EYE OF THE FALCON

January 2011

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Greca, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum command sergeant major, visits with Task Force Falcon, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, Soldiers, at Bagram Airfield Jan. 18. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class JR Williams, Task Force Falcon)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Chaplain (Maj.) Bill Scritchfield, Task Force Falcon, discusses the importance of taking action for the right reasons during a prayer breakfast at Bagrarm Airfield Jan. 28. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Spc. Christopher Durand, a communications specialist with the communications section, Headquarters Support Company, Task Force Mountain Eagle, 10th Combat Aviation, uses a pick axe to break up gravel so that he can lay router wire at Bagram Airfield Jan 21. (Photo by Sgt. George Tucker, Task Force Mountain Eagle)

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PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Vice President Joe Biden visits with Spc. Trellis Littlejohn, a communications specialist with Task Force Falcon of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, Jan. 12 at Bagram Airfield. Littlejohn, a native of Gaffney, S.C., was one of hundreds of Servicemembers with whom the vice president took the time to thank for their service. The vice president made a stop to the air base for a brief visit during breakfast after having met with Afghan President Hamid Karzai in Kabul the day before. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

EYE OF THE FALCON

January 2011

Falcon Flyer is published in the interest of the servicemembers of the 10th Mountain Infantry (Li.) Division's Combat Aviation Brigade.
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PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Pfc. John Hagerman of Madison, Wis., a mechanic with Headquarters Support Company, Task Force Mountain Eagle of 277th Aviation Support Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, checks the oil level of a High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicle at Bagram Airfield Jan. 1. (Photo by Sgt. George Tucker, Task Force Mountain Eagle)

FROM FALCON 6...

Col. Pedro Almeida
10th CAB Commander

Soldiers, Families and Friends of Task Force Falcon,

I hope that this message finds all of you well and having a good winter. We know that many o f our Families across the U.S. have been dealing with some extreme weather, so I pray that this note finds you doing well, wherever you are.

For our Families and Friends, I have a simple message for you: the task force is doing phenomenal! I have one of the best jobs in the brigade simply because I get to travel and see all of our great Soldiers in action. From the Shooters in Jalalabad to the Gamblers in Sharana, in the balmy Tigershark weather in Salerno and the chilly Knighthawk temperatures in Shank, and in the bustling Bagram "metropolis", home to ODIN, Phoenix, Mountain Eagle, and Renegades; our Soldiers are simply doing an outstanding job.

Wherever I go, I ask Soldiers how they are doing, how the deployment is going, and what I can do to help them. The overwhelming response is that they are doing just fine (except for missing their Families, as we all do), that the mission is going well, and that they are doing what they came into the Army to do: Repair vehicles and helicopters, fly aircraft, manage supplies or the host of other jobs our 4,000+ Soldiers perform daily to make us successful!

The motivation and energy of our Soldiers is contagious and makes every task seem manageable, no matter how daunting. It is part of what inspires me on a personal level, and I appreciated their focus and dedication daily.

This Combined Joint Task Force in Afghanistan simply could not accomplish what they do on a daily basis without our Soldiers' contributions. Every Army leader I speak to acknowledges their tremendous professionalism and valor in the execution of their combat missions. You can be deeply proud of what your Soldier is doing, both for the people of Afghanistan and for our fellow U.S. And coalition service members.

Fly to Glory!

Col. Pedro G. Almeida, Task Force Falcon and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade commander, approaches a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter which will take him on a battlefield circulation mission recently. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

FROM FALCON 7...

Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton
10th CAB Command Sergeant Major

We're over a quarter of the way through our deployment and we're doing well both in our missions and staying safe. We can be proud of our contributions to removing threats to the freedoms of the Afghan people. As we look at the larger picture of why we are here, we must continue to stay focused on our daily tasks and that we are carrying them out with safety in mind. Leaders, ensure that your Soldiers are performing their jobs safely, wearing proper protective equipment, staying fit, healthy and hydrated.

Task Force Falcon Soldiers began taking their R&R in December and the first groups have already returned. As our Soldiers continue to go on their 15 days of free leave, I encourage each of you to make the most of your time to relax and do the things that will take your mind off deployment. That being said, be aware of situations that have the potential for negative consequences. Do all things in moderation and think of the possible risks and consequences involved with each activity. Most problems for Servicemembers coming home from a deployment involve drinking and driving and domestic violence. Make a plan for how you will avoid potential problems.

Several regions of the U.S., as well as Europe, are experiencing extreme winter weather. Keep up to date on weather conditions in the areas in which you will be traveling and spending time. Remember to make sure you have appropriate clothing for whatever weather condition you're in. Also, ensure that your vehicles are prepared for extreme weather. Pack blankets, cold weather gear and emergency equipment just in case you find yourself isolated on a roadway for an extended time. Make sure that your tires are properly inflated and have adequate traction, as well.

For those of us supporting the fight against insurgents here in Afghanistan, we must not forget to remain vigilant and follow safety guidelines. Negligent discharges can occur all too easily if you don't take simple precautionary measures to make sure your weapon is properly cleared and kept on safe. Look out for one another. Get to know each other and offer support when needed.

Stay safe.

Fly to Glory!
Falcon 7

From left, Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, Task Force Falcon and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Greca, 10th Mountain Division command sergeant major, and Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Dvorsky, Task Force Phoenix, 10th CAB, pause for a photo on the flightline soon after the division sergeant major's arrival to Bagram Airfield Jan. 18. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class JR Williams, Task Force Falcon)

Careers in aviation unite father and son in RC-East

Family remains close despite deployment

Story and Photo by 1st Lt. Ben Shull, Task Force Mountain Eagle

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – An unknown author once wrote, "Every father should remember that one day his son will follow his example instead of his advice."

In a combat aviation brigade, deployments are the norm and Soldiers are constantly asked to leave friends, loved ones and family on a regular basis. Married Soldiers have a difficult time leaving behind spouses and children while they head off to war, but it's just as difficult for single Soldiers to leave their mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Sometimes though, Soldiers and their loved ones are fighting on the same battleground.

U.S. Army Pfc. Allan Berry II of Terre Haute, Ind., a petroleum specialist with A Company, Task Force Mountain Eagle, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, has the pleasure of getting to see his father on a nearly weekly basis.

Pfc. Berry's father, Allan Berry Sr., also from Terre Haute, flies the Puma S330J helicopter for a major aviation corporation, shuttling Army and Department of the Army civilians around Regional Command-East. Berry Sr. frequently brings care packages and supplies put together by his son and his fellow Soldiers at Bagram Airfield, to other Soldiers in Pfc. Berry's platoon working out of Forward Operating Base Ghazni.

Before flying for his present employer, Mr. Berry spent eight years fixing helicopters in the Marine Corps and then joined the Army where he became a Chief Warrant Officer and flew AH-64 Apaches. After returning from Desert Storm, Mr. Berry got out of the service but continued to fly.

"Knowng my son could be one of the young kids I'm flying around the battlefield makes this job enjoyable and means that much more to me. I always try to help the Soldiers out in any way I can and treat them like it's my son that I'm flying around."

Following his father's example, Pfc. Berry enlisted in the Army January 2008, and specifically asked to be an aircraft re-fueler.

"My dad was always flying in helicopters and flew during the Gulf War," said Pfc. Berry. "It made me proud to see what he did for our country and I wanted to follow in his footsteps."

When Berry Sr. found out his son was deploying to Bagram Airfield, he was excited at the prospect of getting to see him; but as any father would be; worried about the dangers involved with deploying to a combat zone.

"I didn't get to see him in [Contingency Operating Base] Speicher when I was down in Baghdad on his last deployment," said Mr. Berry. "So when Allan told me he would be in Bagram, I was thrilled because my flights bring me into BAF on a regular basis. At the same time though, it makes you worry. I've been flying in Afghanistan for almost a year now, so I know a lot of the dangers here. It scares me sometimes to think

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Pfc. Allan Berry and his father Allan Berry Sr., both from Terre Haute, Ind., stand outside Mr. Berry's helicopter at Bagram Airfield here Jan. 15. Pfc. Berry is a petroleum specialist with Alpha Company, Task Force Mountain Eagle, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade. Through careers in aviation, the two have been able to spend a considerable amount of time together during Pfc. Berry's deployment.

of him in harm's way. But getting to see him helps reassure me that he's doing well."

To be working in the same area as his son, gives Mr. Berry a unique perspective.

"I love the fact that I get to directly support the Soldiers over here," he said. "Knowng my son could be one of the young kids I'm flying around the battlefield makes this job enjoyable and means that much more to me. I always try to help the Soldiers out in any way I can and treat them like it's my son that I'm flying around."

Pfc. Berry's platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class David Essinger, sees benefits of having his Soldier's father in the area.

"I think it's great that Pfc. Berry gets to see his father while we're deployed,," said Essinger. "I think Jim Valvano said it best when he claimed, 'my father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another. He believed in me.' Whether he's had a good day or bad day, Berry's dad always believes in him and supports him. Not only is it satisfying to see a father and son re-united, but it's comforting to know that in a pinch, we have another asset to turn to in order to keep the mission happening."

Pfc. Berry said he agrees.

"Getting to see my dad and visit with him when he flies into Bagram really helps keep my morale high," he said. "Anytime I miss home or want to talk to my family, my dad's only a phone call away."

VP visits Falcon Soldiers

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Vice President Joe Biden visited servicemembers during breakfast at Bagram Airfield Jan. 13, the morning after meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai to discuss the U.S. strategy to stabilize the Afghan government.

While hundreds of servicemembers, including Soldiers from the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, were eating breakfast, the vice president entered a dining facility here, grabbed a piece of bacon from the buffet, and began chatting with the servicemembers.

After first spending time with servicemembers from his home state of Delaware, he made his way around the room, spending time with each individual; shaking hands asking their name, thanking them for

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Spc. Trellis Littlejohn, a communications specialist with the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, and native of Gaffney, S.C., shakes hands with Vice President Joe Biden Jan. 12. The vice president visited with hundreds of Servicemen during breakfast at Bagram Airfield. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Vice President Joe Biden takes time to shake hands with and greet Soldiers dining at the Dragon Dining Facility here Jan. 12. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Vice President Joe Biden signs a 10th Combat Aviation Brigade flag Jan. 14 during breakfast at Bagram Airfield. The vice president spent time with hundreds of Servicemen; shaking hands, thanking them for their service, signing autographs, and having his photo taken with them. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Childers, Task Force Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade)

their service, and taking photos with them.

"It really raised my morale to know that our government officials care about us enough to come here and check on us and let us know that we're not forgotten," said Sgt 1st Class Michael Childers, a communications noncommissioned officer in charge with Task Force Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade.

Pv2 Michael Christiansen, an operations specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Falcon/10th CAB, brought a 10th Combat Aviation Brigade flag to the breakfast with the vice president in hopes to have it signed.

Christiansen got his wish as the vice president signed the flag and then held it up for a photo.

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Davis, a Soldier with Task Force Odin and native of Newark, Del., 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, is greeted by Vice President Joe Biden Jan. 12 during a visit to the Dragon Dining Facility here. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon/10th Combat Aviation

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Vice President Joe Biden signs a 10th Combat Aviation Brigade flag Jan. 14 during breakfast at Bagram Airfield. The vice president spent time with hundreds of Servicemen; shaking hands, thanking them for their service, signing autographs, and having his photo taken with them. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Childers, Task Force Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade)

Knighthawk Soldier, future music star?

Story and Photos by Sgt. Janell Emerson, Task Force Knighthawk

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — The origin of U.S. Army Spc. Brian Stowe's military career is not much different from other Soldiers' stories.

Like many troops, Stowe, of Elkmont, Ala., joined the Army in June 2008 and attended basic and advanced individual training as a human resources specialist at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Stowe has deployed twice since his enlistment. He spent seven months in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and is currently deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom at Forward Operating Base Shank with Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division.

But this is where his story becomes a little bit different.

Stowe's musical ambitions have led him to earn a recording contract in the Christian Contemporary genre.

"I sent my song to them, not really looking for a contract so much," Stowe humbly explained. "I was really hoping for a critique and just wanting to know what they would think."

In June 2010, Stowe received a reply and feedback from the record label in the form of a personal phone call where executives offered him a recording contract. "I was a bit overjoyed, then a little disappointed because we were about to deploy."

The company's executives decided they were willing to wait.

"They told me we could start recording once I returned, so it looks like November or December of next year I'll take some leave and start recording."

Stowe is not alone in his endeavor. As the lead singer of his group, Sanctify Me, his band includes his younger brother Johnathan on bass and school friend Brittany Gibson on guitar. The trio has played together since high school.

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Spc. Brian Stowe, a human resources specialist from Elkmont, Ala., with Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, practices during some down time at Forward Operating Base Shank Jan. 4.

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Spc. Brian Stowe, a human resources specialist from Elkmont, Ala., with Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, sings a ballad he wrote and scored for his co-workers at Forward Operating Base Shank Jan.4.

"I can play drums and sing when we record, and I'll play the keyboard when applicable," he said.

He laughed as he recalled the moment when his band and family reacted to the news. "They were very happy and excited, of course. They were almost more overjoyed than I was."

Stowe credits his wife Evelyn and the rest of his family in Elkmont as the sustaining factor for his music and ambitions.

"I have awesome support with everything… You know, this is our dream," he said.

The dream began during his sophomore year of high school. Stowe was given his first instrument, a white First Act electric guitar. He quickly discovered his natural affinity with music by teaching himself to play the guitar, along with picking up the drums, keyboard and bass soon after. Creating a band was a natural evolution.

For now, Stowe said he enjoys the camaraderie and support of his unit and looks to their continued backing as he moves forward with his music. The soft-spoken Soldier said his fellow troops encourage his musical aspirations. "They support me, they keep my morale up." At the prompting of his co-workers, Stowe works on his lyrics and sharpens his skills with several instruments available at the local chapel and, at times, in the office.

"I do it because they ask me to and for their morale."

Spc. Nicholas MacAlpin, TF Knighthawk chaplain assistant, said his friend's goal of becoming the next success in contemporary Christian music is a no-fail aspiration.

"He is the most amazing guy I have ever known in my life," said MacAlpin, a native of Painesville, Ohio. "He is a man who encompasses the Army Values and his music surpasses most artists for his age."

Czech Soldiers receive 10th Mountian Combat Patch

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- About 100 members of Task Force Hippo, a Czech Republic Air Force unit, received a NATO Medal from Col. Pedro Almeida, TF Falcon and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade commander, at a ceremony Jan. 5 at Forward Operating Base Sharana. TF Hippo is attached to TF Falcon and provides aviation support in Paktika Province. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- About 100 members of Task Force Hippo, a Czech Republic Air Force unit, received a 10th Mountain Division patch from Col. Pedro Almeida, TF Falcon and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade commander, at a ceremony Jan. 5 at Forward Operating Base Sharana. TF Hippo is attached to TF Falcon and provides aviation support in Paktika Province. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

Col. Pedro Almeida, Task Force Falcon and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, TF Falcon and 10th CAB command sergeant major, flew to Forward Operating Base Sharana for a battlefield circulation mission Jan. 5.

At the beginning of the visit, Col. Almeida and Command Sgt. Maj. Patton had the opportunity to present TF Hippo with 10th Mountain Division combat patches and NATO medals. TF Hippo is a Czech Republic aviation unit which provides aviation support around eastern Afghanistan.

"The 10th Mountain Division patch has been warn by American Soldiers since World War II," said Col. Almeida. "Our Soldiers wear this patch with a lot of pride. We are very happy to see you all wear it."

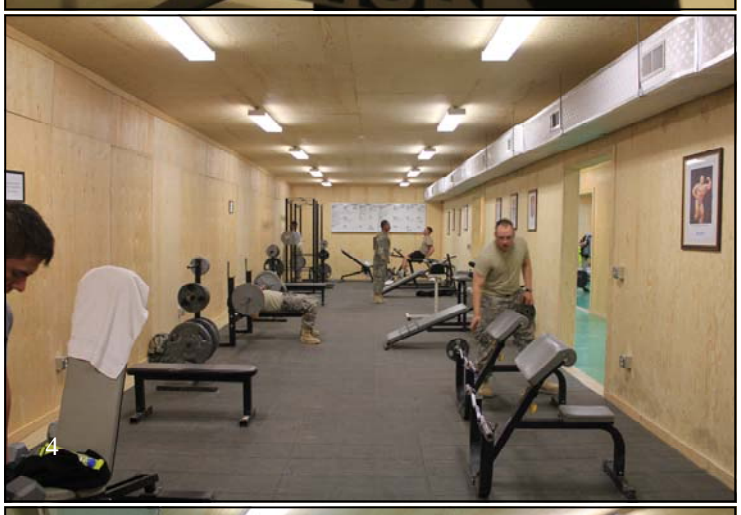
The nearly 100 members of TF Hippo who received the 10th Mountain Division Patch and NATO medal rotated with about 100 incoming personnel Jan. 31, becoming the fifth rotation for the Czech Republic aviation unit.

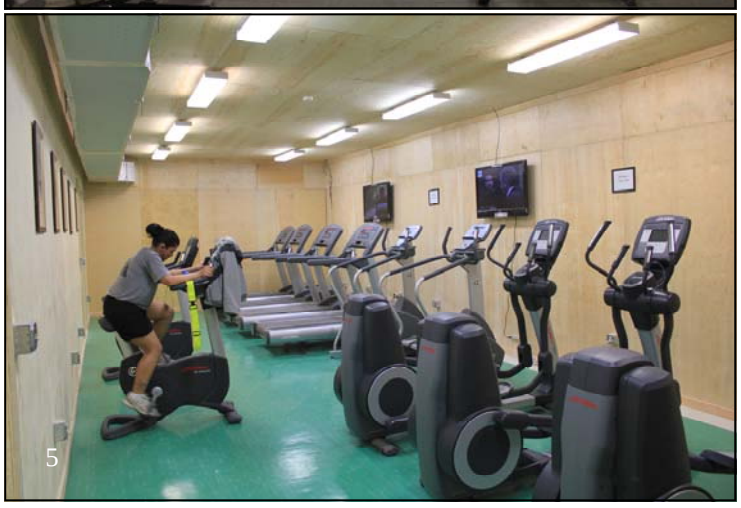
In a change of command ceremony that day, Col. Jaromir Sebesta handed over command to Lt. Col. Karel Krejcirik., who will lead TF Hippo for the duration of their six-month tour.

Col. Almeida and Command Sgt. Maj. Also had the opportunity to spend time visiting with leaders and Soldiers of TF Gambler, an aviation unit from 4th CAB, 4th Infantry Division, who are attached to TF Falcon/10th CAB.

Gambler Soldiers build new gym, MWR facility

Photos 1 & 2 by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon





Photos 3-5 by Sgt. David Lee, Dragon Ground, Task Force Gambler

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan — When Task Force Gambler, a task force from 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, attached to 10th CAB, arrived at Forward Operating Base Sharana, they were the first aviation unit to ever reside at the base. Leaders of the task force were responsible for the planning and construction of much of the essential infrastructure.

Once the airfield, living areas, and command post were in place, the task force decided a gym and a Morale Welfare and Recreation center would improve the living conditions of the Soldiers.

"Our Soldiers have dedicated themselves through hard work and ingenuity to build two places that have contributed in enhancing the morale of our Soldiers," said 1st Sgt. Francisco Aguilar, Dragon Ground company, TF Gambler.

The gym offers a weight room, a cardio room with treadmills and stationary bikes, and a general fitness room. The MWR center offers pool tables, ping pong, high definition TVs, on which Soldiers can watch movies or play video games. The MWR also has phones and computers so Soldiers can communicate with friends and family, surf the internet or work on school work.

"The new MWR facility is a fantastic place to relax, and the phones and computers there make calling or skyping back home to family members very easy," said Capt. Craig Kuphall, C Company, TF Gambler. "It has been a great boost for morale and it is very popular with all the Soldiers."

KHOST PROVINCE, Afghanistan — A CH-47 Chinook flies with a sling load of fuel blivets Jan. 21. Chinooks are used for moving many passengers and large cargo around eastern Afghanistan.

(Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Nicolas Carter, Task Force Tigershark)

KHOST PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Soldiers secure the hook of the fuel blivets to the hook of a CH-47 Chinook Jan.21. Securing a sling load requires coordination between crewmembers and pilots, as well as with the Soldiers on the ground.

(Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Nicolas Carter, Task Force Tigershark)

TF Tigershark *in action*

KHOST PROVINCE, Afghanistan — An unidentified Soldier washes an OH-58 Kiowa. Frequent washings enable OH-58 mechanics to maintain the helicopter, washing away dirt to allow them to find faulty parts easier. Keeping the helicopter clean prevents wear and tear as well.
(Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Nicolas Carter, Task Force Tiger-

KHOST PROVINCE, Afghanistan — A UH-60 Black Hawk hovers over the ground during a mission Jan. 21. Black Hawks are primarily used to move personnel around eastern Afghanistan efficiently. Black Hawks can also be used to move small amounts of cargo.
(Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Nicolas Carter, Task Force Tigershark)

Chinook crew supports 10th CAB mission

A glimpse into a flight crew's day

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Michael Syner,
Task Force Falcon

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – The morning air is sharp. Gusting breezes cut through the Soldiers' lightly-furred fleece and jackets as they prepare to start a relief-in-place mission in a Ch-47 Chinook helicopter Jan. 23.

The crew is ready, suited in their armor and cold-weather clothing to keep the morning chill and the explosive wind caused by the dual propellers at bay.

The five-man crew wears bulky helmets to reduce the noise caused by the propellers and to communicate.

With everything fastened down, protective gear donned and everyone tethered properly to the inside of the helicopter, the pilots, U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Christopher Kerr, a native of Hilo, Hawaii, and 1st Lt. Travis Branch, from Kailua, Hawaii, both members of the Hawaii National Guard, start the engines.

The engine warning alarm pierces the air, indicating the engines are about to start. The crew chief, U.S. Army Sgt. Lowen Cabug of Ewa Beach, Hawaii, also with the Hawaii National Guard; and the door gunner, U.S. Army Spc. Robert Smith of Little Rock, Ark., who deployed with Company B from Fort Drum, N.Y., peer out the side windows ensuring nothing is near the helicopter.

All clear.

As twin rotors slowly gain speed creating a powerful downdraft, the crew communicates constantly.

"Clear up left and right," Kerr said.

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Spc. Robert Smith, a door gunner with Company B, Task Force Phoenix, TF Falcon, assists Soldiers Jan. 23 as they board a CH-47 Chinook. Smith is a native of Little Rock, Ark.

Smith and Cabug examine the surrounding area.

“Clear up left,” Smith responded after looking.

“Clear up right,” said Cabug, who manned the right gun.

As the helicopter lifts, the crew continues to chatter on the radio, performing their complex checks effortlessly.

The crew is on a relief-in-place mission to move troops between various military bases. In addition to being faster than taking to the road, flying keeps the troops safer, according to the flight engineer.

“We get (small-arms fire) sometimes,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Bill Sapolu, the flight engineer and Hawaii Guardsman from Millilani, Hawaii. “But we can usually just pull away with little damage.”

The crew conducts a six-hour mission flying to various bases picking up troops and transporting them within the region.

In flight, Branch and Kerr constantly scan the horizon following the “nape of the land,” a term for adjusting the aircraft’s elevation in accordance with the terrain. Smith, Cabug, and Sapolu continuously scan from their vantage points, and warn the others about any potential threats.

As night approaches, the crew returns to Bagram Airfield. The landscape is enveloped in an increasingly deep blue as the sun sets quickly behind the mountains. The crew reaches the safety of Bagram in the inky darkness of full-on night.

By the end of the mission, the Chinook crew will have moved approximately 120 passengers.

Despite flying a lengthy mission covering hundreds of miles over eastern Afghanistan, the crew’s job is not complete. They must perform about three hours worth of maintenance, logging and post-mission debriefings. The two engines are checked for leaks, fluid levels are examined, rotors are tied down, and blocks are placed behind wheels; details that help make the next mission launch without a hitch.

The crew completes their duties, grabs a hot meal and prepares for another day.

“It feels great to accomplish the mission at the end of the day,” Branch said. “Now we get to do the same thing tomorrow.”

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Task Force Phoenix crew members observe while their CH-47 Chinook helicopter assigned for a relief-in-place mission is refueled Jan. 23. The crew is comprised primarily of Hawaii National Guard Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 171st Aviation Regiment. The unit is currently attached to TF Phoenix in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Cavalry aviators continue 'stable call' tradition

Story and Photos by Spc. Kam Gerohimos, Task Force Shooter

Task force recognizes individual accomplishments

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – In the days of the mounted cavalry trooper, the "stable call" was the sound of a bugle signalling cavalrymen to come tend to their horses. In today's cavalry, the traditions remain the same, but the stable call has altered its significance. Troopers of Task Force Shooter, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, gathered Jan. 14 to honor these cavalry traditions at Jalalabad Army Airfield, Afghanistan.

In the atmosphere of team-building and camaraderie, the squadron conducted several warrant officer promotions, awarded certificates to newly designated pilots-in-command, awarded the Broken Spur, said a farewell to one of its officers, broke-in Stetsons, and recognized several contractors working with the unit.

"I'd like to start off tonight by recognizing five contractors who have been a great asset to the squadron," said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 James Riley of Fulton, Miss., recognizing five civilian contractors who are deployed with the unit and work alongside Army maintainers to keep the squadron's aircraft safe and mission ready. "We look forward to having them with us for the rest of the deployment."

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Blazewicz of Hollidaysburg, Pa. is presented with a Pilot in Command certificate by Task Force Shooter commander Lt. Col. Christopher Downey of Philadelphia and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Timothy French of Pittsburgh.

The second event of the evening was awarding pilot-in-command certificates. The pilot-in-command is the pilot who is ultimately responsible for the aircraft's operation and safety during flight.

"In light of these demonstrated qualities," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Christopher Downey of Philadelphia, reading the certificate, "he is therefore charged to safely and diligently discharge his responsibilities as an aircraft commander and is hereby given the title and authority of pilot-in-command"..

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – During a stable call Jan. 14, Mark Leach of Daleville, Ala. is promoted to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3 by his troop commander, U.S. Army Capt. Chad Monroe of Watertown, N.Y. Leach is one of three cavalry troopers promoted at the gathering.

Newly designated pilots-in-command awarded certificates were: U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Stefan Blasingame of Seattle, an AH-64D Apache pilot; U.S. Army Capt. Kyle Rogers of Erie, Pa., also an Apache pilot; U.S. Army Capt. William Hanna of West Des Moines, Iowa, a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot; U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nicholas Daniels of St. Johnsbury, Vt., a CH-47 Chinook pilot; U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Chamberlin of St. Augustine, Fla.; and U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Blazewicz of Hollidaysburg, Pa., also a Chinook pilot.

The most anticipated event of the night was the awarding of the Broken Spur.

"The history of the Broken Spur has a long and distinguished lineage, dating back at least until mid-July of 2010," said U.S. Army Maj. Mark Herold, squadron executive officer, a native of Waterloo, Iowa.

The Broken Spur is literally a tethered spur, broken in half and attached to a necklace playfully awarded to the squadron member that has distinguished himself or herself for the most ridiculous and humorous error in judgement. The Broken Spur is to be proudly displayed in his or her place of

business, and the person awarded the Broken Spur will recount the infamous details of their impaired cognitive abilities when requested. After opening the forum to new nominations and through much debate, a unanimous vote selected U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joseph Carr as the recipient of the Broken Spur.

After the Broken Spur was awarded, three pilots were promoted to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3. The three pilots were: Mark Leach of Daleville, Ala., an OH-58D Kiowa pilot; Andrew Erp of Watertown, S.D., also a Kiowa pilot; and Mark Chamberlin of St. Augustine, Fla. a CH-47 Chinook pilot.

In the midst of congratulating new pilots-in-command and recently promoted pilots, there was also a farewell. The squadron said farewell to U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jeffery Shadwick, an OH-58D Kiowa pilot.

"Coming to us early from flight school while the troop was still at [High Altitude Mountainous Environmental Training], 1st Lt. Shadwick, with little platoon leader experience, figured out what needed to be done, and got the job done," said his troop commander, U.S. Army Capt. Scott Wohlford of Watertown, N.Y. "He will be greatly missed but we look forward to him doing great things with his next unit."

1st Lt. Shadwick will be going to another base to become a flight platoon leader.

"I couldn't have hoped for a better place to start my career as an aviator then Task Force Shooter," said 1st Lt. Shadwick. "These stable calls are one of my favorite cavalry traditions where we can all get together and celebrate all the achievements and occurrences in our organization."

To end the gathering, troopers conducted the time honored cavalry tradition of breaking in their Stetsons.

The following cavalry troopers broke in their Stetsons: U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Richard Ernst of Islip, N.Y.; U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brian Cammack of West Bend, Wisc., and U.S. Army Spc. Ben Shipp of Roundup, Mont., and the entire MEDEVAC platoon, C Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th CAB.

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nicholas Daniels of Montpelier, Vt. is presented a Pilot-in-Command certificate from Task Force Six Shooters commander Lt. Col. Christopher Downey of Philadelphia. Chief Daniels is a CH-47 Chinook pilot attached to Task Force Shooter of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade.

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Capt. William Hanna of West Des Moines, Iowa, is presented a pilot in command certificate from U.S. Army Lt. Col. Christopher Downey of Philadelphia, Task Force Shooter commander. U.S. Army Capt. Hanna is the A Company commander, with Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, and a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot.

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan –Andrew Erp of Watertown, S.D. and Mark Chamberlin of St. Augustine, Fla. are promoted to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3 during a stable call gathering Jan. 14th. Erp is an OH-58D Kiowa pilot and Chamberlin is a CH-47 Chinook pilot with Task Force Shooter of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade.

Pancakes and spirituality

Soldiers enjoy religious breakfast

Photos by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Task Force Falcon Soldiers enjoy breakfast durning a prayer breakfast hosted by Chaplain (Maj.) Bill Scritchfeld Jan. 28. The discussion following the meal focused on the importance of doing things with the right intentions.

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan —- Chaplain (Maj.) Bill Scritchfield, Task Force Falcon, discusses the importance of taking action for the right reasons during a prayer breakfast at Bagrarm Airfield Jan. 28.

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Chaplain (Capt.) Love, Task Force Mountain Eagle, discusses the importance of taking action for the right reasons during a prayer breakfast at Bagrarm Airfield Jan. 28.

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Chaplain (Capt.) Steven Love, Task Force Mountain Eagle, leads a prayer for the nation at the beginning of the 10 Combat Aviation Brigade prayer breakfast at Bagram Airfield Jan. 28. Chaplain Love was followed by Chaplain (Capt.) Robert Hearon, TF Phoenix, who led a prayer for the unit.

FORSCOM commander recognizes Soldiers

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Spc. Turquoise Dawson of Philadelphia, a supply specialist with Task Force Falcon of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, receives a coin from U.S. Army Gen. James Thurman, commander of U.S. Army Forces Command, Jan. 14 at Bagram Airfield. TF Falcon Soldiers, stationed at BAF, and nominated by their leaders, were presented coins by the general. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Sgt. Binh Mach, a battle noncommissioned officer with Task Force Falcon of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, receives a coin from U.S. Army Gen. James Thurman, commander of U.S. Army Forces Command, Jan. 14 at Bagram Airfield. TF Falcon Soldiers, stationed at BAF, and nominated by their leaders, were presented by the general. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

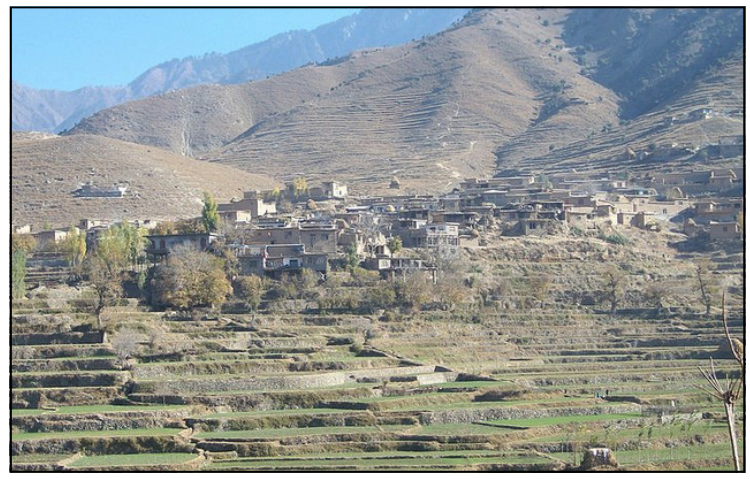
Taeguek, Falcon leaders meet, exchange gifts

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, Task Force Falcon and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade command sergeant major, visits with Command Sgt. Maj. Dong-Sun Seo, TF Taeguek command sergeant major, earlier this month. TF Taeguek is a South Korean aviation unit attached to TF Falcon/10th CAB, that provides aviation support in eastern Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of Task Force Taeguek)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, Task Force Falcon and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade command sergeant major, receives a plaque from Command Sgt. Maj. Dong-Sun Seo, TF Taeguek command sergeant major, earlier this month, to commemorate the joint partnership. TF Taeguek is a South Korean aviation unit attached to TF Falcon/10th CAB, that provides aviation support in eastern Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of Task Force Taeguek)

EYE OF THE FALCON

Photos from around eastern Afghanistan



KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Just outside Forward Operating Base Bostic lies a beautiful river valley. When Soldiers take a break from their work, they're able to take in the beauty of the area. (Photo courtesy of Spc. Kelvin Conyers, Task Force Mountain Eagle)

1. KABUL PROVINCE, Afghanistan — A Cougar transport helicopter makes up part of a helicopter battalion flown by the French Army Air Corps in Afghanistan. The Cougar is part of the French rotorcraft fleet, which supports 3,000 French Army troops and is on call for coalition allies, the Afghan army and civilian emergencies. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class JR Williams, Task Force Falcon PAO)
2. PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- An OH-58 Kiowa begins its mission Jan. 12. Kiowas are used extensively for reconnaissance. (Photo courtesy of Maj. Richard Tucker, Task Force Falcon)
3. BAMYAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- A Black Hawk helicopter flies over the mountains of Bamyan Province earlier this month. (Photo courtesy of Chief Warrent Officer 5 Bobby Sebren, Task Force Falcon)
4. PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Snow covered mountains can be seen from above in a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Jan. 10. (Photo by Sgt. George Tucker, Task Force Mountain Eagle)

Soldier's Perspective:

Opinions from Joes

Let's get one thing up front and out of the way: deployments are perhaps the most difficult things that we, as Soldiers or even as people, will ever have to deal with in our lives. Put bluntly, they stink.

Command Sgt. Maj. Patton has told us before in previous editions of this news magazine that the deployment is an opportunity of a lifetime. I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment. What better way to tackle adversity than head-on.

So what are my coping mechanisms? A sense of humor, first and foremost. If you don't have one of those here, you might be in trouble. But I also have a few others. I have made it a point during this deployment to always work on some form of self-improvement.

My first deployment goal seemed somewhat unique, but if you suffer from this malady you know why it's a challenge of sorts to overcome. I set this simple goal: I will eat my meals slower.

Anybody who has gone through basic training, which should be nearly everybody in Task Force Falcon (excluding the West Pointers, I guess), knows exactly what I am talking about. I have spoken to several people, who have said, "Yes, I have eaten like an emaciated dog ever since basic training. Actually, I am still afraid somebody might take my plate."

So, how am I doing? Well I actually notice that people are sitting around me when I eat now, which means that my head isn't completely buried in my plate. I call that progress!

My second goal involves working on my golf game. The last time I checked there was no country club here on Bagram, though Lord knows we need one. Be that as it may, with no golf course this goal could prove a little more difficult. However, I received some intelligence from our predeployment site survey troopers that I was in luck. And, that there was a hitting net, plumb full of golf balls and golf clubs. Unfortunately, there were no reports of a 19th hole (my fellow golf professionals know what I'm talking about).

I thought to myself, "you know, this whole going to war thing might not be so bad this time." I made it a point to end my day with a stress-relieving session on the driving range, while simultaneously working on certain skills. Not only was I fulfilling my original goal of working on my golf swing, while so unwillingly separated from the game I love, but I was also able to decompress from the stresses of a staff position.

Unfortunately, I may have overdone it and I am currently on the shelf. But don't think for a minute that I won't be back out there the second I am able. I guess I won't know for sure how this particular goal is progressing until I'm able to hit the links and apply some of the skills I have been working on.

What is my next goal? It is currently underway. It's more of a work in progress, if you will. In short, my goal is administration.

Administration and I go together like the Taliban and the Bill of Rights. This is a tough one for me. I recall a time when I was trying to organize my administrative paper work and such with my wife, just prior to my recent departure for Afghanistan. It ended with, "(SCREAM) Honey, I need you to do this for me, this makes my head hurt!" Now, with no wife to bail me out and a desperate need for some administrative organization, it has been a baptism by fire, figuratively speaking of course, but I am hanging in there.

We are going to be here for what seems to be an eternity (it has already felt like an eternity). It's not; it's only a year. The separation from my family is one of the most difficult things I have had to endure in my life, but I am here and there is nothing to do about it, except embrace it and take advantage of every minute of every day.

By Staff Sgt. Nathan Gregg (left), Task Force Falcon intelligence section non-commissioned officer-in-charge

Interested in having your voice heard? Send in your opinions to the editor at:

michael.syner@afghan.swa.army.mil

This is a chance to offer your thoughts about this deployment, your living accommodations, or even a dissertation on your favorite uniform. All submissions will be read, but only a few will be selected for print.

African American/Black History Month
Trivia and Facts

1) The parents of Colin Powell immigrated from what country?
A.) Barbados
B.) Jamaica
C.) Haiti

2) What major U.S. city elected the first African American Mayor in 1967?
A.) Cleveland
B.) New Orleans
C.) Atlanta

3) What is Tiger Woods' real first name?
A.) Elmer
B.) Samuel
C.) Eldrick

4) The first black player in the NHL was Willie O'Ree. What team did he play for?
A.) Toronto Maple Leafs
B.) New York Rangers
C.) Boston Bruins

5) What is the name of the first African American who served on the U.S. Supreme Court?
A.) Barack Obama
B.) Thurgood Marshall
C.) Colin Powell

FACTS

Buffalo Soldiers is a name respectfully given to the African-American cavalries during the 1800s by the Native American Kiowa tribe. These Soldiers received second class treatment and were often given the worst military assignments, but had the lowest desertion rate compared to the rest of the military. The Buffalo Soldiers served in the Spanish-American War, various Indian wars and helped settle the West by installing telegraph lines, and protecting wagon trains and new settlements. More than 20 Buffalo Soldiers have received the highest military award, the Medal of Honor – the most any military unit has ever received.

Josiah Henson (1789-1883) fled slavery in Maryland in 1830 and founded a settlement in Ontario, Canada for fugitive slaves.

Thomas L. Jennings (1791-1859) was the first African-American to receive a patent in 1821 for a dry-cleaning process. He used the money earned from the patent to purchase relatives out of slavery and support abolitionist causes.

6) What is the name of the woman who helped over 300 escaped slaves flee to freedom in the North via the Underground Railroad?
A.) Rosa Parks
B.) Harriet Tubman
C.) Mary McLeod Bethune

7) Jean-Baptist-Point Du Sable was a Haitian-French pioneer who founded the settlement that would later become which large U.S. city?
A.) New York City
B.) Chicago
C.) New Orleans

8) What is the name of the slave who sued for his freedom & lost, in a major Supreme Court case before the Civil War?
A.) Dred Scott
B.) Nat Turner
C.) Carter G. Woodson

9) What is the name of the great Civil Rights leader who won the Nobel Peace Prize and was assassinated in 1968?
A.) Martin Luther King Jr.
B.) Malcolm X

10) Which track & field star was the first athlete to win 4 gold medals in an Olympic Games?
A.) Jesse Owens
B.) Carl Lewis
C.) Michael Johnson

11) Which African American basketball star made history becoming the first woman to dunk during a pro game in 2002?
A.) Michelle Snow
B.) Lisa Leslie
C.) Teresa Weatherspoon

Answers: 1)B 2)A 3)C 4)C 5)B 6)B 7)B 8)A 9)A 10)A 11)B

Don’t get caught up…Read below

Photos depict a dramatization of what could happen if convicted of sexual assault

Sexual Harassment/Assault

By Sgt. 1st Class James L. Slinger, Task Force Falcon EO Advisor

The 10th Combat Aviation Brigade commander’s policy memorandum on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment explains why sexual harassment is detrimental to the unit, describes what sexual harassment constitutes, how to report sexual harassment and the commander’s expectations for leaders and Soldiers, alike.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault breaches the trust that is the foundation of our organizational ethos. It undermines cohesion and ultimately impairs organizational effectiveness and mission accomplishment. Soldiers, Airmen, civilians and members of Task Force Falcon will not subject anyone to any type of sexual harassment– it will not be permitted anytime, anywhere, on or off-duty.

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical sexual conduct. Sexual harassment occurs when submission to or rejection of such conduct is made a condition of employment, either explicitly or implicitly, or such conduct interferes with an individual’s performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Sexual harassment is not limited to the workplace; it can occur during duty and non-duty hours.

Sexual harassment, as well as sexual assault, is unacceptable conduct; both violate our standards of conduct, and are illegal. We all share the responsibility for correcting sexual harassment and preventing sexual assault. Leaders will actively enforce standards of conduct that guarantee an environment of trust, teamwork, and camaraderie; one free from emotional, mental or physical harm. Sexual harassment and assault will not be condoned or tolerated in any form.

Anyone found guilty of either sexual harassment or sexual assault should expect to face maximum punishment. This can and may include separation from the Army and imprisonment.

Sexual harassment complaints or issues may be reported via the following means:

Company/Troop and Task Force Commander’s “Open Door Policy,” Company/Troop and Task Force Equal Opportunity Leaders (EOL), Brigade Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA-SFC James Slinger, NIPR: 481-6541), Division Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA-NIPR: 431-4035), Inspector General, BN/BDE Chaplain, Provost Marshal, Staff Judge Advocate, and medical agencies

For more information about sexual assault prevention or to report an incident, contact the Task Force Falcon Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at VOIP: 481-6541 or SVOIP 431-5156.

The way forward

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — An unidentified petroleum specialist fuels an OH-58 Kiowa helicopter prior to its mission earlier this month. (Photo by Maj. Richard Tucker, Task Force Falcon)

Fly to Glory!