigade takes control of mission

By Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

The 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade took command of the signal mission in Afghanistan on May 25 during a Transfer of Authority Ceremony at 10:00 a.m. on Bagram Airfield.

The 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, which is headquartered in Fort Gordon, Ga., will continue to lead the Soldiers, Airmen and contrac-

tors who fell under the 7th TTSB, which is headquartered in Germany.

The 7th TTSB commanded the mission, Task Force Freedom, since May 2009, with the help of their subordinate units: the 25th Signal Battalion, the 57th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, and the 86th Expeditionary Signal Battalion.

As a whole, Task Force Freedom installed and maintained four joint network

nodes, 20 command post nodes, 19 technical control facilities, 31 deployable satellite terminals and two satellite terminals.

The 7th TTSB also formed the core of the Joint Netops Control Center-Afghanistan (JNCC-A), which became the central point for all communications in the combined joint operational area.

“The 7th Signal Brigade

See TOA, page 6

The 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade staff stands by while the brigade colors, held by Army Sgt. Alonzo Cook, human resources sergeant, are honored during the Transfer of Authority Ceremony in Bagram, Afghanistan on May 25.

As units change positions, their flags are ceremoniously cased and uncased.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Readiness Training Center Flashback

Training prepares Soldiers for the uncertainty of deployment



Army Sgt. 1st Class Dan Wallen, plans noncommissioned officer in charge, takes cover while his squad moves through a “town.”

Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Above, Army 1st. Lt. Anthony Hillmon, Network Operations battle captain, pulls security as “locals” are stopped at a “traffic control point,” during a training exercise.



Army Maj. Ted Smith, projects officer in charge, fires his M16.



Above, HHC Soldiers are instructed on a number of different combative moves, both offensive and defensive. Army Staff Sgt. Chelsea Helsley, security noncommissioned officer in charge, is the instructors victim. Left, Army Spc. Courtney Simmons, supply sergeant, shows off her firing range target.



Above, all Soldiers, regardless of job, train on convoy operations before deploying. Left, HHC, 359th Soldiers conduct urban operations training by “clearing a room” during the pre-deployment training site at Fort McCoy, Wi. Basic skills and knowledge like these provide the average Soldier with the abilities to react in almost any situation.



Above, Army Spc. Darcelyn Kimbro, human resources information systems specialist, assists Army Spc. Corey Smith, human resources specialist, in ensuring his nuclear, biological, chemical mask is properly fitted during a training class at Fort McCoy in March.



Above, Army Spc. Kimika Blakely, JNCC-A supply specialist, and Army Pfc. Christine Awkward, human resource specialist, perform a functions check on the M203 rifle at the Readiness Training Center in Fort McCoy, Wi. Right, Army Lt. Col. Teri Hassell, task force deputy commander, and Army Lt. Col. Orville Jennings, task force personnel officer, look over the .50 cal machine gun during a familiarization class at the training site in March.

Chaplain's Corner:

There are resources to help you

Dear Families,

I hope you are all doing well and coping with the transition thrust upon your family. It seems to me that everyone here is doing well. If your family member is not, please feel free to e-mail me if I can be of any assistance: gary.chester.williams@us.army.mil.

I would like to remind you of the great resource the Army provides us all in the MILITARY ONESOURCE. The number is 1-800-342-9647. (En espanol llame al 1-877-888-0727) (Collect from outside the US: 484-530-5908) They provide consultation, research and referrals regarding any need that you might have. No question is too small nor no issue too big.

They provide six in person non-medical counseling sessions per issue with a licensed counselor. The counselors can help with issues such as: Coping with deployment and return; adjusting to a new location; bicultural issues; marital and couples concerns; parenting and family matters; grief and loss; normal reactions to abnormal situations (e.g. combat); stress management; and more. They have educational materials and offer an interactive website at www.militaryonesource.com.

One last thing, regarding any issues that you might have with your spouse down range, I recommend you always try and focus on the things you can control and not on the things you cannot control.

So, if you are laying in bed at night angered at the thought that your spouse just bought \$1,000 worth of rims on line while here in Afghanistan, focus on what you can control. Don't hesitate to communicate your feelings in a controlled way, but try not to lose sleep over that which you can't control. If you are up thinking from 1 a.m. to 2 a.m., make a decision to stop thinking about it and get up at 2 a.m. and read a book or eat a bowl of ice cream or write your parents a thank you letter. These are things you can control while what your spouse does online is probably not something you can control, (unless you cut off their credit card somehow).

Blessings on your day!

Chaplain (LTC) Gary Williams

Getting to Bagram Not an easy task



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Above, all the Soldiers' gear had to be put onto pallets for the plane to Afghanistan. Middle right, the seats on the sides of the plane were sought after as there was more leg room than the seats in the middle. Right, Soldiers wait patiently as the pallets of gear are loaded onto the plane.



Courtesy Photo

Above, Master Sgt. Carolyn Suazo, information assurance noncommissioned officer in charge, takes a break.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Courtesy Photo



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Army Spc. Corey Smith, human resources specialist, and Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jovar McKellar, network management technician, kill time with a game of checkers while they await their plane to Afghanistan.

Cookout in Bagram



Left, Army Spc. Courtney Simmons, equipment requisitions/parts sergeant, Army Spc. Candid Surry, senior information system specialist and Army Spc. Latoya Bell, armorer, enjoy the cookout that the 7th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade hosted.

Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Top right, Army Spc. Mardriquez Gantt, information systems specialist, shows off his hand against Army Sgt. Melissa Gray, information systems sergeant. Middle left, Army Capt. Elijah McKenzie, networking officer, plays his hand with a cool poker face against some Soldiers of the 7th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade. Bottom left, Army Capt. Joseph Harris, network officer, enjoys the home cooking. Above, Army Spc. Thomas Robinson, human resource specialist masters the grill along the HHC, 7th TTSB commander.



Photos by Capt. Michelle Lunato



Left, Army Col. Chris Kemp, 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade commander, speaks to the crowd attending the Transfer of Authority Ceremony in Bagram May 25 between the 7th TTSB and the 359th.



Far left, Army Sgt. Maj. John Schiffli, task force command sergeant major, and Army Col. Chris Kemp, task force commander, uncased the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade colors. Above, Army Sgt. Maj. John Schiffli, task force command sergeant major.

(TOA continued, page 1)

paid the down payment,” said Army Brig. Gen. James T. Walton, commander, 335th Signal Command (Theater) (Provisional).

“Their achievement to date is nothing short of incredible.” Now, it is up to the 359th to build upon their success, said Walton.

The Task Force Freedom commander, Army Col. Randall W. Bland, (7th TTSB commander), applauded his team for their “unity of effort.” A consistent theme from the deployment was the excellence of character and skill of these task force members, said

Bland.

“Know that every time you send an e-mail or pick up the phone, there is a member of this task force ahead of you,” said Bland to the crowd of Soldiers, Airmen, and contractors from across the task forces on Bagram.

As the 7th TTSB cased their brigade colors in preparation to redeploy back to Germany, Task Force Freedom came to an end. And in ceremonial tradition, the 359th TTSB brigade colors were uncased, thus beginning Task Force Thunder.

The tradition of casing and uncasing colors during a transfer of authority ceremony is significant, said Army Com-

mand Sgt. Maj. Carl Adams, command sergeant major, 25th Signal Battalion. “It recognizes the unit that has been here, but also shows everyone who the new show in town is.”

A transfer of leaders is not complete without a ceremony, said Army Sgt. Maj. John Schiffli, the interim Task Force Thunder command sergeant major. “The Army runs on traditions. And this ceremony signifies the start of our mission,” said Schiffli. “We have big shoes to fill, but we are going to take it where they left off and leave it better for the next team.”

And that is the exact goal of the new task force command-



Lt. Col. Jennings
Task Force Personnel



Maj. Stevens
Task Force Security



Maj. Tamboli
Task Force Operations



Lt. Col. Brady
Task Force Supply



Lt. Col. Hassell
Task Force Deputy



Sgt. Cook
*Task Force
Guidon Bearer*

er, Army Col. Chris Kemp, 359th TTSB commander. We need to focus on maturing the signal operations here, said Kemp. “The 7th did a superb job at setting things up. They have definitely set the conditions for us to succeed.”

Considering almost every operation and task Coalition Forces perform uses layers of communication tools, the signal mission is critical, said Army Brig. Gen. Wayne Brock, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan Army Central Command Support Element- Afghanistan senior signal leader. “We have to meet the needs of the war-fighters.”

To Kemp, there is no other option. “I assure you. As a task force, we will not fail.”

Brigade Highlights:

Network Operations~JNCC-A



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

The Network Operations (NETOPS) section is the focal point of the robust, agile, and responsive Combined/Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan (CJOA-A) network that provides an in-depth analysis regarding mission processes in a continuous cycle through monitoring, assessing, responding and reallocation of resources to ensure that U.S. Forces-Afghanistan is enabled through assured network delivery, availability and protection.

Our break down by areas of responsibility is as follows:

Army Maj. Dennicel Jimenez, NETOPS officer in charge: Manages the brigade level network and the commercial network servicing the CJOA-A in coordination with the NETOPS Center and other Joint Network Communications Center-Afghanistan sections. She also manages the JNCC-A battle captains to ensure situational awareness and technical expertise is provided to subordinate

NETOPS, network health management and predictive analysis to improve the networks.

Army Master Sgt. Steve Rumsey and Air Force Master Sgt. James Harris, NETOPS noncommissioned officers in charge: Ensure the CJOA-A communications architecture supports the needs of the warfighters. They also monitor the CJOA-A networks and troubleshoot outages to ensure that communication issues affecting the warfighters are mitigated.

Air Force Capt. Eric Zymboly and 1st Lt. Jason Kirk, NETOPS senior battle captains and **Army 1st Lt. Anthony Hillmon and Air Force 1st Lt. Roberto Perez**, NETOPS battle captains: They are the primary conduit for information flow into and out of the JNCC-A. They are also the primary resource for rapid and concise

See NETOPS, page 9

Soldiers make time for worship, peace for the soul



Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

HHC Soldiers enjoy the songs and relaxation of Gospel Service.

(NETOPS continued, page 8)

updates on current priorities and network health. They maintain situational awareness over tactical, strategic, and commercial communications network/architecture across the entire CJOA-A.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Carl Turner and Staff Sgt. (Promotable) John Hembree, NETOPS battle noncommissioned officers: Responsible for managing the NETOPS controllers and ensure the CJOA-A communications architecture supports the needs of the warfighter. They also monitor the CJOA-A networks and troubleshoot outages to ensure that communications issues affecting the warfighter are mitigated.

Army Spc. Frank McDonough and Air Force Senior Airmen Hector Reyes and Airman 1st Class Pisces Lee, NETOPS controllers/NETOPS noncommissioned officers: As-

sist the NETOPS NCOIC in ensuring the CJOA-A communications architecture supports the needs of the warfighters. They also monitor the CJOA-A networks and serve as the primary troubleshooters for network outages.

Army Master Sgt. Robert Terstegge, NETOPS liaison officer: Provides real-time event management for signal support facilitating operations across the CJOA-A. He provides a first line understanding signal related matters to the communications elements in direct support of the warfighters.

Ms. Rodgers and Mr. Cole, OPNET: Civilian contractors who are subject matter experts in Network Common Operating Picture monitoring system which allows for an in-depth health assessment of the communications networks in CJOA-A. They enable the NETOPS in maintaining situational awareness and aide in troubleshooting issues as presented via the NetCop system.

Dear Soldiers and families,

The brigade departed Fort Gordon, Ga. April 11, 2010, with a farewell from family and friends to embark on a one year deployment in Afghanistan.

Now we are here at the beginning of the deployment, I look forward to working with each and every Soldier in this Command.

My focus for the upcoming month is the APFT. My goal is for every Soldier to pass the APFT prior to leaving Bagram.

It is important for everyone to do their best and encourage fellow Soldiers during the test.

Sincerely,
1st Sgt. Andree Lipscomb
First Sergeant, HHC



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

HHC Commander: It's a pleasure to serve



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

It is truly a pleasure to serve as the HHC Commander for Task Force Thunder.

Since January 2010 I have seen this unit come together in many different ways, and we have now safely made it here to Bagram, Afghanistan (BAF).

Just to tell a bit more about myself; I'm a University of Georgia 2004 commission Grad. This is my second deployment; on my first deployment I was a platoon leader with the 842nd Signal Company, OIF 05-07. 842nd was a TROPO unit located in Tall' afar, Iraq.

Even though my position does not require my MOS background I plan to take every possible opportunity to visit the JNCC-A and expand on my signal knowledge.

Even though we have had a "few bumps in the road" with our RIP/TOA; I expect everyone to be acclimated to our new environment pretty soon.

Sincerely,
Capt. Gervis Carlisle
Commander, HHC

Brigade Commander:

Thank you for your support, stay strong



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Dear friends and families of the 359th,

First and foremost, thanks to each and everyone of you for your unwavering support. We understand that these first couple of months may have been difficult making the adjustments to not having your

Soldier at home. But we must say, the many packages and letters that arrive everyday have certainly made our time here much easier. The picture to the left represents the kindness of the many employees at the Defense Enterprise Computing Center in Montgomery, Ala., and is just one of the many tokens of appreciation that we have received during our short time in Afghanistan.

There is no doubt that your Soldiers love hearing from their families and friends, and receiving special reminders of home.

With that said, please know that we are thinking of you too. We know that your duties at home are not easy. Not only do you have all of your own tasks, but you have taken on your Soldier's as well.

You can be very proud of your Soldiers as they continue to push forward, executing their mission in a superb manner in a very austere environ-

ment. They may not be serving on the traditional "front lines," but their mission is incredibly critical.

Their expertise in the communications arena is vital to the success of the warfighters who are engaging the insurgents and building positive relations with our Afghan partners on a daily basis. Without these communication links that run throughout all of Afghanistan, success for our warfighters would be impossible.

You loved ones allow the international community to join together in the fight against terrorism.

There is much work to be done here, and there is no doubt your Soldiers are up to the mission.

Thank you again for your consistent support, understanding and patience.

Proud to serve you and your Soldiers,
COL Chris Kemp
359th TTSB Commander

Sending something to your loved one? Check out these package tips...

- Priority Mail packages take 10 to 14 days to arrive.
- When choosing what to send, keep in mind possible delays as well as any climate extremes.
- Check on size and weight restrictions for packages. Packages cannot be larger than 108 inches in total circumference. You can pick up free Priority Mail boxes at your post office. Use the #4 or #7 size box.
- Enclose a card listing the contents of the package. Include the recipient's name and your name on the card. That way, if the package breaks open and the contents scatter during shipping, mail handlers will know what to repack.
- Place items that may spill or leak in heavy plastic zipper-lock bags. Freezer bags work well and your

Soldier will likely find other uses for the bags.

- Use reusable packing material. Cushion fragile items with small packages of tissues; copies of the local newspaper; plastic zipper-lock bags filled with popped popcorn; small beanbag-style stuffed toys; or anything else you think that your Soldier will be able to use.
- Number your packages and letters. Some may take longer to arrive. Numbering them will alert your Soldier to letters and packages that are still on their way.
- Do not send perishables to warm climates during spring or summer months. The climate heats up rapidly between winter and spring and the temperature inside mail storage facilities may rise to over 120 degrees.

Happy Birthday HHC Soldiers!



1st Lt. Damion Pipkin ~ June 23



Sgt. 1st Class Dan Wallen ~ June 16

Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Staff Sgt. Jose Amador ~ June 6



Col. Chris Kemp ~ June 17



Maj. Jane Tamboli ~ June 21



**Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hamill
June 16**



Spc. Darcelyn Kimbro ~ June 24



Sgt. 1st Class Warren Waugh ~ June 13



**Chief Warrant Officer 4
William Wood ~ June 19**

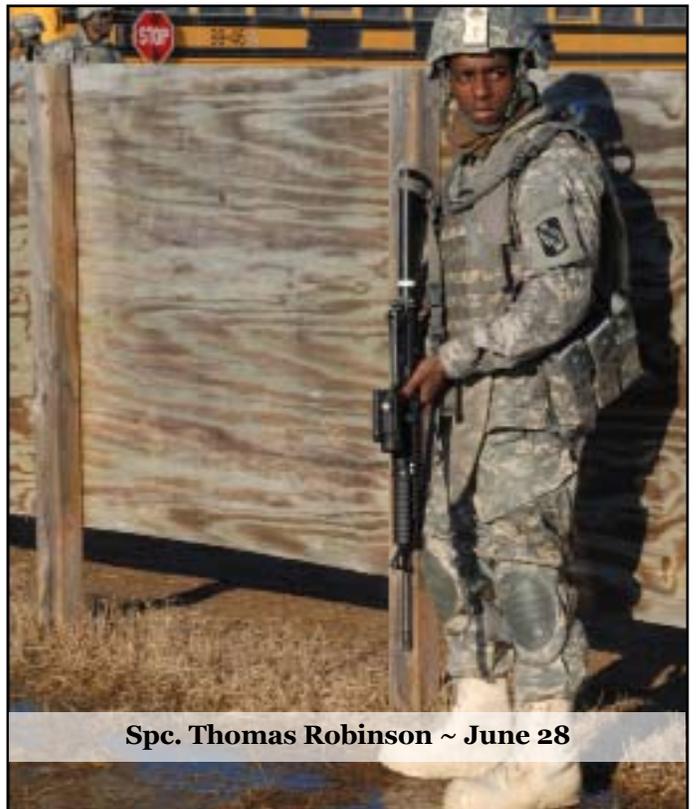
HHC Soldiers with June B-Days



Master Sgt. Carolyn Suazo ~ June 26



Master Sgt. Stuart James ~ June 27



Spc. Thomas Robinson ~ June 28

Teenagers and deployment...

Deployment is a time of emotional ups and downs. With a parent absent for an extended period, children may feel lost, empty, or abandoned. Instead of expressing such feelings directly, your teenager may show symptoms such as these:

- crying to release pain and anxiety
- refusing to have contact with the absent parent
- having physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, stomach aches, insomnia, headaches, nightmares, restlessness, nausea

Here are some ways to help your son or daughter cope during deployment:

- Make it easy for your teenager to communicate with the deployed parent.
 - E-mail, cell phones, and instant messaging (when it's available) provide immediate contact, and many teenagers are comfortable with these communication styles. Try to use your teenager's preferred style of communication when it's possible.
 - Personal Web pages and blogs provide a chance for self-expression and a creative way to keep loved ones up-to-date.
 - Letters, postcards, and greeting cards for special occasions -- or no occasion -- are always appreciated.
- Try to approach discussions from your teenager's perspective.
 - Share control of the conversation by letting your teenager discuss the topics that are the most important to him.
 - Practice your listening skills in advance.
 - Allow some time for light chatter as well as serious subjects. Try to balance discussions of homework and household chores with talk about friends and events at school.
- Maintain structured routines at home. Teenagers, as well as younger children, gain comfort from a stable routine at home. Stick to daily schedules of family life such as bedtimes, TV viewing schedule, and practice routines for music and sports.
- Share information about the war as appropriate. Don't dwell on negative news or extensive TV coverage.
- Suggest ways for your teenager to deal with her own emotional stress. These might include:
 - keeping a journal
 - engaging in art activities
 - writing poetry
 - writing stories
 - relaxing by doing deep-breathing and muscle-relaxation exercises
 - learning problem-solving strategies
 - participating in small group discussions
 - participating in support groups
 - exercising
 - listening to music
 - taking part in individual and group counseling when problems come up
- Keep a list of resources available to your teenager. Include hotline numbers of mental health professionals, and educational professionals such as guidance counselors. Teenagers are more likely to use such resources if they are easy to find in times of need.

Family Readiness Group
Conference Call
July 8, 7 p.m. EST
Guest speaker:
***Emergency
Preparation for Families***

359th Citizen-Soldier wins 'Woman of the Year'

By Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Deploying for the first time comes with a number of uncertainties and expectations, but Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cynthia P. Thomas never could have guessed the news she received upon getting into Afghanistan.

Within days of arriving at Bagram Airfield, Thomas, the enterprise system administrator for Task Force Thunder, was told she had been awarded 'Woman of the Year' by the Midlands chapter of the American Business Women's Association.

In between her work as the commercial systems manager at Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina, a Reserve signal Soldier with the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade and the mother of three, Thomas served as chapter president, treasurer and chairwoman of several committees over the past 16 years.

The award, which is only

earned via nomination, "is all about your contribution to the community and how you help and support others," said Thomas.

Though the title came as a surprise to Thomas, the principle behind it did not. "I didn't expect it at all, but it goes to show you that when you have a genuine concern for others, it doesn't matter where you are. Your work won't go unnoticed," said Thomas. "If it's genuine, you will get recognized."

Since Thomas was already in Afghanistan when the award was announced, her 18-year-old daughter Sherrise, accepted the recognition in her place. My friends told me she was very professional and spoke like a mature young lady, said Thomas. "She brought tears of joy to my eyes," said Pamela Beasley, a friend of Thomas.

The tears of joy did not all come from my friends, said Thomas. "My daughter said she was proud of me, and I didn't



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cynthia Thomas, enterprise system administrator, enjoys the fresh air at Fort McCoy.

expect to hear that from a high school senior." Young people don't always think outside of themselves, but she did, and I couldn't be more proud of her, said Thomas.

This mutual support is liter-

See Thomas, page 16



Courtesy Photo

Army 1st Lt. David Jacobs, gets promoted to captain by Army Col. Chris Kemp, commander, Task Force Thunder.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Left, Army Spc. Candid Surry, information assurance specialist, prepares for a live-satellite interview with MSNBC on Memorial Day. Surry said, "Memorial Day means a lot more to me now that I am in the military."



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Courtesy Photo

Above, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cynthia P. Thomas in her civilian work attire. Left, Thomas practices her aim with the 9mm pistol during a training class at the Readiness Training Center at Fort McCoy, Wi.

(Thomas continued, page 15)

ally a tenet at the Thomas household. “We have a rule in our house that we may not like the activities each other do but as long as they are positive, we support each other,” said Thomas.

And for the last six years, Thomas has stuck to her rule by attending every basketball and soccer game of her son’s and every cheerleading competition of her daughter’s. “I never missed a game or competition unless I had military duty,” said Thomas.

Now that military duty has taken Thomas across the world, Thomas cannot support her children as much as she likes, but she knows that they understand. “They know I love the military, so they support me wholeheartedly,” said Thomas.

The bottom line of all this circular support is team work, said Thomas. “It doesn’t matter if you are in a war zone, back home or at the beach; it is about being a team.”

One of the team efforts Thomas was working on before she deployed was her endeavor with Sister Care, an organization that helps kids from abused homes. I have a passion for kids and

think everyone should be given equal opportunities and treated fairly, said Thomas. Not supporting the community is just not a wise consideration, said Thomas. “These children are our future leaders.”

Deploying to Afghanistan did not restrict Thomas’ need and ability to support the community; it just changed her avenue of approach. Young Soldiers come to me and ask me personal and professional questions, said Thomas. “I guess they look at me like a role model, and it makes me feel good that I am a comfort and ear to them.”

Thomas is not just a role model to the youth, but her peers as well, said Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Stephen A. Campbell, enterprise system noncommissioned officer in charge, Task Force Thunder. “She blends quality

traits like integrity, leadership, and core values, all the while projecting nurturing and mentoring skills.”

When asked to assign specific skills and traits to her roles as mother, business woman and Soldier, Thomas said that each job had similar skills and duties.

“The similarities are all about passion, being a good leader and knowing how to treat people.”

“It doesn’t matter if you are in a war zone, back home or at the beach; it is about being a team.”
