

## SoldierStory

# Soldier runs in memory of battle buddy

*Aviation officer does marathons for friend*

By **KARI HAWKINS**  
Assistant editor  
kari.hawkins@us.army.mil

From the outside looking in, Lt. Col. Greg Fortier seems like any other determined runner on track to make a good time in completing yet another marathon.

But with every marathon he has run, Fortier carries with him the memory of a fallen Soldier whose own desire to finish 50 marathons keeps Fortier running.

In the summer of 2002, Fortier, now commander of the Aviation Flight Test Directorate, Redstone Test Center, was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C. A Kiowa helicopter pilot, Fortier soon became friends with fellow pilot Chief Warrant Officer 4 Matt Lourey.

"It was a unique time because the war in Afghanistan was still very new to everyone and we all wanted to be there," Fortier recalled. "The 82nd Aviation Brigade had Soldiers deploying and there was a lot of uncertainty as to whether we would or not. We all wanted to deploy, but Matt really, really wanted to deploy. He wanted to go to Afghanistan. We all did."

In December 2002, a group of Soldiers within the squadron, including Fortier, did deploy to Afghanistan. Nine months later, Fortier returned and Lourey was deployed to Iraq. After

Lourey's return, circumstances caused the two friends to again deploy. On this deployment, they went together to Iraq.

"Matt had completed a very successful combat tour in Iraq. He was geographically removed from his wife for years, who was also serving in Washington, D.C.," Fortier said.

"He came back in April 2004 and he had orders in hand to serve at Davison Army Airfield at Fort Belvoir (Va.). He was making plans to spend time with his wife and finish out the last few years of his career. When he learned that we were deploying again in the fall of 2004, he gave it all up without hesitation, and chose to deploy with us."

Lourey was 40 years old when, on May 26, 2005, his Kiowa Warrior helicopter came under small arms attack in Buhriz, Iraq, and crashed, killing both Lourey and his co-pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joshua Scott.

"It was a normal nighttime aerial reconnaissance mission. Troops on the ground had taken contact from the enemy and Lourey was the first responding to the fight. He and his wing man charged in to the sound of shots and his helicopter was soon shot down over a palm grove," Fortier said.

Fortier was working a night mission in Mozul, Iraq, at the time, a two-hour helicopter flight away from where his friend had crashed.

"We had just finished our mission and were winding down when we got the call that we had an aircraft down," Fortier said.

In the ensuing weeks, Fortier thought a lot about his friend. He remembered visiting his home in North Carolina, where Lourey had a coat rack covered in race medals.

"When I knew him, he was a 145-pound runner. At one time, before he was in running shape, he decided he wanted to do 50 marathons before his 50th birthday. He had done 39 marathons and there was no doubt that he would have completed that goal," Fortier said.

"He and I had a lot of conversations about serving, about going into combat, about doing the mission. He was an admirable Soldier, an absolute patriot."

During a memorial for Lourey in Iraq in June, Fortier knelt next to his friend's helmet, rifle and boots, and made his own commitment.

"I had run a few marathons, but I was not a big marathon runner. I decided



Photo by Kari Hawkins

**Lt. Col. Greg Fortier, commander of the Aviation Flight Test Directorate, stands in his office with his command guidon for Bravo Troop of the 1-17th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, in the background. Fortier was serving on a deployment in Iraq with the 1-17th when friend Chief Warrant Officer 4 Matt Lourey's Kiowa helicopter was shot down in Buhriz, Iraq. Lourey and his co-pilot were killed.**

right then that I would pick up those last 11 marathons and finish them for him," he said. "The best way I could keep his honor alive and his memory alive was to stay connected to him in this way."

Throughout the deployment, Fortier's squadron came under at least 36 direct enemy attacks.

"Our squadron was highly decorated," said Fortier, who was the troop commander. "We provided 24-hour coverage in an area the size of West Virginia. An aviator's week was six days flying and one day off with missions lasting four to six hours. Flying in and around the cities was always the most difficult. The city of

**See Runner on page 31**



Courtesy photo

**The Disney World Marathon in January 2006 was the first marathon Lt. Col. Greg Fortier ran in honor of his friend Chief Warrant Officer 4 Matt Lourey.**

Photo by Skip Vaughn

## International sendoff

**Brig. Gen. Hesham Ismail, Egyptian aviation liaison officer for AMCOM's Security Assistance Management Directorate, receives a memento Friday from SAMD director Jeff Young. Ismail, an Apache helicopter pilot, is returning to Egypt after a year at Redstone.**



# Foreign military sales support coalition partners

By MICHELLE HARLAN  
USASAC Public Affairs

Typically foreign military sales are defined as a U.S. government to foreign government sale of defense articles, services and training. But for 1206 sales cases, the purchase is funded through Department of Defense appropriated funds. According to the National Defense Authorization Act, Section 1206, its purpose is to equip, supply and train foreign military who support U.S. military in joint operations.

"These countries are fighting alongside U.S. service men and women, so it is imperative that we provide them with the proper equipment to ensure they are successful in their mission," Brian Steinberg, a country program manager for the Army Security Assistance Command headquarters' EUCOM Directorate, said.

The United States acts as the buyer of materiel and transfers ownership of those items to the coalition partner. Cindy Decker, a country case manager at USASAC's New Cumberland, Pa. office, works on the 1206 Coalition Program for Georgia, Bulgaria and the Baltic states, which falls under

USASAC's EUCOM Directorate. She is responsible for ensuring the receiving governments are prepared to take responsibility of the FMS items being supplied to them.

"Once the COCOM (Combatant Commands) and country decide what is needed, the items and the potential dollars are defined on a Congressional Notification," Decker said. "This document is sent through the channels from DSCA (Defense Security Cooperation Agency), to State (Department) and to Congress. Once approved, the cases are written."

One challenge of 1206 sales is the imposed time frame to obligate appropriated funds on a contract before the end of a fiscal year. According to Steinberg, there are five years available to complete delivery,



Photo by Melody Sandlin

**USASAC commander Maj. Gen. Del Turner welcomes Security Assistance Enterprise members attending a 1206 program conference Oct. 18-21.**

services and billing for each individual case. Decker said the goal is to provide materiel and services to the coalition partners within six to 12 months once the money is obligated, but can vary based on various factors such as the time frame in which the U.S. budget is approved or correct items are determined.

It takes time to establish the correct items available for

shipment to these countries, according to Decker. Coalition partners request materiel that is being used by U.S. Soldiers. Because of the restrictions on what U.S. items can and cannot be used by foreign militaries, comparable items have to be found to provide to the coalition partners.

USASAC's motto, "Strength in Coop-

eration," is exemplified through the 1206 program because the U.S. provides defense articles or training to partner governments in order to aid in counter-terrorism activities and support the U.S. military. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria and Georgia are examples of countries who will receive items such as GPS, radio equipment, body armor and helmets which will be used in Afghanistan.

"It is important to help these countries because they are playing a vital role in Stability Operations in theater," Steinberg said.

"People don't understand why we give our money to a foreign government," Decker said. "The equipment and training received by the countries helps both us and them. It helps the U.S. because it creates a partner nation and ally in our war on terrorism."

Supporting the smaller countries also helps them to develop as a nation.

"It helps the partner nation because these are usually small, emerging countries that do not have a robust budget for military equipment," Decker said. "It provides a means for them to receive military training from the best military in the world."

## Runner

continued from page 27

Mosul represented a 5-kilometer area that included 2.4 million people.

"You just never knew what would happen. We needed to fly as fast as we could — about 105 knots — and as low as we could — about 50 to 100 feet. There were many times when we had to make a choice between whether or not we were going to hit a flock of birds because we couldn't get high enough or whether we would be able to dodge antennas on roof tops."

In October 2005, Fortier returned to Fort Bragg and departed the squadron for another assignment. In January 2006, Fortier completed his first marathon in honor of Matt — the Walt Disney World Marathon in Orlando. Since then, he has completed eight other races. His 10th race will be the New York City Marathon on Nov. 6. The 11th and last marathon has not yet been decided, but Fortier is hoping to qualify for the Boston Marathon.

For each race, Fortier doesn't write his name on his race number. Rather, he writes the words "For Matt" in honor of his friend. Besides that, he has kept his mission pretty much to himself.

"The only time I have really talked about this in public was at that first race in Orlando," he said. "I was in Iraq and missed the registration for the race. So, I asked the race officials if they could make an exception. I told them about Matt and what I was try-

ing to do. So, they made an exception, and asked me to speak at Epcot Center about Matt and why I was in the race."

That first race set the pace for Fortier's other marathons.

"My time of three hours and 20 minutes was really encouraging," he said. "I had not run a marathon in five years and I had certainly not run distances of that magnitude. It was a perfect day for a marathon. It was a little cold for Orlando, 34 degrees, but the morning was extremely peaceful and there was absolutely no wind."

"Usually, at the 20- or 21-mile mark, you start fighting with severe fatigue. I never really felt that during that race. I had times of being tired, but I didn't hit a wall. I finished 314th out of 11,000 finishers."

The run took him through all the Disney parks and through MGM Studios and Universal Studios.

"When you run that long of a distance, there are times when things are really quiet and lonely. You get in a secluded place where you are channeling energy to sustain as much as you can," Fortier said. "I prayed often and talked out loud. There was an amazing choir singing at the finish. It was very spiritual, very inspirational. Running marathons are never easy. But it was the easiest marathon I've ever done."

Fortier went on to run in Sarasota, Fla. (March 2006, three hours and 17 minutes), Detroit, Mich. (October 2006, 3:20); Disney World (January 2007, half marathon in one hour, 45 minutes on a Saturday and then a full marathon in 3:31 on the following Sunday); Washington, D.C. (March 2008,

3:29); Richmond, Va., (October 2008, 3:23); San Diego, Calif. (June 2009, 3:39); Virginia Beach, Va. (March 2010, 3:23) and Minneapolis, Minn. (June 2011, 3:26).

Fortier's last race in Minneapolis was especially sentimental as Minnesota is Matt's home state.

Fortier has made the races a family affair. During the earlier marathons, it was only his wife Angela cheering him on. In the later races, his wife has often been joined by their children, 4-year-old Grace and 2-year-old Faith.

"My wife is always at the finish line. Seeing my wife and kids on the course is extremely important to me," he said.

"I recently started running with my Blackberry (cell phone). So I can communicate with my wife and kids while I'm running. I also pre-format a bunch of text messages, so that I can just hit and send them to friends when I get to certain mile markers. Often, my friends text me back with encouraging words. It is a nice extra source of motivation for me, but it doesn't take the place of seeing my wife and kids cheering me on the course."

The New York City Marathon has been a race Fortier has been looking forward to for a while. His registration was denied twice — the standard — before being accepted this year. The race takes about 45,000 runners through the city's five boroughs and through Central Park. Fortier is now in training to get the best time possible, running 6 to 8 miles five days a week and a 12-18 mile run on the weekends. He has been running between 150 and 175 miles a

month.

"New York City is a once-in-a-lifetime deal. So I want to be in the best shape for it," he said. "But the tempo at the Redstone Test Center is so fast and furious. We have had a lot of significant events and a lot to accomplish daily. When I am running consistently, I have more energy throughout the day and, in this job, you need as much energy as you can get."

Another ulterior motive for Fortier is his desire to earn a qualifying time in the New York City Marathon that will allow him to run in the Boston Marathon. The qualifying time is 3:15 for his age and gender. To date, Fortier's personal best is just two minutes longer at 3:17.

"But I was only 32 years old then," he said of his best time. "This might not be my year for the Boston Marathon, even if I do qualify. In February, I will be leaving this assignment to be the executive officer and future commander of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School at Patuxent River, Md. It's where the Army makes its experimental test pilots."

Fortier is an experimental test pilot rated to fly not only the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior, but also UH-60 Black Hawk, as well as fixed wing aircraft like the C-12 and the T-34.

Once he finishes Matt's 11 races, Fortier said he will retire from marathon running.

"But I won't retire from running," he said. "Before college, I never ran to just run. But as my days in the Army have passed, my passion for running has grown. It's more of a way of life now."