Eye of the Falcon

SEPTEMBER 2011

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Cover Photo

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Soldiers of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade take their seats on a C-17 Globemaster before beginning their trip back to Fort Drum, N.Y. Sept. 29. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

EYE OF THE FALCON

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LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Sgt. Jay Knight of Company D, Task Force Knighthawk, unpacks his belongings in preparation for a customs inspection Aug. 23. The customs inspection is one of the first steps of preparing for redeployment stateside. Inspectors check all containers to ensure all items are legally permitted for travelr - even teddy bears. (Photo by Sgt. Janell Emerson, Task Force Knighthawk)

From Falcon 6:

Dear Families, Friends, and Soldiers of Task Force Falcon and 10th CAB,

We've reached a tremendous milestone - September, the final month of our deployment. Some of our Soldiers have already arrived at Fort Drum, and many others will soon depart. Although we are close to handing over this mission to the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, our mission doesn't end until all of our boots have safely hit the ground at Fort Drum. With that said, we must all remain focused on what we must do to set the conditions for 82nd CAB to continue a successful mission. As we do that, managing the risks of this tough fight will continue to be uppermost in our minds.

These risks are always evident in this battle, as was tragically illustrated in the loss of 1SG Billy Siercks at FOB Shank. The entire Task Force Falcon team, and especially Task Force Knighthawk, suffered an incalculable loss with the rocket that exploded on the FOB. Please join me in keeping 1SG Siercks' family and friends in your thoughts and prayers as we wish them strength in the days ahead.

Coming back home after a year-long deployment can be an exciting time; it can also be quite stressful. The potential long-term effect of the combat deployment upon Soldiers and Families alike should not be underestimated. Be patient as you adjust to being home. The brigade will sponsor workshops to provide reintegration support. At any time, if things seem to be more than you can handle, our chaplains and leaders are available to help you.

As we load up our aircraft and equipment, know that you can take pride in the brigade's accomplishments. Despite challenges, each one of our Soldiers has carried out their tasks honorably.

82nd CAB Soldiers have begun to arrive and over the next few weeks we will share our lessons learned and best practices to ensure we provide the best handover possible. We wish our aviation comrades all the best in their assumption of authority over aviation operations throughout Regional Command – East. This is an extremely important mission and one that I'm confident will continue to provide outstanding support to those who are fighting for Afghan security. The success of the 82nd CAB will be a reflection of our efforts to prepare them for their mission.

To our Families and Friends back home, we cannot thank you enough for the support you've given to our Soldiers. Across the ranks, your support has kept morale high, which makes a challenging deployment a bit more bearable.

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

From Falcon 7:

Families, Friends, and Soldiers of Task Force Falcon and 10th CAB,

Our Soldiers have begun to leave Afghanistan. We've accomplished a lot over the past 12 months. Each of you ought to be proud of what you brought to the 10th CAB fight. As we arrive back in garrison, it's extremely important that we realize that, although we're no longer in a combat zone, different risks exist. For every activity, whether it's driving, skiing, working, or even spending time with loved ones, think ahead and take steps to avoid accidents.

The months after redeployment have historically seen a high number of alcohol-related incidents, as well as domestic violence. Understand these facts and actively make a plan for how you will avoid getting caught up in behavior that can damage lives and careers.

In addition to alcohol-related incidents and domestic violence, a third area of concern as we return from deployment is the notion that we can afford things that we couldn't afford before deployment. Think carefully before making purchases. For the most part, you should continue to save the money you have been saving already. It doesn't take much to spend all that extra money. Don't forget to factor in paychecks that no longer include extra combat pay when working on your budget.

I expect challenging physical training to begin soon after the reintegration process is complete. If you haven't been training consistently during the deployment, I strongly advise you to get out and exercise on your own right away. At the same time, take advantage of the extra free time to relax and spend time with loved ones.

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

"I have to go do my part"

Soldier recalls returning to military after 9-11 attacks

By Sgt. 1st Class JR Williams, Task Force Falcon

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – The morning began just like every other morning. Jesus Roman-Hernandez took a bus from his home to the Newport Mall in Jersey City, in order to board the PATH train that would bring him to his job with Delta Airlines at LaGuardia Airport in New York City.

Roman-Hernandez, who grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., took the position with Delta after completing five years in the Marine Corps as an avionics specialist. His transition back to civilian life had begun about ten months earlier and the new job allowed him, his wife and new son to live near his hometown, family and friends.

When the bus dropped Roman-Hernandez off at the Newport Mall, he made a simple decision that would change the direction of his life forever; he decided to smoke a cigarette before getting on the train.

"I was standing in the parking lot of the mall and looking at the skyline while I smoked," said now U.S. Army Spc. Jesus Roman-Hernandez, a 10th Combat Aviation Brigade early warning systems operator. "All of a sudden, I noticed smoke pouring out of one of the towers of the World Trade Center."

At first, Roman-Hernandez thought it was some kind of accident causing the smouldering plumes pouring from Tower One.

"At that point, there was a crowd of us just looking and wondering what could have happened," he explained. "Then, we saw the second plane crash into Tower Two. When I saw the second plane hit, that's when it started to look fishy."

The crowd of people in the parking lot watched in shock as their beloved landmark burned and blazed just on the other side of the river.

"I couldn't go to work at that point because the PATH train ran through the World Trade Center and it was pretty clear that they weren't running any more trains that way," Roman-Hernandez recalled. "Nobody really understood what was going on. We were all listening to the radio outside of the mall, trying to find out what was happening in the city."

Nobody knew what to do, so they listened and waited and watched the scene just beyond the water. That's when a report broke in- the Pentagon was just hit.

"Once I heard the Pentagon was hit, the first thing in my mind was, 'We're going to war.' I didn't know with whom at the time, but I knew we were going to war," said Roman-Hernandez.

Since he had only left the Marine Corps a few months prior, the Brooklyn native was still a member of the Inactive Ready Reserve. The Marines could contact him at any time and recall him to active duty. The thought began to build in his mind. He wasn't sure what to do, but then his attention was diverted. The first tower began to fall.

"It was almost like a movie, even though I was watching everything happening with my own eyes. But watching the towers fall? That was just disbelief, just complete disbelief. It just couldn't be happening," he recalled.

As both towers collapsed, the former Marine had one other thought, "I better get home."

In the moments that followed the collapse, it became apparent that public transportation would not be an option. The city and everything around it was shutting down.

"Everything was so crazy. You couldn't call. The phones wouldn't work, you couldn't get a hold of your family to make sure everyone was alright, the buses and trains weren't running," said Roman-Hernandez.

"I wasn't sure how the IRR worked, but I thought (the Marine Corps) would recall me for sure. I figured someone was either going to come find me or call me, I just didn't know how it would happen. I kept thinking that I just had to get home and find my uniforms. I ended up walking from Jersey City back to West New York."

Once home, Roman-Hernandez waited for the call that would send him to war- and he was fine with going.

"New Yorkers, we have an attitude to begin with," he explained. "From my point of view, New Yorkers took the attacks more personally. One of our landmarks was taken and we'll never see it again. You know, my wedding photos were taken with the New York City skyline in the background and that includes the twin

towers. I'll never look at those the same. I was definitely for going to war because whoever did this, we had to push them back. So for me, it was personal."

The call from the Corps never came. In the meantime, the effects of 9/11 were taking their toll. The aviation industry was hit pretty hard and airlines began to lay off personnel. Delta Airlines was no different and as a recent hire, Roman-Hernandez was among the first let go. He ended up taking a job at the Newport Mall and when the Marines didn't come looking for him, he went to them.

"I tried to go back into the Marine Corps, but that was going to take too long. By 2002, [the U.S. military] was in Afghanistan and I wasn't getting anywhere. I made it my resolution in January to get back in," said Roman-Hernandez. "I moved my wife and son into my mother-in-law's place and got them settled so that I could focus on getting back in."

He went to the Military Entrance Processing Station and received a higher score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery exam than he had the first time around. When things didn't work out with the Marine Corps, he went to talk to the Army recruiters. By April 2003, Roman-Hernandez was back on active duty, this time as a Soldier.

"I came in with the expectation to deploy- a certainty," stated Roman-Hernandez. "I just felt I have to go to do my part."

Although back on active duty, things didn't turn out the way the Soldier expected.

"It took me ten years to get to Afghanistan. I was supposed to go to Iraq in 2005 as an individual augmentee, but the mission was cancelled a week before I was set to leave," he explained. "Then, I kept getting sent to units that just redeployed or who weren't going."

Despite his frustration, the early warning systems operator kept looking for an opportunity. But, he wondered if he was going to make it downrange after everything he went through to come back on active duty.

"I really wanted to keep the job I had in the Corps as an avionics specialist when I joined the Army, but as prior service, my options were limited. I took what I was offered because it would get me in and let me do my part," he said.

Ultimately, patience earned Roman-Hernandez an as signment to the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade and the opportunity to deploy.

"Now, I'm here and finally doing my part," he stated.

"Being here and doing my duty in the war, it makes me feel good. I didn't join to be idle. Even if I'm not directly involved, I can facilitate the combat operations."

Roman-Hernandez credits his wife, Irma, for helping him reach his goal.

"My wife is very supportive and she really understands what this means for me," he said. "She went through my deployment to Kosovo with the Marines, so she knew what to expect. And even though this deployment is a little different, she always supports me, no matter what.

Reflecting on the journey of the last decade, the Soldier admits it's been a long road.

"It's a little frustrating that it's been ten years since 9/11 and we're still here," he admitted. "We got Osama Bin Laden this year and I feel we made headway in that area. But, Afghanistan still has a ways to go and the World Trade Center hasn't been rebuilt...I haven't progressed the way I wanted to, so I'm not exactly where I want to be professionally."

Still, the New Yorker looks ahead to the future.

"I still like what I do and I'm going to keep going and do my best until it's time for me to retire," he said.

There is only one question that haunts him from time to time.

"What if I didn't stop to smoke and got on the train that got hit going through the tunnel of the World Trade Center?"

And what if he knew then, all that he knows now?

"I still would have done it," he stated. "There's still that sense of duty; I just had to do it. Even after a decade in Afghanistan, even after Iraq, and the downturn of our economy- all the negative things we can bring up- I would still have done it. I don't think I would have done anything differently."

TF Falcon pilot takes last flight in Afghanistan on 9/11

By Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bobby Sebren, a tactical operations officer and pilot with Task Force Falcon, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, receives a certificate of appreciation from U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dennis McKernan and U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Dvorsky, Task Force Phoenix commander and command sergeant major, respectively, Sept. 11. Sebren conducted his last military flight, after 25 years as an aviator, with TF Phoenix Soldiers and in addition to the certificate, received a post-flight spray down and near-beer. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix)

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bobby Sebren, a tactical operations officer and pilot with Task Force Falcon, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, made his last UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flight for the Army in support of Operation Enduring Freedom on the 10-year mark of Sept. 11.

Sebren stepped out of his Black Hawk with a smile and was greeted by Task Force Phoenix pilots who took turns spraying him and his crew with water from a fire truck. Laughs turned into lots of photos and congratulating handshakes.

After the spray down, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dennis McKernan, TF Phoenix commander, presented Sebren with a near-beer and a certificate of appreciation.

"I enjoyed every hour flown [with TF Phoenix]," said Sebren, "Everyone was always very nice to the old guy. They treated me like one of their own, and I always tried to return the favor."

Sebren, a native of Brandon, Miss., said his last flight was particularly significant for him.

"I'll be going back to Fort Rucker to run the Aircraft Shootdown Assessment Team for two more years," said Sebren, "Since that job is so busy there is no flying. Being able to finish my flying career in Afghanistan with 10th CAB on 9/11 was very special."
He recalled his memories from the fateful night for Americans.

"I flew down to Andrews

Air Force Base that night to pick up a Federal Emergency Management Agency team to take to Shanksville, Pa., and was parked right in front of Air Force One," said Sebren. "The Baltimore/Washington airspace is usually so busy you have to butt in to get a call to approach control, but on this night I only heard one other aircraft. It was very surreal."

Sebren has served in the Army for 32 years – 25 of those years as an aviator. He is qualified on the TH-55 Osage; UH-1 Iroquois; OH-6 Cayuse; UH-60 Black Hawk; Bell 206 BIII, L1, L3, L4; BO-105 and BK-117 helicopter. Over the course of his career, he has acquired approximately 6,800 flight hours and 2,500 civilian flight hours. Making his last flight on a Black Hawk was fitting for Sebren as it holds a special place in his heart.

"I enjoy the mission (of a Black Hawk) - everything from MEDEVAC to Air Assaults to flying VIPs," said Sebren, "It is never boring and rarely the same. Of the 10 helicopters I've flown the Black Hawk is by far my favorite."

Operation Enduring Freedom XI is Sebren's first deployment with a combat aviation brigade; however, he used to run the Aircraft Shootdown Assessment Team which brought him to Iraq and Afghanistan. He looks forward to his retirement to play golf, hunt, enjoy life with his family and occasionally fly; however, parting will leave a hole after so many years of service.

"(I will miss) the camaraderie of the Army the most," said Sebren, "Even though we mess with each other, everyone is like family."

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bobby Sebren, a tactical operations officer and pilot with Task Force Falcon, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, takes a spray down by fellow aviators signifying the last flight of his military career on the ten-year anniversary of Sept. 11. Sebren conducted his last flight with Task Force Phoenix Soldiers and in addition to the spray down, received a near-beer and a certificate of appreciation. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix)

Soldiers of TF Six-Shooters remember 9/11

By Cpl. Kam Gerohimos, Task Force Six Shooters

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — It was a somber day for the Cavalry men and women of Task Force Six-Shooters at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Afghanistan Sept. 11. As Americans around the world recalled ten years ago the day America stood still, Soldiers of TF Six-Shooters couldn't be more reminded of what they are fighting for.

"All of us here deployed in combat today have continued the unselfish spirit of service to ensure that no one ever has to relive these events," said TF Six-Shooters commander U.S. Army Lt. Col. Christopher Downey of Philadelphia, addressing fellow service members in front of the task force flagpole.

Downey emphasized that Soldiers serving today have continued carrying on the legacy to honor not only those who perished that day, but also those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in protecting America's freedoms.

He recalled where he was the day the planes hit the two towers.

"I was flying in Fort Polk, La., a Joint Readiness Training Center exercise when we got a call over the radio to ground all aircraft," Downey said.

He recalled how he was training with some Soldiers of the New York National Guard and the horror they felt as they watched the World Trade Center crumble over the television. He said it was something he will never forget."

Four different memorial services were held to correlate with the times in Eastern Standard Time for American Flights 11 and 77 and United Airlines Flights 175 and 93 that crashed on that tragic day. The task force chaplain, U.S. Army Capt. Richard Hurst, said a prayer and had a moment of silence to remember the victims who lost their lives in the World Trade Center as well as those who died in the planes.

"This tragedy, however, instead of tearing a nation apart, pulled our nation together," said Downey. "On this day, we will remember all those who gave their lives both on that fateful day in September as well as those who have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting against the war on terror."

Remembering 9/11

KHOST PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Soldiers of Task Force Tigershark take a moment to honor the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. "There has been much sacrificed, most especially by our military in the past 10 years," said Lt. Col. David Kramer, TF Tigershark commander. "All of you are a part of that sacrifice as combat veterans, veterans who believe in the idea of freedom and liberty and the fact that all people are created equal and have the right to pursue happiness." (Photo courtesy of Task Force Tigershark)

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -Task Force Knighthawk hosted a 9/11 Memorial Run to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. Left, Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Parchey, a health care specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Knighthawk, and a native of Lewistown, Pa., waves during a half-marathon. Right, Staff Sgt. Jonathan Reid, a health care specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Knighthawk, takes water from a civilian contractor at a water point along the route. (Photos by Sgt. Janell Emerson, Task Force Knighthawk)

Pathfinders receive badges for combat action

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Maj. Gen. James L. Terry, 10th Mountain Division commander, presents Sgt. Jason Gatlin of Fox Company, Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, the Combat Infantry Badge at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan, Sept. 1. Gatlin, a native of Crestview, Fla., was one of 36 Pathfinders from his company to receive a badge for their actions in combat. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Janelle Emerson, Task Force Knighthawk)

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Maj. Gen. James L. Terry, 10th Mountain Division commander, presents the Combat Infantry Badge to Pfc. Aren Thorsen, an infantryman with Fox Company, Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, and a native of Knob Noster, Mont., Sept. 1 at Forward Operating Base, Shank, Afghanistan. Thorsen was one of 36 Pathfinders from his company to receive a badge for their actions in combat. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Janelle Emerson, Task Force Knighthawk)

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Pathfinders from Fox Company, Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, listen to U.S. Army Maj. Gen. James L. Terry after he presented two Combat Medic Badges, 12 Combat Action Badges and 22 Combat Infantry Badges in a ceremony Sept. 1. After the ceremony on Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan, Terry thanked the Pathfinders for their service. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Janelle Emerson, Task Force Knighthawk)

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Daniel Gerhardt, a senior human resources noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, holds his flag into the skies of Afghanistan in a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Sept. 11. Company A, one of TF Phoenix's Black Hawk companies, flew not only Gerhardt's flag, but others as well. Gerhardt is a native of Miami, Fla. (Courtesy Photo)

Sept. 11 Flag Flying

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Soldiers of Company C "Warlords," Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, took some time during their regular mission to fly American flags Sept. 11. During their approach to the airfield, the Warlords hung two of the flags from their UH-60 Black Hawk doors to be visibly flown over the forward operating base. Pictured here is one of the crews with one of the flags flown that day. U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Benjamin Coon, a pilot from Sterling, Ill.; U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Kearney, a pilot in command from Moscow, Penn.; U.S. Army Sgt. Shaun Godfrey, a crew chief from Opelika, Ala.; U.S. Army Spc. Richard Campbell, a crew chief from Charleston, S.C.; and U.S. Army Spc. Steven Calloway, a door gunner from Trenton, Fla. (Courtesy photo)

A Helping Hand

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan – Lt. Col. David Kramer, Task Force Tigershark commander, lends a hand as he and Spc. Justin Merrell, an armament specialist with Company E, TF Tigershark, load rockets at the forward arming and refueling point after a test fire Sept. 1. (Courtesy photo)

Crew member delivers care packages to Soldiers in remote areas

By Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Many deployed Soldiers sacrifice having common comforts in order to accomplish their unit's mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Some Soldiers reside in remote areas, work with no running water, consume only pre-packaged meals, receive mail infrequently and have no electricity.

U.S. Army Sgt. Paul Roberts, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter door gunner with Company B, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment; a reserve unit serving with 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Phoenix, made it his personal mission to provide care packages for Soldiers located in these remote areas.

"I was an infantry Soldier when I first entered the Army in 1989, so I know firsthand how difficult it can be living under these conditions," said Roberts, "I took it upon myself to go to all the units at Bagram asking for anything they could donate to help these Soldiers."

Roberts said he understands how important receiving mail is for the morale of deployed Soldiers.

"We fly all over Afghanistan and see the living conditions some of our fellow Soldiers … live in - which is extremely rough," said Roberts, "Whenever we fly [into remote locations] we always do our best to give them whatever we can."

Roberts and his crew make quick supply drops to many areas that do not have common amenities. During these scheduled flights, Roberts and his crew quickly unload the supplies as well as care packages to these Soldiers. The supplies are often quickly delivered without landing; and in rare circumstances, the crew gets to interact with the Soldiers they help.

"[On one occasion], instead of just dropping off the load and immediately taking off - we landed. This is something we do not do very often," said Roberts, "One of the Soldiers assigned there walked over to our bird and looked in; we gave him the first of a long line of donated boxes. It took about one minute and we had about 30 Soldiers running to our bird to get the rest. It felt like Christmas in July to us and our hearts felt joy!"

The leadership within Roberts' unit supports his endeavor and has noticed the positive effects it has had on their Soldiers.

"I believe that Sgt. Roberts' efforts have improved the morale of our [unit]," said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Todd Carter, the Co. D, 7-158th first sergeant, "Every Soldier knows what it is like to receive a package from home. Getting the opportunity to help Soldiers in austere conditions receive packages makes us feel good."

Carter, a native of Gardner, Kan., has served in the Army for almost 20 years. He said he is immensely impressed by Roberts' drive to help other Soldiers.

"I have never witnessed one Soldier support [so many] other Soldiers in the way that Sgt. Roberts has; he is the epitome of selfless service," said Carter.

Carter added that the experience is very rewarding for his Soldiers when they get to see the joy that they can bring to others.

"It is great to see the smiling faces at [remote bases] when we arrive," said Carter, "It's like Santa coming in a big green Chinook."

Roberts received the rare opportunity to spend some

"I was an infantry Soldier when I first entered the Army in 1989, so I know firsthand how difficult it can be living under these conditions"

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - U.S. Army Sgt. Paul Roberts, a CH-47 Chinook Helicopter door gunner with Company B, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Phoenix, made it his personal mission to provide care packages for Soldiers located in remote areas. Whenever the team is scheduled to go to remote forward operating bases, they load their Chinook with what they have collected and ensure Soldiers have items to improve their morale. Co. B has donated everything from candy and hygiene items to guitars and golf supplies. Roberts is a native of Austin, Texas.

time at one of the locations in August and finally interacted with the Soldiers since his arrival in May.

"I was on a crew that flew a maintenance team for helicopter repairs to FOB Bluejay," said Roberts, "We were there for a little over 24 hours, and because of this, I was able to talk with the Soldiers assigned there."

Roberts said the Soldiers in this location rarely see fresh food – especially fruit. Knowing this, he offered an apple that he brought with him to one of the medics he found enjoying some down time. The medic cut the apple into 12 pieces and shared it with everyone in his tent.

He said it was wonderful to offer them such a rarity and it brought back a rush of memories of when he was in the infantry and how close-knit everyone was.

"My goal is to boost their morale," said Roberts, "I just want to let them know that other Soldiers and civilians care about them."

FORT HOOD, Texas - Members of Company B, 306th Aerial Exploitation Battalion, Task Force ODIN-Afghanistan, load onto a military chartered aircraft Aug. 22 as the sun sets on their final day in the United States. Over 50 Army National Guardsmen from six states make up the company that provides a manned aerial reconnaissance platform to ground commanders in northern and eastern Afghanistan. The pilots and aerial sensor operators expect tol log hundreds of flight hours during their 12-month deployment. TF ODIN-A is attached to 10th Combat Aviation Brigade for Operation Enduring Freedom. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jack w. Carlson III, Task Force ODIN-A)

ODIN intel company deploys to Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Maj. Jerry Brennan, Company B, 306th Aerial Exploitation Battalion, Task Force ODIN-Afghanistan commander, and 1st Sgt. Richard Ogden, Co. B first sergeant, unfurl the company guidon during the unit's uncasing ceremony at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan Sept. 11. Co. B, 306th Aerial Exploitation Bn. is a company that remains in Afghanistan but its personnel rotate every 12 months. During the ceremony the outgoing company relinquished the duties and responsibilities of the manned aerial reconnaissance company to the incoming Soldiers. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jack W. Carlson III, Task Force ODIN-A)

MG Allyn visits Falcon, Phoenix
praises Soldiers for successful tour

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Daniel Allyn presents a coin to Spc. Thomas Zabriskie, an operations specialist with Task Force Falcon, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, Sept. 20. Allyn presented coins to Soldiers who were chosen by their supervisors for their contributions to the task force's mission. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Daniel Allyn discusses lessons learned with Col. Pedro Almeida, Task Force Falcon commander, Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, TF Falcon command sergeant major, and TF Falcon staff, Sept. 20. The visit coincides with TF Falcon's preparations to hand over authority of aviation operations in Regional Command – East to TF Poseidon, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – From left, U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Dvorsky, Task Force Phoenix, 10th CAB, command sergeant major; Lt. Col. Dennis McKernan, TF Phoenix, commander; and Maj. Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, Combined Joint Task Force – 1, Regional Command – East, 1st Cavalry Division, commanding general. Allyn visited TF Phoenix Sept. 13, to discuss lessons learned over the past year. Dvorsky presented a unit-designed flag to Allyn at the conclusion of his visit. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown, Task Force Phoenix)

TF Six-Shooters inducts 28 Soldiers into NCO Corps

By Cpl. Kam Gerohimos, Task Force Six-Shooters

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – The backbone is commonly known as the single most important part of the human anatomy. It is the foundation which provides strength for the entire body and ensures all parts function properly. This is perhaps why the U.S. Army Corps of Non-commissioned Officers is known as "the backbone of the Army".

The NCO Corps has strived to live up to the ideals of leadership, professionalism, commitment, and allegiance for more than 236 years reaching back to the American Revolution. During a ceremony Sept. 8 at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Task Force Six-Shooters inducted 28 newly promoted non-commissioned officers into the corps.

The ceremony began with the lighting of three candles by a corporal and two sergeants; red to represent valor and hardiness, white to represent purity and innocence, and blue to represent perseverance, vigilance, and justice.

Following the candle-lighting, Command Sgt. Maj. Isaia Vimoto Combined Joint Task Force-1 command sergeant major and the guest speaker for the ceremony, spoke on the significance of the NCO Corps and the vital role that the newly inducted NCOs will play in shaping Soldiers to be all they can be.

"To our new sergeants; the rank you wear does not have any magical powers," said Vimoto. "The power comes with what you create with those you lead."

He mentioned the story of Excalibur, Merlin and King Arthur of Camelot and how it correlates to being an NCO. He said Arthur represents the NCO eager to learn to be a successful leader, Excalibur represents the stripes, Merlin represents the senior leaders who provide mentorship, and Camelot represents the unit an NCO is responsible for building into a strong unified team.

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – From left, Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick McGuire, Task Force Six-Shooter command sergeant major; Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, Task Force Falcon command sergeant major; and Command Sgt. Maj. Isaia Vimoto, Combined Joint Task Force command sergeant major, preside over a non-commissioned officer induction ceremony at Forward Operating Base Fenty Sept. 8. Twenty-eight new NCOs were inducted into the NCO Corps. (Photo by Cpl. Kam Gerohimos, Task Force Six-Shooters)

Vimoto urged the new leaders to always remember that the magic is not in the rank, but rather, it's in the difference the leader makes and the influence leaders

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After the guest speaker's remarks, 28 cavalry troopers were inducted into the Corps: U.S. Army Sgt. Beth Ackey of Peru, N.Y.; Sgt. Jonathan Arthur of Sarasota, Fla.; Sgt. Eric Carson of Drury, Mo.; Sgt. Randall Celebrezze of Broadview Heights, Ohio; Sgt. Yong Cho of Baltimore; Cpl. Jeremy Clark of Utica, N.Y.; Sgt. Reginald Crawford of Dallas; Sgt. Norman Cutway of Monticello, N.Y.; Sgt. Andrew Gage of Ilion, N.Y.; Sgt. Tyler Griffith of Burton, Kan.; Sgt. Tylen Hazard of Hampton, Va.; Sgt. Tyrone Jensen of Renton, Wash.; Sgt. Andrew Johnson of Georgia, Vt.; Sgt. Jermaine Jones of Falcon, Miss.; Sgt. Christopher Kellum of Waycross, Ga.; Sgt. Thomas Lapierre of Southport, N.C.; Sgt. Christopher Lockhart of Sophia, N.C.; Sgt. Joshua Lovik of Marion, N.C.; Sgt. Joseph Mack of Ney, Ohio; Sgt. Roger Mann of Palmdale, Calif.; Sgt. Daniel May of Springfield, Mo.; Sgt. Carlos Mendez of Fresno, Calif.; Sgt. Shaun Milicic of Winter Springs, Fla.; Sgt. Adam Norwich of Geonoa City, Wisc.; Sgt. Dustin Phipps of Plano, Texas; Sgt. Carlos Sannicolas of Saipan, North Mariana Island; Sgt. Mark Schwichtenberg of Newton, Kan.; and Sgt. Doug Underwood of Tulsa, Okla.

To conclude the ceremony, the Creed of the Non-commissioned Officer was presented by three senior NCOs dressed in three different uniforms of the Air Cavalry

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Cavalry Soldiers with Task Force Six Shooters sit at attention during a non-commissioned officer induction ceremony at Forward Operating Base Fenty Sept. 8. Twenty-eight new NCOs were inducted into the NCO Corps. (Photo by Cpl. Kam Gerohimos, Task Force Six Shooters)

Task Force followed by the playing of the 10th Mountain Division Song and the Army Song.

"The NCO induction ceremony was a professional and powerful ceremony that truly accomplished its intended purpose to welcome new NCOs into an elite fraternity and challenge them to live up to the NCO creed," said Lt. Col. Christopher Downey, task force commander. "It was a privilege for me to attend the ceremony and an honor to welcome seven sergeants major from outside the task force to witness the entry of our outstanding troopers into the ranks of Army leaders."

Fuel for thought

TF Mountain Eagle opens FARP on Bagram

By Capt. Drew Madden, Task Force Mountain Eagle
Photo by 1st Lt. Rosa Figueroa, Task Force Mountain Eagle

Soldiers of the water and fuel platoon, Company A, Task Force Mountain Eagle, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, work around the clock to ensure that helicopters have the fuel they need for any mission they may be called upon.

"The Fuel and Water Platoon of Alpha Company proved their determination, resourcefulness and competence with the construction and operation of this FARP," said U.S. Army Capt. Michael Richardson of Newark, N.Y., Co. A, TF Mountain Eagle, commander. "There's no doubt that the (task force) has the subject matter experts in the brigade when it comes to Class III and V operations."

The FARP was built from a piece of vacant land consisting of dirt and vegetation into a highly successful and fully functioning FARP. The Soldiers

built their workstation from the ground up; they personally installed the "steel beach" for the landing pads and placed concrete barriers.

"Fuelers may be rough around the edges or even a little intense but the professional level of the Soldier when on the job can be considered next to none," said U.S. Army Sgt. Kendrick Kidd of Lower Peachtree, Fla., Co. A, TF Mountain Eagle, FARP shift NCOIC. "The most important part of running a successful FARP is safety. Its primary role is to ensure quality fuel is being issued at all times, following proper (standing operating procedures), wearing proper personal protective equipment and maintaining equipment to be fully mission capable is the platoon's daily standard".

So the next time you are flying about the battlefield and have to refuel that Black Hawk or Chinook that's taking you to your next destination, take a look at the characters running up to the aircraft using nothing more than hand and arm signals to communicate, ask yourself how long does it take to refuel you car or truck back home? The FARP averages 6 minutes per aircraft.

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Soldiers of Task Force Mountain Eagel, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, unload 82nd CAB aircraft Sept. 28. Over the next few weeks, the 82nd CAB will be preparing to assume aviation operations for eastern Afghanistan. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

As 82nd CAB aircraft arrive, 10th CAB aircraft loads up

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Pfc. Pankaj Kapil, an OH-58D Kiowa helicopter armament and electrical repairer with Troop D, Task Force Six Shooters, and a native of Everett, Wash., prepares an OH-58D Kiowa for its return to Fort Drum Sept. 27. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Soldiers of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade go through a customs inspection before they're cleared to fly out of Afghanistan Sept. 29. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Soldiers of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade wait for their flight out of Afghanistan Oct. 3. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

10th CAB leaves Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Soldiers of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade board an Air Force C-17 Globemaster which will take them out of Afghanistan Sept. 29. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)

Spouses' run marks completion of deployment

By Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon

Anticipating the end of a deployment and the return of a loved one is quite a significant event. Twelve months living without a spouse can be extremely difficult and those who have experienced it share a common bond.

Six 10th Combat Aviation Brigade spouses decided to dedicate a 12-mile run Sept. 17 to their deployed husbands; each mile representing each month without their spouse.

"If we had nothing else in common that day it was our camaraderie as wives in the U.S. Army and the desire to accomplish those miles," said Jenny Stone. "We felt this would be a great way for us to get together and honor our husbands who have sacrificed so much for us."

Despite the chilly morning temperature, the runners began at Wheeler-Sack Army Air Field and continued out the airfield's gate toward the town of Evans Mills and back.

In addition to commemorating the end of the deployment and supporting their spouses, many of the runners used the run to train for upcoming road races. Gwen Decker, Anne Bachmeyer, Rebecca Brink, and Alyssa Hennessy say they will be traveling soon to participate in the Army 10-miler and Rebecca Brink and Jenny Stone plan on running the Empire State Half Marathon in October.

"I did the 12 miles for two reasons; one, to help train and make the Army 10-Miler look easier; and two, to do something I've never done before to show my dedication to my husband and the Soldiers of our company," said Bachmeyer. "They sacrifice so much and work so hard the least I could do to show my appreciation is to give up a Saturday morning and push myself farther than I've done before using them as inspiration!"

10th CAB families do not have much longer to endure separation from their loved ones as Soldiers have already begun to redeploy back to Fort Drum.

"It was an accomplishment for those who participated as much as it was an accomplishment for us to go through a year without our husbands," said Stone.

FORT DRUM, New York - From left, Jenny Stone, Gwen Decker, Anne Bachmeyer, Alyssa Hennessy, Rebecca Brink, and Jana Minchoff, all spouses of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers, prepare for a 12-mile run on a cold morning Sept. 17 at Wheeler-Sack Army Air Field. The spouses participated in the run to commemorate the 12 months endured without their Soldiers who are completing their deployment to Afghanistan over the next few weeks. (Courtesy photo)

Congratulations to 2nd Lt. Andrew P. Lang of Task Force Tigershark. 2nd Lt. Lang won the Equal Opportunity poster contest for the month of September.

In memory of:

Staff Sgt. Keith J. Rudd

We will never forget

1st Sgt. Billy J. Siercks

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Soldiers of Company D, Task Force Mountain Eagle, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, assist with unloading 82nd CAB aircraft Aug. 29. Over the next few weeks, 82nd CAB will be preparing to assume aviation operations in eastern Afghanistan, replacing 10th CAB. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot, Task Force Falcon)