

EYE of the F A L C O N

MARCH
2011



MANIFEST

4 From the Leaders



6 Falcon support Soldiers aim for weapons proficiency



Knighthawk leads aviation expansion

8

Soldier inspires peers

10

Shooter conducts first mission with AAF

11

12 Soldiers' ingenuity keeps airfield clear of ice

13 Spouse's fitness regiment makes "Walk to Afghanistan" rewarding

SECDEF visits Falcon Soldiers

14

Shooter Soldier receives Purple Heart

15

TF Phoenix makes a move

16



19 TF Tigershark Soldiers recognized

20 Phoenix Soldiers receive letters, kind words from U.S. Children

22 Falcon Soldiers volunteer time with Afghan Children

27 Backbone of the Army

28 Phoenix provides training, transport of Afghan Air Force during largest air assault in RC-East

ODIN pilot among first female Army combat aviators

31

Opinions: Soldiers' Voices

33

Equal Opportunity

35



EYE OF THE FALCON

February 2011

Falcon Flyer is published in the interest of the servicemembers of the 10th Mountain Infantry (LI) Division's Combat Aviation Brigade.

The Falcon Flyer is an Army-funded newsletter authorized for members of the U.S. Army, under the provision of AR 360-1. Contents of the Falcon Flyer are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or Department of the Army.

10th Mountain Division Commander
Maj. Gen. James Terry

10th CAB Commander
Col. Pedro Almeida

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

10th CAB PAO
Sgt. 1st Class JR Williams

10th CAB PAO NCOIC
Staff Sergeant Todd Pouliot

Editor
Pfc. Michael Syner

CONTACT
481.6597

TASK FORCE TIGERSHARK
FOB Salerno
Lt. Col. David Kramer
Command Sgt. Maj. Nicolas Carter

TASK FORCE KNIGHTHAWK
FOB Shank
Lt. Col. Lars Wendt
Command Sgt. Maj. Carlos Escalara

TASK FORCE PHOENIX
Bagram Airfield
Lt. Col. Dennis McKernan
Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Dvorsky

TASK FORCE SHOOTER
FOB Fenty
Lt. Col. Christopher Downey
Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick McGuire

TASK FORCE EAGLE
Bagram Airfield
Lt. Col. Albert Stiller
Command Sgt. Maj. Zacchaeus Hurst

TASK FORCE ODIN-A
Bagram Airfield
Lt. Col. Kevin Diermeier
Command Sgt. Maj. Marion Travis

TASK FORCE GAMBLER
FOB Sharana
Lt. Col. Jeffrey Thompson
Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Grumbach

TASK FORCE TAEGUEK
Bagram Airfield
Lt. Col. Myoung Choi

TASK FORCE HIPPO
FOB Sharana
Lt. Col. Karel Krejcirik



REGIONAL COMMAND - EAST, Afghanistan – An AH-64D Apache helicopter takes off from a base in eastern Afghanistan recently. Apaches offer fire power to provide aerial cover for other aircraft and for ground operations. In this month's edition, read about a Task Force ODIN pilot who was among the first female Army combat aviation pilots when the restriction on women in combat aviation was lifted in 1993. (Photo courtesy of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Edward Smith, Task Force Phoenix)

From Falcon 6:

Spring is a time of change and renewal and for Task Force Falcon, we are welcoming the warmer weather this month as we head into an important phase in our deployment. For our Afghan partners, the month of March is a special time of celebrating the coming of spring and Nowruz, the first days of the Persian New Year. This year's Nowruz celebrations saw large turn-outs not seen in many areas for over 40 years; a sign of progress in security. We share the hope of our Afghan partners for peace and continued progress in the upcoming year.

Our Soldiers saw several opportunities to help the people of Afghanistan this month. Several 10th Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers have given a few hours of their free time each week to spend with Afghan children at the Egyptian Hospital under a literacy program that not only provides English lessons, but also friendly interaction. Female Soldiers also interact with Afghan women.

Early in March, Apaches from Task Force Shooter, escorted a re-supply mission conducted by Afghan pilots. This was the first joint mission between our aviators and the Afghan Air Force.

Flight medics from our MEDEVAC Company conducted training with Afghan Army medics. The training was important because the Afghan medics will be able to train their counterparts so that medical operations between coalition and Afghan forces can be conducted safely and efficiently.

Our Soldiers are performing tremendously. We can all be proud of the service we are providing here in eastern Afghanistan.

The support that we are receiving from the home front has been exceptional. We look forward to being home next winter to do our share of the shoveling. I've enjoyed reading about

family members' participation in the brigade's symbolic "Walk to Afghanistan". Hopefully we can carry this momentum into the 10th CAB "Half Way 5K and 10K Run" April 30. Check with your FRG leaders for more information about this event that will be held not only at all of our forward operating bases, but at Fort Drum as well.

Fly to Glory!
Col. Pedro Almeida
10th Combat Aviation Brigade
Falcon 6



From Falcon 7:

Greetings from eastern Afghanistan!

As I write this, Task Force Falcon Soldiers are finishing their fifth month of providing outstanding aviation support to coalition and Afghan forces; and most importantly, to the people of eastern Afghanistan.

Being a Soldier is one of the noblest professions. It's not merely a job, for our nation depends on us. Our military forces are not only currently fighting a war against terrorism; we're also providing humanitarian assistance in Japan as well as providing protection to threatened civilians in Libya.

We're less than one percent of our nation's population who are physically and morally fit to serve in our military. We must continue to maintain that fitness.

This month the brigade held a Soldier and NCO of the Quarter competition in which representatives from several of our task forces traveled to Bagram Airfield to participate. There were five examinations conducted over two days. The participants scored very well in the Army Physical Fitness Test and the weapons knowledge exam and everyone passed the Land Navigation exam; but it was the written test on common Soldier combat tasks which ended the competition for many of the participants. Those who passed the preliminary exams faced a board of four task force command sergeants major, the HHC first sergeant and myself.

The Soldiers and NCOs should be proud of how they represented their task forces. We discussed areas where we need to focus more attention. That said, the preliminary exams for the NCOs proved very challenging, and so an NCO of the Quarter was not selected. In the Soldier of the Quarter board, Pfc. Tyler Koebbe, an Apache mechanic with TF Tigershark base at FOB Salerno, displayed knowledge and bearing beyond his 20 months in the Army as he earned Soldier of the Quarter honors.

Families and friends, your Soldiers are performing their duties admirably and we can all be proud of their individual and collective accomplishments. We think of you often and appreciate all the support you send our way. Stay safe!

Fly to Glory!
Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton
10th Combat Aviation Brigade
Falcon 7



Aviation brigade support Soldiers aim for weapons proficiency

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot
10th Combat Aviation Brigade

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Brigade-level Soldiers supporting Army aviation operations for eastern Afghanistan spend most of their work day indoors, and for the most part, behind a desk.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Falcon, conducted an individual weapons range at Bagram Airfield Feb. 28 in which Soldiers had the opportunity to zero their weapons, qualify and conduct reflexive fire exercises.

“There are a couple reasons for these Soldiers to train with their weapons,” said U.S. Army Capt. Matthew Romanych of Utica, N.Y., HHC, TF Falcon, commander. “First is to increase proficiency with their weapons. The second reason is it gets Soldiers out of the office. It breaks up the monotony of the daily routine.”

Soldiers zeroed their weapons and had the opportunity to qualify with them. Once they qualified on their personal weapon, they moved to an adjacent range for reflexive fire training.

Reflexive fire is a short-range marksmanship exercise, explained 1st Sgt. Todd Higginbotham, HHC, 10th CAB, first sergeant. “It helps if you are in a close combat fight and helps to positively identify the correct target.”

Higginbotham, a native of Abbeville, La., demonstrated proper technique to efficiently engage targets from the low-ready position. After having the students stand directly in front of their targets, he taught them the proper position to fire when facing a target.

“Knees should be slightly bent as if you’re in a fighting stance,” he instructed.

“From the low ready, bring your weapon up so the butt is against your shoulder; place the weapon on fire as you take your aim.”

The Soldiers went through the motions for a few repetitions and then actually fired at the targets; large sheets of paper, each with three different shapes of differing colors.

“Red triangle,” declared Higginbotham.

The Soldiers engaged the red triangle target.

Higginbotham said he randomly announces the shapes to reinforce Soldiers’ response in positively identifying what they are shooting. He also occasionally announces a color-shape combination that does not exist to check the Soldiers’ discipline and attention to detail.

Higginbotham also taught the Soldiers how to pivot properly when reacting to targets to their left and right flank.

U.S. Army Pfc. Michelle Dunning of Enterprise, Ala., a human resources specialist with HHC, TF Falcon, arrived at the in early February on her first deployment. She said she feels more confident having zeroed and qualified with her weapon and completing the reflexive fire exercises.

“If something were to happen, I would know what to do,” said Dunning. “I feel confident walking around base with a zeroed weapon.”

Despite rarely leaving Bagram Airfield, the Soldiers of HHC, TF Falcon, continue to train so they’re prepared should a situation arise where they need to defend themselves.



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Pfc. Michelle Dunning of Enterprise, Ala., a human resources specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Falcon, gets ready to react during reflexive fire training at a range at Bagram Airfield Feb. 28. Soldiers of HHC, TF Falcon, support aviation operations for eastern Afghanistan at brigade level. The unit conducted the range to improve weapons proficiency and break up the routine of working primarily in an office.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Todd Higginbotham of Abbeville, La., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Falcon, first sergeant, instructs Soldiers in the techniques and procedures of reflexive fire at a range at Bagram Airfield Feb. 28. Soldiers of HHC, TF Falcon, support aviation operations for eastern Afghanistan at brigade level. The unit conducted the range to improve weapons proficiency and break up the routine of working primarily in an office.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

Knighthawk takes lead in aviation expansion at FOB Shank

By U.S. Army Sgt. Janell Emerson
Task Force Knighthawk

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan— It takes a lot of effort to brainstorm and implement plans which involve legions of people across the span of four years, especially for something as elaborate as aviation infrastructure improvements. The expansion on Forward Operating Base Shank began in 2007 with blueprints and discussions flowing between METAG, a Turkish contractor; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

and 10th Mountain Division units. The aviation expansion project is funded congressionally, and includes a new C-17 runway, parking for this exceptionally large aircraft, and a new Forward Arming and Refuelling Point. William Green, a quality assurance contractor who commissions fuel systems, said in reference to the FARP expansion, “They had to redesign a few things. The initial design didn’t take into account

multiple types of aircraft that TF Knighthawk uses in its missions.” Coordination and standards compliance between the three elements was conducted through Chris Zell, a USACE officer who inherited the position a month prior to completion.

“I mitigate issues between the contractors and the users to make sure what the user wants doesn’t overly demand what’s stated contractually.” Zell said.

Zell claims he never had any issues. “METAG met the Corps of Engineers standards, and the Corps met the needs of the Army standards.”

Levant Ucan, owner of METAG and project manager has been working on the airfield expansion for two years.

“The support approach from all

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Sgt. Donnis Greenwood of Enterprise, Ala., supervises U.S. Army Spc. Thomas O’Connor of Palm Coast, Fla., as part of a two man team to fuel an AH-64 Apache, the first aircraft to receive fuel and fly from the newly built and certified Forward Arming and Refuelling Point March 10.

(Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Janell Emerson, Task Force Knighthawk)



parties in the project is the key to its success,” he said. “We have 30 ongoing projects and a similar FARP project in Forward Operating Base Sharana.” Ucan said he believes everyone worked together flawlessly.

The concrete pad’s automated fueling system for refueling aircraft has been vastly overdue as fuelers currently working on FOB Shank are still hand cranking hoses and turning valves during operation and emergencies.

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Alan Allosada, a petroleum supply specialist of 1st Brigade, 171st Aviation Regiment, Wheeler Army Air Field, Hawaii, explains the practicality of the automated system, “Because it’s automated, mistakes in fuel accountability and accuracy are less likely to occur. This system will enhance our spill contingency plan too. The idea is to eliminate the need for manpower so the aircrafts’ [refuelling] time goes down.”

Currently, fuelers are able to fill one 25,000 gallon bag at a time, which typically takes an hour. The automated system enables the filling of two bags at a time in about 30 minutes.

U.S. Army Sgt. Donnis Greenwood, a petroleum supply specialist with TF Knighthawk, explains the benefits of the new design, “It’s concrete so the aircraft can taxi in, receive fuel, re-arm, and taxi out. The pipeline is underground. It has sheltered ports like a drive through. Hand valves are at each point; the pumps and hoses are boxed to protect them from the elements, and the electric shut off valve is a huge safety feature.”

Greenwood has been pivotal as one of many subject matter experts who tested the system prior to certification. He worked closely with civilian and METAG contractors to ensure the FARP met aviation standards.

“They didn’t know we needed

bonding cables on the hoses,” said U.S. Army Maj. Joseph McLaine, TF Knighthawk executive officer. “TF Knighthawk soldiers and leaders were instrumental in the design, plan, and follow through to completion, but special recognition should go to Sgt. Greenwood. He led the way and was completely proactive. His impact is felt from TF Knighthawk to FOB Shank and across Regional Command-East.”

Greenwood was been officially recognized with a coin from Brig. Gen. Townsend and a letter of appreciation from the civilian Corps of Engineers.

Certification of the FARP and the ribbon cutting ceremony March 10 is not the end of improving aviation infrastructure here. As Green watches the first AH-64 Apache helicopter lift off from the new FARP, he acknowledges the reality that there will likely be future projects to make operations run more efficiently.

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Key personnel from the Forward Arming and Refuelling Point expansion project at Forward Operating Base Shank join in the ribbon cutting ceremony before the first aircraft, an AH-64 Apache helicopter, took on fuel from the new FARP March 10.. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Spc. Callie Worstall, Task Force Knighthawk)



Soldier's pursuit of MBA inspires peers to further education

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot
Task Force Falcon

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – At the age of 19, a Montego Bay, Jamaica, native left his homeland for New York City in search of expanded opportunities but, after a few years of working, he said he realized he wasn't satisfied with the path his work-life was heading. "Seeing (how much money) I made, I looked around the office and saw older workers doing the same thing I was doing," said U.S. Army Spc. Ricaud Brown, "That's when I knew I needed to go to college."

Brown's pursuit of higher education has resulted in him earning a master's degree in business administration and a position with a financial firm upon completion of his Army obligation in a few months. Additionally, several Soldiers who were inspired

by Brown's accomplishments pursued their own higher education goals.

At first I wanted to get a degree in business management," Brown recalled. "I took an investment class and I was learning about the stock market. That's when I decided to change my major to finance."

A few months after graduating from the State University of New York in 2006, with a Bachelor of Science in finance, Brown joined the Army to pay off student loans.

Brown has worked as a human resources specialist with the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, 10th Mountain Division, human resources office since 2007, having stayed at Fort Drum his entire Army career.

Not satisfied with his bachelor's degree, Brown began working toward his master's degree. A deployment to Iraq did not keep him from moving toward that goal; he took six classes while serving in Iraq.

"Those were the toughest times in my life," he said. "I was working so many hours."

But it was his leaders who saw to it that he completed what he'd started.

Brown said their apparent desire to see him succeed and reach his goals pushed him through

those difficult times. He said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Linda Kremblas would make sure he had time to study.

"She would stay on me like a mom," he said. "She would say, 'Get your work done in six hours. You'll have the remaining six hours to study.'"

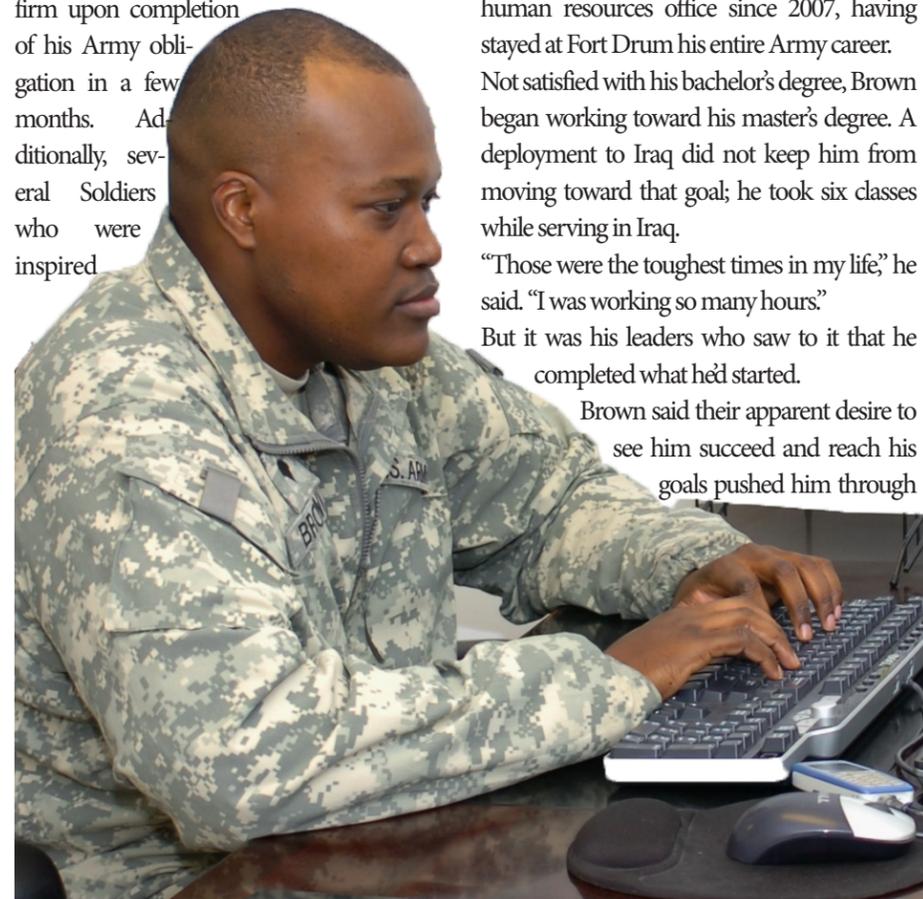
U.S. Army Sgt. Vernon Redd, another TF Falcon human resources noncommissioned officer, was also committed to Brown reaching his educational goals.

"It was important for me for two reasons: for himself, and for opening the door for other Soldiers," said Redd of Chicago. "There were six to seven Soldiers who had no previous interest who are furthering their education now." Brown earned his MBA through Columbia College between his Iraqi deployment and his current deployment to Afghanistan. In a few months, his Army obligation will be up and he will be leaving Afghanistan to return to civilian life. He has a job lined up as portfolio manager with an investment firm in Miami and intends to continue further education.

"I'm going to pursue my doctorate in finance in September with the G.I. Bill," he said. "My future goal is to get a senior-level management position in an investment firm. I might want to teach at a college in the future. I'm driven to learn everything I can and earn a lot of money as well," Brown said.

He said he is always interested in teaching others how to invest their money.

"I hate seeing Soldiers have all these opportunities and not take advantage of it," he said. "I convinced a fellow Soldier to pursue a business degree; he just got into the No. 1 business school in Florida. I just received an e-mail from him thanking me for pushing him."



TF Shooter completes their first mission with Afghan Air Force

By U.S. Army Cpl. Kam Gerohimos
Task Force Shooter

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Since the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S. military and coalition forces have worked with the Afghan National Security Forces to set the conditions for transferring responsibility solely to host nation. Task Force Shooter, a multi-functional aviation task force of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, continued the work of turning the Afghan air space over to the Afghan Air Force by supporting an AAF mission March 10.

Two AH-64D Apache helicopters flew as armed escorts with a total of six MI-17 Hip Afghan cargo helicopters and two MI-35 Hind-E Afghan attack helicopters flown by the Afghan Air Force with British and Hungarian coalition flight advisors, to Barg-e Matal in northern Afghanistan. Barg-e Matal is an Afghan National Army compound of strategic importance that has been the scene of numerous contentious battles in recent years. The ability to conduct partnered aviation operations to this historically volatile area demonstrates both the growth of ANSF capabilities and the increasing levels of security in the N2KL region.

"The success of today's mission was a critical step forward in the growth of our coalition force partnership efforts," said Maj. Jaysen Yochim, the operations officer for TF Shooter. "These partnered missions will ensure the preparedness of the Afghan Air Force to shoulder aviation responsibilities in areas operationally transitioned to Afghan National Security Forces."

The purpose of the mission was to ensure safe transportation of an air resupply and personnel movement to Barg-e Matal with the AAF and Air Interdiction Unit in the lead. This was the first time TF Shooter, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, has collaborated with the Afghan Air Force in a combined mission.

Before take-off, Shooter pilots met with members of the AAF, as well as their advisors, to conduct final mission preparation and coordination. This transition of responsibility to the people of Afghanistan is not only a part of the counter-insurgency campaign but is also an attempt to develop and enhance the abilities of the Afghan military forces.

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Task Force Shooter assistant operations officer Capt. Thomas Jones of South Bend, Ind., holds a map during a mission brief with Afghan Air Force members and a flight advisor from Hungary before take-off. TF Shooter conducted their first aviation mission with the AAF March 10; a resupply and passenger movement to Barg-e Matal in northern Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Cpl. Kam Gerohimos, TF Shooter)



Soldiers' ingenuity keeps airfield clear of ice

By U.S. Army Pfc. Michael Syner
Task Force Falcon

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Task Force Knighthawk Soldiers' ingenuity was tested at Forward Operating Base Shank in December when it became apparent there was a need to remove ice from the runway.

"We realized we needed something to get rid of ice just before it started to snow," said U.S. Army Spc. Lee Hough, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic with Company E, TF Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, and a native of Rumford, Maine.

While the Soldiers could have waited until the Army provided them with a de-icer, a piece of machinery designed to remove ice quickly, waiting may have impeded missions being conducted at the base.

"If we had waited for the Army to provide one and it didn't make it here on time, then we wouldn't have been able to clear runways as efficiently," said U.S. Army Spc. Robert Benson, also a wheeled-vehicle mechanic with Co. E, and a native of St. Claire, Mo.

The Soldiers and their leaders put their heads together to figure out a feasible design for a homemade de-icer.

"As soon as I found out that we'd have to make it, we brainstormed on what would be the most effective way to make the de-icer," Benson said.

Using parts they could scrounge on the FOB and a maintenance kit, the team was able to create a functioning de-icer out of a water buffalo, a military water trailer.

"The water buffalo is filled with de-icer fluid and gets pressurized from a truck's air system," Benson said. "On the rear of the buffalo is a pipe that was fabricated with 60 drilled holes in the bottom, to disperse the liquid in a 10-foot-wide spray pattern."

Despite their lack of experience, the crew was able to complete the project in short order.

"It took a couple days of work," said U.S. Army Spc. Mark Goodroe Jr., a fellow wheel-vehicle mechanic with Co. E, TF Knighthawk, 10th CAB, and a native of Angleton, Texas.

The project brought the entire motor pool platoon together and allowed everyone to contribute.

"It was a good platoon effort," Hough said. "Everyone chipped in with painting and other parts in assembly."



LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Soldiers of Company E, Task Force Knighthawk, de-ice the runway at Forward Operating Base Shank. Soldiers of Co. E, TF Knighthawk, constructed the de-icer from an Army water trailer this winter to remove ice from the runway at the FOB. (Photo courtesy of David Guarino)

Spouse uses "Walk to Afghanistan" to train

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot
Task Force Falcon

FORT DRUM, NY – From left, Addison, Stephanie, Mya, and U.S. Army Capt. Chad Monroe, Troop C, Task Force Shooter, commander. Stephanie has logged about 67 miles since November for the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade's symbolic "Walk to Afghanistan", while training for a sprint triathlon. Her motivation was to do something out of her comfort zone and to share in the hardship of her deployed husband. (Photo courtesy of Stephanie Monroe)



FORT DRUM, NY – Initially, Stephanie Monroe said she wasn't sure how her participation in the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade's Family Readiness Group's symbolic "Walk to Afghanistan" would have a meaningful impact on her deployed husband or the unit, for which she's the FRG leader.

"I wanted to set an example and hopefully motivate families in our unit to get involved," said Monroe, a native of Atlanta, whose spouse is U.S. Army Capt. Chad Monroe, Troop C, Task Force Shooter, commander, also of Atlanta.

However, Stephanie needed to find her own motivation. To fulfil her need to do something out of her comfort zone, she signed up for a sprint triathlon.

"I've never been a huge fan of running; and after complications from a caesarean section last year, running has been even more difficult," she said. "A sprint triathlon is awesome for me because it is not just running. The variety in biking, swimming and running has made me look forward to my workouts."

Stephanie says she's still in the beginning stages of her training and her mileage increases each week.

"I have completed about 67 miles in the three months," she said. "I train five days a week. Right

now I run about four miles a week, bike about 20 miles a week plus all the swimming."

Elizabeth Jaen, Stephanie's sister-in-law, senses the importance of her endeavor.

"Stephanie does not do anything half way; once she puts her mind to something she will give 100 percent," said Jaen.

Her training has taken her out of her comfort zone and she says that doing something hard gives her a sense that she is sharing in the hardships of her deployed husband.

"My life right now is pretty comfortable," Stephanie explains. "As an Army wife, I have the privilege of staying home with our two girls surrounded by family, friends, and other spouses of the unit; while my husband does not get to see our girls every morning or tuck them in at night. He does not have the option to sleep in or have a 'movie day' when he does not feel well. I wanted to do something hard because my husband is doing something hard every day"

As of the first week of March, Troop C has logged 3,034 miles since November. The "Walk to Afghanistan" will continue throughout the deployment.

SECDEF visits 10th CAB Soldiers

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot
Task Force Falcon



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Secretary of Defense Robert Gates responds to a question from a Soldier during a visit at Bagram Airfield March 7. Gates visited with Soldiers of Combined Joint Task Force – 101. Gates thanked the service members for their service in making eastern Afghanistan safer. (Photo by 1st Sgt. Tyrone Walker, 210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Secretary of Defense Robert Gates presents a coin to Pfc. Tiffany Jones, a human resources specialist with TF Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade, March 7 at Bagram Airfield. (Photo by 1st Sgt. Tyrone Walker, 210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Secretary of Defense Robert Gates met with service members of Combined Joint Task Force-101 at Bagram Airfield March 7 where he thanked them for working alongside the Afghan people to make eastern Afghanistan a safer place for its residents.

“It was a tough winter, and it’s going to be a tougher spring and summer, but you’ve made a lot of headway,” said Gates.

Gates said because it is he who signs the orders for each service member to deploy, he feels personally responsible for ensuring they have the resources necessary to be successful.

After expressing his appreciation for their service, the Secretary took questions from the service members. When asked what keeps him up at night, he responded that it was his concern for troops.

“I think a lot about you people out here -- what you have to put up with, the conditions you live in, the sacrifices you make,” he said.

Several Soldiers from 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, were selected to attend Gates’ visit and came away with not only a commemorative coin, but also with feelings of inspiration and posi-

tive memories of meeting a highly respected cabinet member.

Two TF Falcon Soldiers, both on their first deployment, listened to the Secretary while standing a few feet from the podium.

“As a Soldier, it’s very inspiring to see someone you only hear about,” said U.S. Army Pfc. Tiffany Jones of Mobile, Ala., a human resources specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, TF Falcon. “It was an honor to meet him and shake his hand.”

The visit was a pleasant surprise for the Soldiers as only a small number of people were aware that Gates was coming to the bustling airbase, which is about 30 miles north of the capitol.

“I found out I was going just a few hours before,” said U.S. Army Spc. Raecita Yazzie of Kirtland, N.M., a flight operations specialist with HHC, TF Falcon. “It’s nice to know he really cares about what we’re doing here.”

Before meeting with Soldiers from CJTF-101, Gates toured Craig Joint Theater Hospital where he visited with medical personnel and presented Purple Heart medals to three Soldiers from a Utah-based U.S. Army Reserve unit who were injured by a roadside bomb.

Shooter Soldier receives Purple Heart

By U.S. Army Pfc. Diane Tyus
Task Force Shooter

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – In a ceremony at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, a 10th Mountain Division Soldier was awarded a Purple Heart medal Jan. 31 for injuries he received while deployed to Afghanistan.

Spencer Abraham, former U.S. Secretary of Energy, presented the Purple Heart medal to U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Irwin Alcantara of Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, an AH-64 Apache helicopter armament and electrical repairman with Task Force Shooter, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, for injuries sustained during an insurgent attack on Forward Operating Base Fenty in November.

In the early morning hours of Nov. 13, 2010, FOB Fenty came under attack from insurgents with small arms, suicide vests and hand grenades during which the cavalry troopers of Task Force Shooter successfully defended. During the attack, Alcantara and several other Soldiers were injured. Insurgents threw hand grenades into the FOB and shrapnel pierced Alcan-

tara’s wrist.

Due to the extent of the damage to his wrist, Alcantara was medically evacuated from Afghanistan to the United States for surgery and rehabilitation. After his surgery, doctors feared he would not regain full use of his hand. However, after numerous physical therapy sessions, Alcantara regained almost 100 percent use of his wrist and hand.

“Sergeant Alcantara, you have met the challenge and your nation is grateful for your service,” said Abraham. “It is a great honor for me to have this opportunity to offer thanks on behalf of your fellow countrymen for all you have done.”

Abraham also quoted Gen. George Washington when he created the Purple Heart. Gen. “Let it be known, that he who wears the military order of the Purple Heart has given of his blood in the defense of his homeland and will forever be revered by his fellow countrymen.”



NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Former Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham awards U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alcantara with the Purple Heart medal Jan. 31 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington D.C.

(Photo courtesy of Walter Reed Army Medical Center)

TF Phoenix moves to make way for fixed-wing infrastructure improvements

By U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown
Task Force Phoenix



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Spc. John Wells, CH-47 Chinook mechanic with Company D, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/TF Falcon, sands putty off of a ceiling in a new office March 5. Wells, a native of Douglasville, Ga., and other TF Phoenix Soldiers, are currently working on the cosmetics of one of the new buildings constructed by the Air Force's 55th Expeditionary "Red Horse" Squadron. The entire task force began moving into temporary work areas from west Bagram to the east in February with the hopes of moving into their new offices soon. Once the building has been inspected and approved, Soldiers will begin their second transition of moving from temporary work spaces into their new permanent area of operation on the east side of Bagram. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix)

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – As March began, Soldiers in Task Force Phoenix neared their fifth month in country supporting Operation Enduring Freedom XI and celebrated with a major change in scenery. The move of the entire task force from the west side of Bagram Airfield to the east side will facilitate better communication, provide leadership with closer proximity to their Soldiers, and provide better overall aviation support for Regional Command-East.

The new offices that will be utilized by TF Phoenix were built by the U.S. Air Force 55th Expeditionary "Red Horse" Squadron. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dennis McKernan, TF Phoenix commander, and U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Dvorsky, TF Phoenix command sergeant major, did a walk-through of the spacious buildings with U.S. Air Force Capt. Nick Saccone of Pittsburgh, Red Horse civil engineer, Dec. 10. After the walk-thru, McKernan was interviewed by the Armed Forces Network regarding his excitement about the unit's future area of operation.

"I expect this building to absolutely help our mission to make us stronger," said McKernan, a native of Haddon Township, N.J., "It provides us more flexibility and space that we need to operate."

The Red Horse team completed the job on the first building early. As they continue working on the second building, TF Phoenix has the opportunity to begin preparing the first one for operations.

The TF Phoenix signal support system specialists began a joint effort with Air Force, Task Force Falcon, Task Force Mountain Eagle, and the 25th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, signal support specialists to establish a communication and computer architecture structure.

The team battled through the wet February weather where they ran fiber cable through muddy trenches and water filled manholes to bring communication technology to the east side.

U.S. Army Capt. David Edwards, TF Phoenix officer-in-charge of the signal support section, explained his teams' efforts in preparing the east side.

"We have been running dual operations," said Edwards, a native of Dallas. "Every day we do even

more to make the east side better. There's a lot of hard work that goes into the whole process [of getting the communication system running]. We ran over 30,000 feet of cable on the east side. It was hard work and a lot of fun."

The team ran the cable to 300 ports in more than 120 rooms, installed more than 30 switches, and terminated three fiber optic cables. The joint operation was a success – having been completed in ten days – eleven days ahead of the suspense date set by TF Falcon.

While the signal support Soldiers were knee deep in mud, the flight and maintenance companies were busy packing their work areas and beginning their transitional move into temporary work spaces on the east side.

As the individual companies moved, they continued to maintain their missions – everything from rotary wing flights to regular ground and aviation maintenance.

Company A, a TF Phoenix UH-60 Blackhawk flight company, completed their initial move rapidly by coordinating movement around their missions. The unit was fully functional within just days.

"From start to finish I would say it took us two days to move all of our equipment," said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Albert Serrano, Company A first sergeant. "Once we unplugged our computers from the west side, we were up and running on the east side in two hours."

Serrano boasted that his caliber of Soldiers were the reason that the flight company successfully completed the move efficiently.

"There was no doubt in my mind that my Soldiers would execute without issues," said Serrano, a native of Inglewood, Calif., "Initially, there was the expected, 'First sergeant, that's impossible,' but my guys are the best at everything they do. My Soldiers were the reason we succeeded."

The challenging task of moving the entire Company E motorpool was completed by three non-commissioned officers and two enlisted Soldiers. They moved two maintenance tents, built two additional offices, and set up all of their office equipment.

The five Soldiers went a step further and provided forklift and vehicle assistance to other companies in need of assistance moving their equipment.

It was a large task that required them to work in lakes of mud and water, but the team tackled the mission with gusto.

"The lack of personnel made the job difficult," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Stephen Hall, a native of Fairhaven, Vt., the senior non-commissioned officer of the motorpool team. "But [the Soldiers] did great even with minimum amount of people – we still made the mission happen."

Company D, TF Phoenix aircraft maintenance company, ran into quite a few challenges they had to overcome during their transition.

"There were many things that led up to the movement itself that were challenging for the unit," said U.S. Army Capt. Michael Flint, Company D commander, "The biggest hurdle we had to overcome was ensuring [the company] set up the ramp and hangar space so that we had the least amount of negative impact on the task force maintenance operation."

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Michael Plummer, the engine shop non-commissioned officer in-charge, evaluated the new work area prior to the move and found that the areas did not have any benches, desks or work stations available for Soldiers to utilize for their mission.

He also noted that the work areas the Soldiers had been using, which he helped build the last time TF Phoenix deployed to Bagram in 2005, were in poor shape, according to Flint, a native of Cincinnati.

Plummer, a native of Williamsburg, Pa., was proactive and ordered all of the construction materials he knew would be necessary to construct the new area. Once he had supplies in hand, he began building the maintenance footprint with as few as four Soldiers to help.

The Company D technical supply office moved twenty-eight 20-foot containers, four smaller containers, a maintenance work container, and six flat bed truckloads of aircraft parts. The job was completed by eight lower enlisted Soldiers and the tech. supply officer-in-charge. U.S. Army Sgt. Francisco Polanco, tech. supply non-commissioned officer in-charge, returned from his leave and found his entire office efficiently moved.

"Because of their hard work and dedication to get the mission done they made it happen," said Polanco, whose family resides in Watertown, N.Y.

Soldiers of Co. D say they are already happy being on the east side even though the task force is still waiting to move into their permanent work locations.

"Things are going very well," said Flint, "Despite

having to commute to and from our living-quarters, we have a much more efficient footprint on Romeo Ramp. [Soldiers] have ample space to work and seem to be performing well.”

Moving an entire task force has required a vast amount of logistical coordination. Desks, chairs, wall lockers and other furniture had to be ordered. Local nationals were hired to build the furniture and lay down floor mats on the concrete to allow the Soldiers to continue their daily missions.

With the majority of TF Phoenix working on the east side, Soldiers are taking turns working on the cosmetics of their new buildings. In order to do this, the task force acquired paint, sanders, wall putty, respirators and other items. With tools in hand, the Soldiers are able to mud the dry wall, construct

service desks, and complete general maintenance to ensure the building functions as needed.

The first building is still pending inspection; but once approved, companies will be able to move into their permanent work areas. Upon completion of the second building, the two buildings will have over 600 Soldiers operating out of them.

“We have been supporting Operation Enduring Freedom for approximately nine years,” said Dvorsky, a native of Trumbull, Conn., “Prior aviation task forces have been trying to function while being spread out here at Bagram. This move will bring our task force together allowing leadership to have eyes on Soldiers before missions, facilitate better communication within the task force, and allow us to provide better aviation support for RC-East.”



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Spc. Thomas Zbinden, Company D, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/TF Falcon, guides a forklift driver while loading a container onto an Army truck during the TF Phoenix move from west Bagram to the east Jan. 28. Zbinden is a native of Long Valley, N.J.

(Photo by US Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix)

Tigershark Leaders Recognize Soldiers

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Broesamle

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Lt. Col. David Kramer and Command Sgt. Maj. Nick Carter stand at the position of attention during the reading of the award orders during an award ceremony held here March 20.



LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Cpl. Adam Meuser of Company B, Task Force Tigershark, shakes hands with Lt. Col. David Kramer immediately after Meuser received his Army Commendation Medal during an awards ceremony held here March 20.



Phoenix Soldiers receive letters, kind words from U.S. children

Photos by Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown
Task Force Phoenix

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Pvt. Brittnei Maurer, Company E Executioners, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, smiles after receiving a letter March 12 from a child in the states. Several classes of children wrote letters for Soldiers in TF Phoenix. Maurer is a native of St. Petersburg, Fla.



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Spc. Brandi Briolat, Company D Dukes, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Task Force Falcon, holds up two letters March 12 from children in the states after reading them. Briolat is a native of East Greenbush, N.Y.

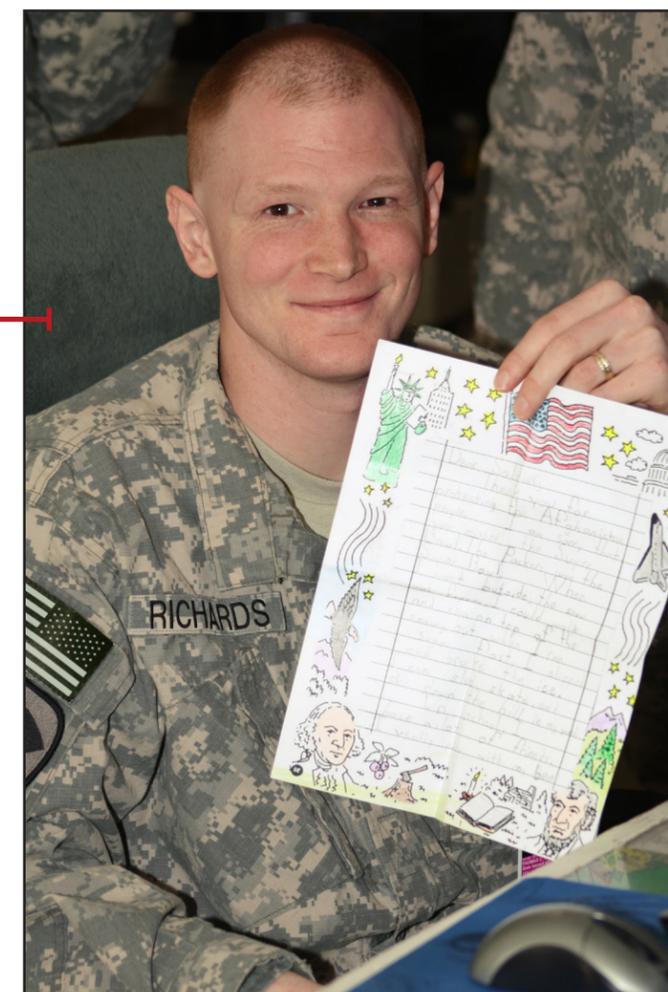


PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Chief Warrant Officer 3 Casey Pfannenstiel, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Kearney, and Chief Warrant Officer 3 James Self, all from Company C Warlords, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Task Force Falcon, hold up their Valentine's Day letters March 12 written by children for Soldiers in TF Phoenix. Pfannenstiel is a native of Idaho Falls, Idaho. Kearney is a native of Moscow, Pa. Self is a native of New London, Conn.

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- 1st Sgt. Tim Clay, Company C Bluemax, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Task Force Falcon, first sergeant, shows off his Valentine's Day card March 12 that was written by a child in the states for TF Phoenix Soldiers. Clay is a native of Winnie, Texas.



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Sgt. Thomas Richards, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Task Force Falcon, holds up his colorful letter March 10 that a child sent from the states. Richards is a native of Moreno Valley, Calif.



TF Falcon Soldiers volunteer time with Afghan children

By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class JR Williams
Task Force Falcon

Two years ago, President Barak Obama called on Americans to make volunteerism and community service a part of daily life, and the life of the nation.

These days, Soldiers of Task Force Falcon answer this call to service during their deployment to Afghanistan. Although the deployment itself comprises one aspect of volunteerism, the Soldiers' time spent with Afghans living around Bagram Airfield underscores their commitment to community service.

Most Tuesday mornings, U.S. Army Capt. Rachael Neff, an intelligence officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade/Task Force Falcon, 10th Mountain Division, hurries down the sidewalk along the main road on Bagram Airfield. The Coal City, Ill., native dedicates her free time on Tuesdays to a literacy program for Afghan children involving volunteers, both military and civilian.

"The volunteers help the kids review their ABCs, practice their printing skills, practice letter recognition," Neff said, "We also review some basic math- which is a universal language."

An outdoor classroom set up next to the Egyptian hospital hosts the literacy

program, which began as an offshoot when Bagram villagers brought their children with them to the clinic. When Neff enters through the gates next to the facility, she's greeted by a group of young Afghan children.

"Hello! How are you?" they ask in English while thrusting out small hands for a handshake. Young girls, wearing brightly colored scarves around their heads, tote smaller siblings, encouraging little brothers or sisters in Dari to give the English greeting. Little boys crowd around to ask Neff, "Do you have pens?"

It doesn't take long to notice most of the children speak English fairly well. Not only do most run right through the

alphabet, they also count to 10, recite the days of the week- and ask a lot of questions.

"Are you married? How many kids do you have? Boys or girls? Old or young?" the kids quiz Neff.

"They're a lot of fun," Neff said, "The kids are really cute and they really want to learn. That's what keeps me coming back; (the kids) really want to know more."

Neff isn't the only one coming back to help. Thursdays and Sundays, a group of female Task Force Falcon Soldiers meet at the headquarters building and go to the outdoor school together.

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays are women's days,

while Saturdays, Mondays and Wednesdays are men's days to visit.

U.S. Army Spc. Michelle Huggins, a chaplain's assistant with Headquarters Support Company, TF Mountain Eagle, 10th CAB/TF Falcon, 10th Mountain Division, volunteers with the kids as often as possible.

"I wish I could go every day," said Huggins. Huggins claims Queens, N.Y., as home, but said she understands the

Afghan children's situation from her own experience growing up in Trinidad.

"I'm from a country where people are less fortunate. These kids are not as fortunate as other kids, so I understand what they're going through," she explained.

During her first day volunteering, a young boy approached Huggins and asked if she had a pair of socks for him.

"That just got to me," Huggins said, "In America, kids will ask you for a PS3 or a whole bunch of other things. This little boy just



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Afghan children from Bagram carefully practice printing the alphabet on worksheets provided by volunteers for a literacy program, Mar. 17. Operation Care, a literacy and humanitarian program sponsored by service-members and civilians at Bagram Airfield, relies on volunteers who share their time during deployment. (Photo by Pfc. Michael Syner, TF Falcon)

wanted one pair of socks to wear. We, as Americans—even me—we have so much of everything. You can see it even here (at Bagram). Go to the dining facility and see how much food left on plates gets thrown in the trash.”

Huggins pointed out it’s not the material things or even the school the kids look forward to most.

“They enjoy the time that you spend with them. The time you spend with them brings them joy- and that brings me joy,” Huggins said.

U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Emory Lussi, a chaplain for Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare

Squadron 3, Marine Aircraft Group 14, agreed.

“I’m here every day,” said Lussi, a native of Jacksonville, N.C., as he held 2-year-old Husnah, a little girl with large brown eyes.

“The literacy program isn’t so much about having the children learn English,” Lussi explained, “They learn English, but it’s more about inspiring the desire to learn, so they can take what they discover here and

take it further.”

Yet, Lussi acknowledged, the literacy program also yields other results.

“The Afghan people who come here with their children see the Americans

interacting with the kids. So, they see for themselves that we can relate and that we want to help; that we care,” said Lussi.

Standing by the dry erase board,

marker in hand, a girl named Nazila carefully practices writing the alphabet in upper and lower case. But, Nazila wants to move beyond the letters to complete words.

“How do you spell ‘arm?’” Nazila asks one of the volunteers, and then carefully spells out the word. Focused on the task at hand, she draws a stick figure of a person, sketches a line from the body part and continues her line of questions, “How do you spell ‘head?’”

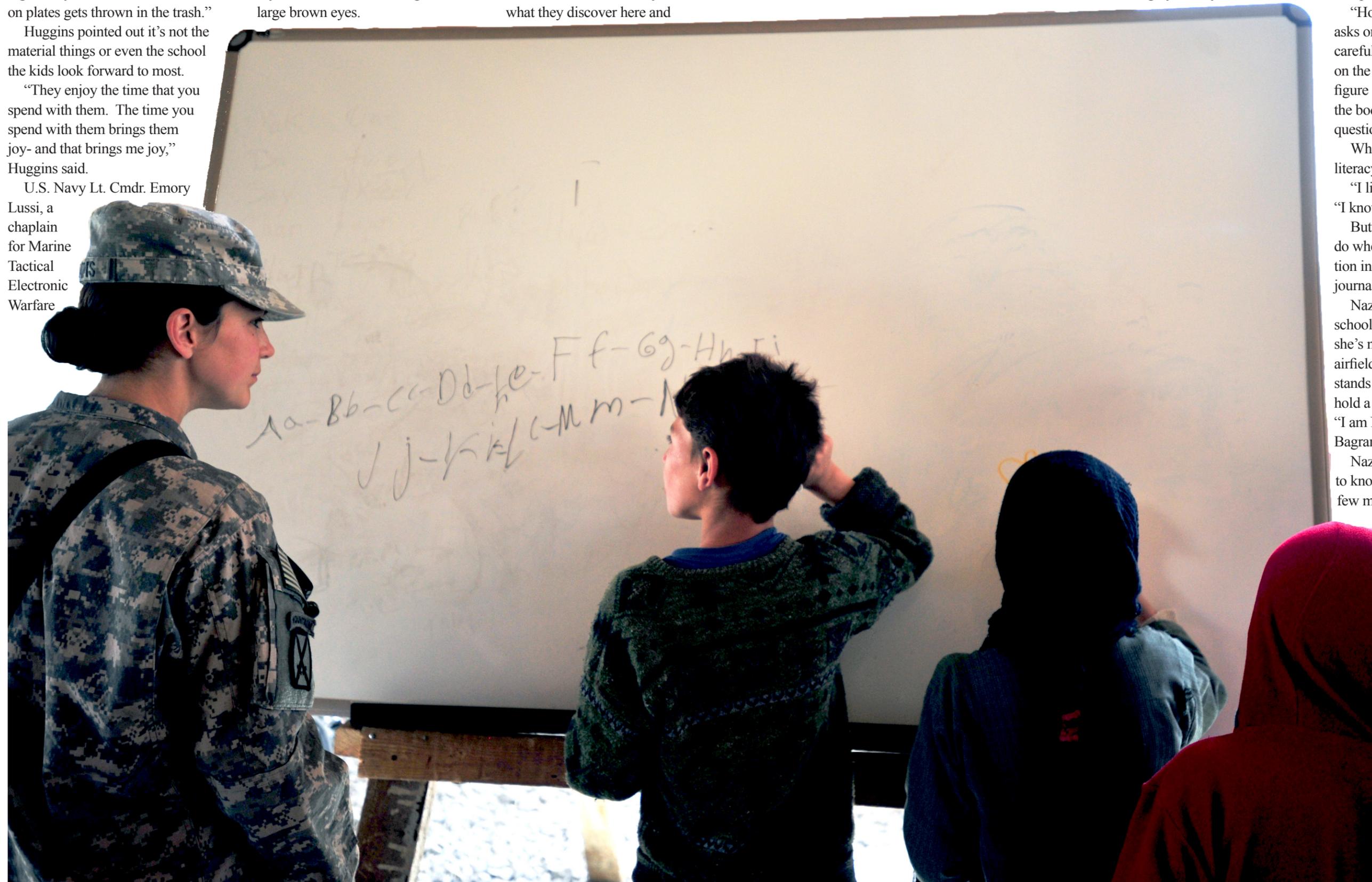
When asked why she comes to the literacy program, Nazila shrugs.

“I like learning English,” she said. “I know many English words.”

But, when asked what she’d like to do when she’s older, there’s no hesitation in her response, “I want to be a journalist.”

Nazila explains that she also goes to school in her native Bagram and when she’s not in school, she comes to the airfield to practice her English. She stands up straight, and pretending to hold a microphone begins her delivery, “I am Nazila, I am a journalist from Bagram.”

Nazila explains that journalists need to know everything. She thinks for a few moments before continuing, “I



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Zolker, one of the children who frequents the Egyptian Hospital at Bagram Airfield here, practices writing the English alphabet March 17.

(Photo by Pfc. Michael Syner, Task Force Falcon)

also need a camera and a microphone to be a journalist.”

In the meantime, Nazila returns to the literacy program to practice her English and learn new things from the volunteers.

Surrounded by young Afghan girls every time she visits, U.S. Army Spc. Kimmy Emery chats easily among the group and smiles when one of the girls gives her an enthusiastic hug.

“Mostly, I volunteer because I just like kids,” said Emery, a supply specialist with HSC, TF Mountain Eagle, 10th CAB/TF Falcon, 10th Mountain Division. “But it’s also part of my village’s belief to help when you can. Where I come from, a lot of people live in poverty.”

Emery, who now calls Chicago home, originally hails from Kenya.

“But, I’m also Muslim, so I understand them.”

Although sharing this understanding helps communication, Emery said the Afghan children behave like most other children, “They’re kids. They want to have fun and talk to you (and) have you spend time with them.”

Both Huggins and Emery plan to continue helping the Afghans living around Bagram, even after their return to the United States.

“These people are less fortunate,” Huggins said. “But they are still people. They need some help right now to get on track.”

Emery quickly added that it’s not all about what material things a volunteer can offer.

“Time means something to these children,” Emery said. “They get so excited to see you show up. That’s something they’ll remember.”

For those interested in volunteering, contact Combined Joint Task Force -101 Human Terrain Analysis Team.



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Spc. Michelle Huggins, a Chaplain’s assistant for Task Force Mountain Eagle, helps a young Afghan boy put on a pair of socks, Mar. 17. Huggins, from Queens, N.Y., volunteers time during her deployment to Afghanistan for a literacy program sponsored by servicemembers and civilians at Bagram Airfield.

(Photo by Pfc. Michael Syner, TF Falcon)



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Spc. Kimmy Emery, a Supply specialist for Task Force Mountain Eagle, smiles as a young Afghan girl takes her picture. Emery, from Chicago, volunteers time during her deployment to Afghanistan for a literacy program sponsored by servicemembers and civilians at Bagram Airfield.

(Photo by Pfc. Michael Syner, TF Falcon)

The Backbone of the Army

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Joseph Viverette
Task Force Falcon

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – “I was first introduced to Sgt. Harper in February of this year and as a specialist not even promotable at the time, he possessed an inner drive and motivation that was shown through his demeanor,” said U.S. Army Sgt. JH Greenlee, a computer administrator, 21st Cavalry Brigade, Task Force ODIN-A, from Lawton, Okla. “He expressed to me immediately that he wanted to attend the promotion board and be a part of the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps. To be an effective NCO or leader in the Army today you must first be able to lead yourself on a day to day basis. Sgt. Harper is a firm believer in setting the example and through his actions he is able to influence his Soldiers and peers to strive for personal and professional growth.”

Promotion to sergeant brings more responsibility and for many Soldiers, it can be both an exciting and thrilling time. With the exception of corporal, the rank of sergeant is the first time you are considered to be a noncommissioned officer. As the NCO Creed states “As a Noncommissioned Officer, I realize that I am a member of a time-honored corps, which is known as “The Backbone of the Army.”

The Backbone of the Army got even stronger with the addition of Sgt. Harper from TF ODIN-A, when he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. Sgt. Harper has been proving himself in the battalion S6 shop as both a computer administrator and junior leader. Not only has Sgt.

Harper been able to accomplish every mission he has faced, but he has also been able to impress his first line supervisors and demonstrate that he possesses the skills and leadership needed to be an exceptional NCO.

“For me being a leader has come naturally,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Joe Harper, a computer administrator with 21st Cavalry Brigade, TF ODIN-A, based out of Fort Hood, Texas, and a native of Lincoln Park, Mich. “I have always been the Soldier with the ‘Can Do’ spirit. Making the rank of sergeant at the age of 21 is an outstanding accomplishment and I hope to inspire other young soldiers to achieve their maximum potential. My family is very proud of me; my wife Amber and son Joey have been wonderful in supporting me throughout my career and my deployment. I owe a lot of my success to my wife; she is a wonderful woman and I am lucky to have her support. Getting promoted has helped my career by placing me in a leadership position where my skills can be defined and used to help Soldiers. It has truly set me up for success in both my career and my life. My leadership has really helped develop me and get me to where I need to be.”

Winning the fight against our enemies is not an easy task and without Soldiers like Sgt. Harper we would be unable to complete our missions. Sgt. Harper is continuing to do a great job in his field and there is no end in sight for his potential. Congratulations Sgt. Harper, you earned it!

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Sgt. J.H. Greenlee, a native of Lawton, Okla., affixes new sergeant rank on Sgt. Harper’s patrol cap during a promotion ceremony at Bagram Airfield recently. Both Soldiers are computer administrators with 21st Cavalry Brigade, Task Force Odin, which is attached to 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, at Bagram Airfield recently. Sgt. Harper is a native of Lincoln Park, Mich.

(Photo by U.S. Army Warrant Officer 1 Marina Cruz, Task Force Odin, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade)





TF Phoenix provides training, transport of ANSF, ISAF during largest air assault in RC-East

By U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown
Task Force Phoenix

LAGHMAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Fierce lightning shattered the night sky as a CH-47 Chinook’s 350 pound blades sliced through the air producing a continuous rain of thunder over the otherwise quiet Galuch Valley March 25.

Crews and helicopters from Task Force Phoenix, TF Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, provided air transport for a major air assault mission in Regional Command – East in support of Afghan National Security Forces and Task Force Red Bull operations.

TF Phoenix collaborated with Chinook crews from TF Shooter to complete their essential mission: to provide static load training to ANSF and conduct an air assault into the Galuch Valley allowing ANSF and TF Red Bull to remove enemy forces and speak with village elders.

“Static load training with [the

ANSF] is absolutely critical to the success of our operations,” said Lt. Col. Dennis McKernan, TF Phoenix, TF Falcon/10th CAB, 10th Mountain Division, commander, and a native of Haddon Township, N.J. “Operating around helicopters is extremely dangerous and any Soldier from any country must be trained how to operate on an aircraft to include loading and unloading. The terrain is extremely rugged in Afghanistan. Off-loading Soldiers into tight landing zones can be specifically challenging if the Soldiers don’t know what to do.”

To ensure that everyone involved in this large mission was prepared to off-load an aircraft even in unsatisfactory conditions, Phoenix and Shooter Chinook crews flew despite lightning, to train the ANSF with TF Red Bull Soldiers.

The huge engines quieted their loud roar and the blades slowed to a halt as the crews landed in Combat Outpost Xio and stepped out of their giant into the thick darkness surrounding them.

“Most of the (ANSF) have never been on a CH-47 before. Cold load training allows them to get used to the aircraft and efficient at exiting the ramp when we arrive at the landing zone,” said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Daniel Snyder, Company D, TF Phoenix, TF Falcon/10th CAB, 10th Mountain Division, first sergeant.

The training – that was conducted in complete darkness – is a simple, but crucial part of a successful air assault. It provides Soldiers with familiarity of the aircraft and procedures used during a mission.

Time is of the essence during air assaults with the challenges of rugged terrain, unpredictable weather, and the threat of enemy forces hidden in the shadows.

“You never know what kind of landing zone you will be flying into on a mission,” said Snyder, a native of Millington, Mich. “It could have hostiles present, or it could just be a difficult landing where we can only put the back two wheels on the ground. When that happens, there is a lot of stress on the pilots and crew.”

“The faster they exit, the less that can go wrong,” added Snyder.

The Chinook crews cycled through the groups just as efficiently as the ANSF absorbed the training.

U.S. Army Sgt. John Colwell, a flight engineer with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, TF Shooter, TF Falcon/10th

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – 1st Sgt. Daniel Snyder, a CH-47 Chinook flight engineer from Millington, Mich., sits at his position waiting for his cue over the communication system to perform crew member duties March 25. Snyder, a first sergeant in Company D, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, crewed during one of the largest air assault missions in Regional Command – East.

(Photo by US Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix)

CAB, 10th Mountain Division, and a native of Phoenix, said he felt the ANSF were very motivated to learn and are ready for the mission.

Snyder used his own technique to motivate the ANSF by incorporating a friendly contest between the groups to see which could exit the aircraft the fastest.

"I don't care who you are - everyone likes a little competition," said Snyder, "That is one of the first things you learn as a leader. When I told (the final group) that the (previous) group exited the Chinook in 16 seconds they got really excited to beat the time."

When Snyder yelled out - Zay! Zay! Zay! - the ANSF knew it was their time to hustle out into the darkness. Even with all of their heavy gear, the last group managed to exit the aircraft in 14 seconds.

"It was a total success," said Snyder, "There is no way we can eliminate of all the nervousness anyone has when we arrive at the landing zone. That is why I told them to exit in 20 seconds or less. The goal is 30 seconds. We stayed well within the time limit on all of the insertions."

When the training was complete, the ANSF and TF Red Bull Soldiers

loaded up into the aircraft and prepared to put all of their training into action during the air assault.

Each group handled the flight to their landing zone in their own way - some groups silently sat in their seats using subdued lights to look over maps and notes. Other groups laughed and gave each other excited high fives.

Regardless of how they acted during their flight, the ANSF and TF Red Bull Soldiers were all business when it came time to dismount the aircraft into the shadowy mountains surrounding the valley.

"I think it's great that the ANSF are augmented with our forces," said Snyder, "It lets them see what right looks like."

The aviation crews worked diligently to ensure each landing into the mountains was done to standard and done safely regardless of the unique challenges presented by the terrain.

"I would say the greatest hazards were unimproved landing zones that can have large rocks that could damage the aircraft, or steep slopes that are near impossible to land on, unpredictable wind gusts, and enemy personnel imbedded in the mountain sides and ditches," said Snyder.

With experienced crews manning each helicopter, the Soldiers were confident in the success of the operation.

"Our crews are the best. We purposely stack the crews to best complement each other," said Snyder, "All of us on this mission had done (air assaults) before. It's awesome when you use almost all of your training on one landing and the mission was successful. It's an amazing feeling."

In a matter of hours, the Chinook crews had safely inserted all of the groups into the Galuch Valley with no issues.

As the crews made their journey back to Bagram Airfield they reflected on a successful joint mission.

"I feel that (Afghans) will soon be able to obtain their role as defenders in their fight against the forces threatening their country (by training with US Soldiers)," said Colwell.

The crews landed at Bagram Airfield as the first hint of golden sunlight was struggling to illuminate the mountainous land of Afghanistan. As the sun quickly rose the crews began preparing their helicopter so they would be ready to support Afghans another day.



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan - 1st Sgt. Daniel Snyder, a CH-47 Chinook flight engineer, speaks to a Soldier while Afghan National Army and Task Force Red Bull Soldiers wait to practice the method in which they will dismount the aircraft in blackout conditions March 25. Snyder, a first sergeant in Company D, Task Force Phoenix, TF Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, trained four separate groups of ANSF in the process. Snyder is from Millington, Mich.

(Photo by US Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix)

ODIN pilot was among first female Army combat aviators

By U.S. Army Spc. Morgan McAfee
Task Force ODIN

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- As a child looking into the sky above her hometown of Goldsboro, N.C., U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cathy Jarrell recalls the B-52 airplanes from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base soaring overhead. It was then that she realized she wanted to be an aviator. It was around this time that the Army was beginning to open opportunities for women to become pilots.

Jarrell, currently a C-12 pilot with Task Force Condor, TF ODIN, attached to TF Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, seized the opportunity in

1990 when she enrolled in Warrant Officer Candidate School where she was one of three females in her class of 80 candidates.

At first, the three females had the entire first floor of the wooden World War II era two-story barracks, she recalled. But halfway through training, they were split up so each of them would share a floor with the male candidates.

"I didn't understand what their intent was at the time, but I think now it was to prepare us for challenges down the road," said Jarrell.

In August of the same year, as Jarrell was beginning flight school, Iraq was invading Kuwait, the precursor to the 1991 Gulf War. By the time she graduated in May 1991, combat operations in the Gulf had ended.

"Flight school was the hardest school I've attended, it was such a long period of time and they were constantly watching you", recalls Jarrell. "Flight school could last anywhere between nine months and one year depending on the aircraft you are assigned to fly."

Upon graduation, Jarrell said she was assigned to pilot the UH-1H Huey helicopter.

"The Huey is a great aircraft, very forgiving-



PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan - U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cathy Jarrell, a fixed-wing pilot with Task Force Condor, Task Force ODIN-A, an aviation unit attached to TF Falcon/10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, pauses while inspecting a C-12 aircraft. Soon after the restriction on females flying combat helicopters was lifted, Jarrell, a native of Goldsboro, N.C., became one of the first female AH-64 Apache helicopter pilots in 1993. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Morgan McAfee, Task Force ODIN)

ing and basic, but a great workhorse in Vietnam,” she said.

Although women had been flying Army helicopters since the early ‘70s, it was not until 1993 when then Secretary of the Army Les Aspin lifted restrictions and allowed females to fly combat missions.

It was during her assignment in Korea that she volunteered for Apache Helicopter training and was selected by Human Resource Command for training. After she completed the AH-64 Apache course in 1993, Jarrell became one of the first female Attack Helicopter Pilots. Her first assignment was with the 101st Airborne Division in 1995.

“The guys in the unit were like big brothers that will pick on you, but wouldn’t let anyone else.” Jarrell said of her male counterparts.

Her follow-on assignments included Korea; currently she is stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany with 15th Military Intelligence Company.

With 21 years of military service, Jarrell has been on three rotations to Afghanistan, one to Iraq; and during her tour to Korea she participated in Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines where she flew a Cargo C-12.

While deployed to Iraq in 2003 she was awarded the Combat Action Badge when she came under anti-aircraft and surface-to-air-missile attacks while flying the Longbow Apache in one of the first direct-fire engagements of the Iraq war on March 20, 2003.

When asked about Iraq, Jarrell says “All of my tour to Iraq was exciting; mysterious. The ‘Madmax’ drive to Baghdad, all the unknowns, even here you never know what will happen.”

Jarrell’s last apache flight was in 2003 and not flying it took some adjustment.

“My first year after I stopped flying Apaches I really missed the high action adventure, flying over terrain in an apache, the sensation is totally different,” she said.

In regards to overcoming fear she says, “I’m trained to fly and engage. We are constantly trained and ready to go and pull the trigger and employ aircraft.”

Jarrell has since become a fixed wing pilot of several aircraft to include the RC-12,

RC-12K, RC-12X, and RC-12U. Her favorite fixed wing aircraft to fly is the RC-12X, because of its cutting edge cockpit technology, and the RC-12K even though it is reminiscent of older avionics.

Although she is now a fixed wing pilot, her heart is still with the Apache. “If I had millions and millions of dollars, I would have an Apache in my driveway if I had a choice to buy one,” she said.

Jarrell said she has been afforded fair equitable experiences.

“As an aviator, I have been given a lot of opportunities, which I am happy with”, she said.

Currently Jarrell is qualified as an instructor pilot and an instrument examiner. But the opportunities did not come without overcoming obstacles. The most challenging obstacle she says is balancing family and her career.

Jarrell is married and a mother of a teenager.

“Megan likes being a ‘military brat’. She loves to travel and loves the lifestyle so far; first Korea and now Germany; she loves it”.

She credits her success in the military to her husband.

“He has always been there, been supportive of me and a great person to talk to, he gives me guidance,” she said. “He had to give a lot to allow me to stay in.”

She offers the following advice to women in the military, “Keep a positive attitude and strive to do your best and study hard. Know all you can and find the good leaders in your unit, whether it be officers or NCO’s, and gravitate toward them.”

As for her experiences this deployment, she said, “Being in Afghanistan, you will experience different things rather than being stateside, and I have a wonderful Chain of Command, under (U.S. Army Lt. Col. Timothy Brown and U.S. Army Lt. Col. Kevin Diermeier).”

Her plans include to stay in the military in an operational flying position and to have her family near.

“To be my age and still go out and fly, it’s every aviator’s dream.”

Opinions: Soldiers’ Voices The Accidental G.I.

Photos and commentary provided by U.S. Air Force Maj. Nicholas Hardman

The heavy lifting in Army aviation is done by a very unique aircraft known as the CH-47 Chinook; it’s so unique that I don’t think it should even fly. There’s no stabilator, no rudder, not even an empennage (that’s a French word for the rear end). Instead, this massive dual-rotor beast gets its stability and surprising maneuverability through differential lift, a sophisticated flight control system and, of course, a highly-skilled crew.

The Chinook has three gunner stations with M249 automatic weapons, so it’s a quasi-standalone battleship. It can carry almost 12 tons of cargo or 32 fully-loaded combat troops. You wouldn’t guess it by looking at the Vietnam-era design, but the CH-47 is one of the fastest and most technologically-advanced helicopters in the world. It’s like a football lineman with the speed of a wide receiver and the brains of a quarterback. The following notes detail a few Chinook missions in Northern Afghanistan.

I caught my first Chinook flight while trying to get back to Bagram after some work at an outlying FOB. After some regular passenger stops, we arrived at a high mountain landing zone (LZ). You know it’s not a regular stop when the gunners keep up their scan instead of stowing their weapons. As soon as the ramp door dropped, eight soldiers emerged and made their way to our aircraft. They lumbered under heavy packs and fancy gear; these were Special Forces. They oozed a coolness that seemed to say, “I could kill you with my finger and start a fire with your bones.” Yea, their coolness was doing all the talking because they weren’t much for conversation. After they all got onboard and sat down, their square-jawed leader attempted a discussion with one of the gunners. The extreme decibel level of the overhead engines reduces conversation to shouting and animated hand gestures. (If



you’ve ever seen two fighter pilots in a bar, you get the picture.) After a few exchanges, the square-jawed one meekly shouldered his pack and stomped out the back. His men quizzically got up, followed him down the ramp, and onto the adjacent Blackhawk. Yes, it’s hard to keep up your air of coolness when you just boarded the wrong aircraft.

Soon, our correct passengers appeared. We were giving a platoon of Afghan commandos a ride. As they approached the ramp, I tensely fingered the selector switch on my weapon. Two of our soldiers had been killed a week earlier when an Afghan soldier turned his gun on them during combined operations. That’s what’s so nerve-racking about counter-insurgencies; it’s a constant trust issue. As it turns out, these guys were just happy to be getting out of the mountains. I was thankful to have a seat by the open gunner’s window because they had all the odorous qualities of an extended field stay. One of their sergeants dropped down next to me and gave me a friendly smile. He indicated that he wanted to talk more, but he spoke limited English and my Pashto isn’t very intelligible, even without the ear-splitting roar above our heads. We settled for a fist bump and a nod to say, “It’s all one fight.”

“The objectives are here and here ... intelligence reports that the locals are very isolated, but foreign Taliban have infiltrated here ... weather forecast for H-Hour is low

lunar illumination...imagery indicates that the LZs should be free of mines and consist of packed dirt or snow...”

This was the D-1 (day of execution minus one) mission planning brief. It was a true coalition operation. American aviation assets were going into a mountain valley with 40+ French soldiers. Such an operation involves a dizzying level of planning and coordination.

On the eve of the mission, all crewmembers gathered for the update brief. Once all the maps and planning cards had been reviewed, the mission commander concluded with some inspirational words. I prayed silently.

As we all stepped to the aircraft, the ramp was abuzz with energy. I paused to look around as maintainers and crewmembers scrambled to ready Chinooks, Apaches, and other support assets. We’ve been at this war so long that missions like this were almost routine for these guys ... almost; it’s still an



emotional event to be part of a team headed into battle.

The mission kicked off as planned. We descended into a valley that was so dark it was hard to discern the nearby buildings, even with night vision goggles (NVGs). The people who live here have never known electricity. As the aircraft touched down, the rear gunner and I hopped out and looked around. The soldiers started offloading, but

much too slowly for the pilots' liking. We had surprised the opposition, but it's never wise to sit for long. The first few charged right out, but one of the newbies showed some hesitancy. I sympathized. He was standing in a warm cocoon peering into the inky blackness of a hostile battlefield. But, "J'appologize, monsieur ... we gotta go!" I pulled him off the ramp and the gunner steered him toward their rally point. The rest followed.

As the last ones were stepping off, something near a tree caught my eye and I adjusted the goggles for a better look. My gaze was broken with a slap on the back and, "Major, you comin' with us?" Time was up.

The gunner and I jumped back aboard and the Chinook leapt off the ground and climbed for the sky. From my view on the back ramp, I watched the soldiers form up and head out; those kids were in for quite a night.

Some flights are defined by the action, but some are memorable for the serenity. One day we had to visit some New Zealanders in the Bamyan Valley. This is one of the most scenic and historic places in Afghani-

stan. Located in the Hindu Kush mountain range, the only way to get there is through high mountain passes (over 12,000 feet above sea level) with towering mountain peaks on both sides. As we climbed out of the "Bagram bowl" and into the mountains, I joined the ramp gunner scanning the terrain passing under our feet.

The mountains were breathtaking, but as we spilled out of the high country, I gazed on the majestic valley. Bamyan was once a key stop along the Silk Road. The people of the valley thrived for hundreds of years with the new technology and wealth brought by the many caravans that passed through. It was a jewel of the Persian Empire, of Alexander the Great, and then of Indian dynasties. It became a center of activity for religion, culture, and art.

The entrance of the valley was once guarded by the ruins of an ancient citadel. Genghis Kahn's march west was stopped there, as the story goes, until the Bamyan king's daughter decided to get back at her dad for not letting her run around with her boyfriend. She snuck out and showed the Mongols the source of the secret under-

ground spring. They dammed the source, captured the citadel, and destroyed everything. The massacre was so horrific that the place is now called Shahr-e-Golgota, the 'City of Screams'. Genghis Khan then executed the princess for being such a bad daughter. So kids, obey your parents!

One of the most famous sites in the valley is the 1,400 year-old Buddhist temple, home of two massive statues and caves full of ancient frescos. This was a World Heritage Site and destination for many pilgrims and tourists until the Taliban declared them 'un-Islamic' in 2001. They blasted the place for days. Though in ruins, the site is still impressive in its enormity and historical significance. The valley has been in decline, and the local population hasn't been too keen on the Taliban, ever since.

And thus goes Afghanistan.

These missions are a microcosm of the war, and a metaphor for the country as a whole; a multifarious weave of trust and treachery, of ancient culture and new technology, of foreign armies and isolated peoples ... as it has been for two thousand years.

Good times with Task Force Falcon

By U.S. Army Spc. Adam Clary
Task Force Falcon

During my time in the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, I've had countless memorable experiences. From my first day on August 26, 2008, when the first thing a master sergeant said to me was, "Welcome to the brigade. We're deploying in 2 months," to just recently, when I had an awful stomach virus during this deployment.

I will be separating from the Army, but I do not leave empty handed. I've gained countless experience in my field that will help me throughout the rest of my career as a civilian. I will miss the camaraderie that this brigade offers.

There are countless times when I would take a trouble call, and one of my peers would be more than willing to lend a hand. I could just be having a bad day, and they would be willing to lend a word of wisdom or two.

The leadership has been outstanding from my standpoint.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Childers has done an excellent job as a noncommissioned officer in charge of our shop. He is aware of his soldiers' situations, and if needed he will do what he can to

help out. He isn't afraid to get his hands dirty with a little work, too.

Our officer in charge, Maj. Scott Herzog, went to the east side of Bagram Airfield to give whatever help he could with the cable team. And our new NCOIC, Master Sgt. David Enderle has made a very good impression on the soldiers. We haven't had very long to really get to know him, but I can tell he will help our section to do great things. Sgt. Pen Tran is a Soldier's ideal NCO. He will go out of his way to make sure you doing the right thing, even if that means buying you a cup of coffee from Green Beans.

Sgt. Jeremy Carson is on night shift, so I haven't gotten much time with him this year, but he is always calm and collected. My leaders are very helpful, be it with military standards or our day to day tasks. Even now in my last days they treat me as a peer and as a friend, when I figured they would be looking down at me for leaving theater early.

When I return to the civilian side to continue working with computers, I know I will miss my shop, my coworkers, and my friends. I will carry their wisdom with me. Fly To Glory.

Women's History Month

WWII demand for pilots opened opportunities for first female military pilots

By Sgt. 1st Class James Slinger
Task Force Falcon Equal Opportunity

Before the more famous Women's Air Force Service Pilots, there was the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) which was formed in 1942 and organized by Nancy Harkness Love. The purpose of the WAFS was to deliver planes from the factory to military bases within the United States. The WAFS provided greater opportunities for female pilots and freed up male pilots to be utilized for combat operations.

Jacqueline "Jackie" Cochran, one of the most well-known aviators of that time, established the Women's Flying Training Detachment at Howard Hughes Airport in Houston, in November 1942. The WFTD would perform whatever flight duties the Army Air Corps required within the United States.

On Aug. 5, 1943, the WAFS and WFTD merged into the WASP. Cochran served as director of WASP and its Training Division and Nancy Love was director of the Ferrying Division. The WASP only existed for 16 months and while more than 25,000 women applied; only 1,879 candidates were accepted.

Once the war was over, Congress voted against integrating the WASP into the Army Air Corps and so the Army disbanded it in 1944 because they

did not want women to compete with men for pilot positions.

Gen. "Hap" Arnold, commander of the Army Air Corps, notified the WASP stating,

"When we needed you, you came through and have served most commendably under very difficult circumstances, but now the war situation has changed and the time has come when your volunteer services are no longer needed. The situation is that if you continue in service, you will be replacing instead of releasing our young men. I know the WASP wouldn't want that. I want you to know that I appreciate your war service and the AAF will miss you..."

It would not be until 1974, when the Navy and Army began training women as pilots.

Two of the numerous pioneers of female military pilots during this time were Betty Huyler Gillies and Mildred Darlene "Micky" Axton.

Betty Huyler Gillies received her license in 1929 and served as a pilot for Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation when the United States entered World War II. In 1942, she became one of the original 25 members of the WAFS, eventually becoming commander of WAFS at New Castle Army Air Base in Delaware.

When WASP formed, she continued as squadron commander. In 1943, she became the first female to pilot the P-47 Thunderbolt. Gillies went on to preside over numerous women's flying organizations.

Mildred Darlene "Micky" Axton was raised in Kansas, and received her pilot license in 1940 at the age of 21. In 1943, she volunteered to serve in the WASP as a test pilot at Pecos Army Airfield, Texas, during World War II. After leaving the WASP in 1944, she became a test pilot at Boeing where she became the first woman to fly the B-29 Superfortress.

Sources cited:

"Jacqueline Cochran". *The Official Website of the U.S. Air Force*. n.d. Web. 2 April 2011.

Hollander, Lu. "Betty Huyler Gillies, Charter Member, January 1, 1908 - October 14, 1998". *The Ninety-Nines, Inc. International Organization of Women Pilots*. n.d. Web. 2 April 2011.

"Experiencing War; Stories from the Veterans History Project, Mildred Darlene Tuttle Axton". *The Library of Congress*. n.d. Web. 2 April 2011.

Shine, Conor. "Wichita service honors aviation heroine Micky Axton". *The Wichita*



REGIONAL COMMAND - EAST, Afghanistan – The view of an AH-64D Apache helicopter pilot, taken in eastern Afghanistan recently. Apaches offer fire power to provide aerial cover for other aircraft and for ground operations. (Photo courtesy of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Edward Smith, Task Force Phoenix)