

DEMON



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skies of Iraq**

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"The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave." --- Patrick Henry, U.S. Patriot

Introduction



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Troth

Not a tourist. Remember your Warrior training while in Iraq

Luckily when rockets landed on Camp Taji in June there were no injuries, just minor damage to equipment and buildings. Hopefully this is as close as anyone in the Combat Aviation Brigade family comes to combat during this tour in Iraq. The attack should have reminded all of us that we are most definitely in a combat zone and not on

a very long field training exercise. Although Operation Iraqi Freedom is wrapping up and we are moving into Operation New Dawn there are still some hostile forces out there that wish us harm. We must remain vigilant in our day-to-day operations and remember that we are not here as tourists, but as Soldiers. We have all had training

on what should and shouldn't be done when we are attacked. React to indirect fire is a skill level one task that every soldier, regardless of rank, should know. If you don't know, or are unsure what to do during an attack – get with your platoon sergeant. What you shouldn't do is go to the impact area to get photos to go along with your "war story." Even when the "all clear" is given, the danger hasn't necessarily passed. Rockets/mortars

don't always explode on impact. This unexploded ordnance is an unstable threat that could explode without notice. Do not go near it. The Army has Soldiers trained for disposal of UXOs. Whether in Iraq, or back in the states we need to think about our actions and the actions of those around us. If you see someone doing an unsafe act stop them. Remember we are all safeties. Getting a picture is NOT worth anyone's life.

Demon 6.

Col. Frank Muth addresses the Soldiers and Families of the Demon Brigade, speaking on the unit's accomplishments and the welfare of the team's spirit.

The Demon Brigade has come a long way in our four months. With several TOA ceremonies complete, the eCAB is spreading across Iraq and taking over a large amount of responsibility.

We are setting the example as we transition to the first ever enhanced combat aviation brigade. Future unit formations will be built off of what we are doing here in Iraq. It is the Soldiers and our Families that are putting CAB 11D into the history books.

This historic moment is not going to be accomplished by itself; it is going to be done by our junior leaders doing the right thing – making timely decisions, instilling pride and enforcing standards and discipline.

I am not the only one to notice the outstanding efforts our Soldiers are making within this great organization. During a recent visit MG Wolf the USD-C Commanding General recognized one of our medevac crews for making the right decision to launch despite harsh weather conditions and limited visibility. That decision was essential in saving the Soldier's life.



Actions like this only occur when we entrust our Soldiers and empower our leaders to make decisions to accomplish the mission.

We are also welcoming additional units into the Demon Brigade. Two additional battalions will join us as we take over Aviation Operations within Iraq. I welcome them to the Demon Family and look forward to working together on this historic mission.

We have to continue to look out for one another. The Taji FARP is doing

just that with their Suga Shack, providing cold drinks and snacks for our flight crews. Things like this say so much about us as Soldiers and a Family. They also show great character and work ethic and will make this tour an overwhelming success. Success is not only defined by mission accomplishment but by how we take care of one another.

While we continue to provide each other a foundation for success, I cannot forget the leading inspiration for us all,

the American people, who are represented best by our Families back in Kansas and across the United States. We could not do what we do without their support. I would like to personally thank each spouse, son, daughter, mother and father who has a Soldier within the Demon Brigade. I know that each one of you is sacrificing more than most while your loved ones are serving their country.

Every member of the Demon Family is making sacrifices in order for this Mighty Brigade to do what our country has asked of us.

The Army has called upon us to provide air support to a country as long as California and as wide as Texas, and they could not have chosen a better Team to do it. In the year since taking command of this unit, I have had the honor to spend time with our troops, whether on a flight, in the hangar, at the DFAC or during a run. I am always impressed with the caliber of the troops in our formation, from the newest private to the most seasoned warrant officer. I look forward to the coming months and encourage all to remember our credo: No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great. Duty First!

Demon 7.

Command Sgt. Maj. James Thomson addresses the Soldiers of the Demon Brigade, speaking on their achievements and the road ahead.

On July 4th I had the honor and privilege of attending a very special ceremony held inside the grandiose hall of Saddam Hussein's Al-Faw Palace in Baghdad. I couldn't help but feel moved by the significance of the event as I stood in the shadows of ornate marble columns towering above the crowded vestibule while 156 Soldiers raised their right hands and in unison took the oath of citizenship. One at a time, each Soldier stood with Vice President and Doctor Biden for a photo beneath a three story tall American Flag, their eyes bright, chins high, the pride of being a citizen of the United States beaming on their faces. Recognizing three of our CAB members I marveled at the spirit displayed by these men and women, many on their third and fourth deployments serving a nation they've only just now become citizens of. Incredibly, all had long ago taken an oath to defend our Constitution and American way of life yet not Americans themselves. Truly an inspiration and testament to the caliber of character we have serving in our formations today.

This phenomenal spirit of service and commitment to something greater than one's self is not really something new nor is it that uncommon among those wearing the Big Red One patch. History shows time and



again brave young men and women answering the call to duty to fight for freedom and defend liberty.

From its inception in June 1917, the First Division was the first to arrive in France fighting among the trenches of the Meuse-Argonne forest and defeating evil in the first victory of the war at Cantigny. One of the earliest aviators and first American Ace of WWI, Eddie Rickenbacker who began his service as General Pershing's driver, had 26 aerial victories and earned the Congressional Medal of Honor. When the sounds of battle again rang out in 1942, the Soldiers

of the "Fighting First" were the first to answer the call landing on the beaches of Africa, Sicily and France determined to fight oppression. In 1964, the First Aviation Battalion joined the First Infantry Division and a year later became one of the initial aviation units to employ helicopter gunships and reconnaissance helicopters in unison to conduct search and destroy teams in combat. The Big Red One served for five years in Southeast Asia continuing the legacy of commitment to duty, no matter how difficult. That commitment is seen time and again with deployments to Iraq for

Operation Desert Storm, the Balkans, Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom and again to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Today as we prepare for transitioning to Operation New Dawn, the Soldiers of the Combat Aviation Brigade, First Infantry Division continue to lead the way with laser like focus and that uncanny sense of selfless service in all that they do. In the coming weeks we will form the first ever Enhanced Combat Aviation Brigade, the largest Army Aviation Unit ever organized, operating across an area as long as California and as wide as Texas. The eCAB will be the only aviation unit supporting United States Forces in Iraq calling for each of us to dig a little deeper and find that passion and commitment to get this monumental job done. The mission will not be like any we've seen in recent years. The challenges will be many and varied. Soldiers at all levels will be forced to think outside the box and fight in ways we've not fought before all the while maintaining standards and not sacrificing discipline. We can be sure that it will be tough; however, I am confident that with the support of our Families and given the spirit of service I find throughout our ranks today, we will follow in the footsteps of our forefathers and prove once again that for the Demon Brigade, there is No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great. Duty First!

Accepting the Truth. Chaplain (Maj.) Thomas Bruce talks about unity and a common brotherhood. **The Combat Aviation Brigade chaplain speaks from the land of Jesus' birth.**

What if there were a place where people lived and worshipped together on the basis of what they had in common – a place where skin color, language and culture didn't matter?

Where an example were set that it is possible to overcome the things that normally divide people? Where people say, "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" as often as necessary and aren't afraid to say, "I love you". What if there were a place where people cared for one another on the basis of a shared membership in the family of God?

Such a place must not be a dream. It must be found in our homes, in our worship services on Camp Taji, and in the Army community. That's the heritage of the kingdom that God has entrusted into our hands. I believe that's how it is in the kingdom of God.

It's obvious that we live in a fractured, broken and divided world. People are fighting because they belong to different tribes, religions, cultures, or social levels. Wherever we turn, we find broken homes, broken relationships, and broken hearts.

Even within God's kingdom we are often painfully aware of our different viewpoints. God expects something more from His people.

A feeling of family can unite hearts and souls. We're brought into one family so that the things that divide us may become insignificant. Those who form a family should live together in peace and harmony. There should not



Photo by Spc. Roland Hale
Let us Pray Chaplain (Maj.) Thomas Bruce speaks at a mixed-service church service for Father's Day on Camp Taji, Iraq

be disunity or broken fellowship among brothers and sisters. If we're a part of the same family, we should dwell together peacefully. This unity hardly seems natural, but if we can't do it, then who can?

How sweet and fragrant it is when we really do get together, drinking in the same sweet refreshment; when wealth, society or talent do not dictate the basis of our fellowship, but rather a love and unity in the truth. How delightful that is!

And what a change it makes in this world.

These ideals are evident in Iraq today, as Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds struggle to find compromise in creating a constitution. They have found that unity does not imply complete agreement on forms of government – much less religious practices – but that it requires that nations respect the basic human

rights of its citizens.

God wants understanding in place of confusion – unity instead of division. He wants to show the world something it could not achieve on its own. He wants his people to overcome their differences and dwell together in love and compassionate service.

Unity creates community and becomes an example to the world that in God's kingdom doors are opened and differences forgotten. The gift of unity brings power – and it will charm you.

A Christian brotherhood will last forever. We're destined to dwell together in unity forever in heaven. Admire it! Don't stop there, imitate it. So long as there is unity, we will stand. We have many bodies but share one heart.

Diversity comes together in harmony, climbing together toward the presence of God.

Aviation News. Iraqi military announces change in structure similar to U.S. forces. **Iraqi Army, Iraqi Air Force form relationship, transfer rotor-wing aviation to Army control.**

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher DeHart

COB ADDER, Iraq - While the concept of Iraqi partnership centers around the many projects, missions, and events involving U.S. Forces and Iraqi Security Forces, there is another layer to developing relationships that is becoming stronger – the partnership between the various ISF elements themselves.

The joint training with the soldiers of the 10th Division Iraqi Army June 1-3 at Contingency Operating Station GarryOwen, Iraq, are just the beginning of establishing those very important foundations.

Soldiers with the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force 12 assisted with bringing ISF elements together. The 10th IA realized the greater potential for mission success through future collaboration with the Iraqi Air Force under the Air-Ground Integration initiative.

AGI needs operations integrated so air and ground forces can work together on the battlefield to accomplish a common goal. AGI maximizes combat power through synergy of both forces, and therein lays its strength.

The synchronization of aviation operations into the ground commander's scheme of maneuver may also require integration of other services or coalition partners. It may also require attack reconnaissance, assault, and cargo helicopters.



Photo by Spc. Roland Hale
Load Up Iraqi Army special operations soldiers prepare to board an Iraqi transport helicopter during air assault training on Camp Taji, Iraq

AGI is intended to effectively integrate air and ground assets that are required to successfully conduct combined arms operations. Each element brings unique capabilities and limitations to the commander. This integration starts at the home station with implementation of effective operating procedures, relationships, and air-ground team training, such as that burgeoning between the IA and the Iraqi AF.

The Iraqi Aviation Operations Center personnel and the commander of the Iraqi 70th Squadron, Col. Nazih al-Fahaed, planted the seeds for future cooperation by giving capabilities briefings.

Nazih said he got good feedback from the young officers who were present for his part of the briefing about the Iraqi AF unit.

He said this is very important for them so they can have a good base

for cooperation and spreading ideas for how to incorporate everything between the Army and the Air Force where they didn't have anything before.

"About cooperation, they have good ideas, for the Army and the Air Force. I think this is best because it is easier for us for the future," Nazih said. "I think we are planning to supplement them with cover from the air within their sector or for different cities; we have the capability to cover them in day or night.

"We had an officer here yesterday to show them some of our [reconnaissance assets] and what the goal is of using this equipment and they understand how important that is and how it will help them as well. For our future, our next step, I told them we will be available for them and will be ready to support them."

93 years of tradition continued

CAB celebrates combat experience, Army tradition

Soldiers of the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division joined the ranks of combat veterans May 2 when they were awarded the 1st Infantry Division shoulder sleeve insignia for former wartime service, more commonly known as the combat patch.

Soldiers donned the patch during a ceremony in front of the brigade headquarters, the battalion areas and other bases around Iraq at which the CAB has aircraft.

The date of the patch ceremony also held additional significance in that May 2 is the anniversary of the 1st Infantry Division's authorization.

On May 2, 1917, less than a month after declaring war on Germany, President Woodrow Wilson authorized the formation of the American Expeditionary Forces. Maj. Gen. John "Black Jack" Pershing was given command of the new unit.

"They were called the 1st Division, then they were called the Fighting First, then finally the 1st Infantry Division, but most just call us the Big Red One," said Col. Frank Muth, the CAB commander.

The Big Red One, or "BRO", refers to the patch that the CAB Soldiers wear.

"Our patch has been worn for 93 years, fighting on the battlefields of North Africa, Italy, France, Belgium, Vietnam, Kuwait and Iraq," Muth said to his troops. "Our division is steeped in pride and has been proven in battle. You steely-eyed warriors have just become part of that lineage."

BRO Up

Cpt. Kirsten Bergman places a combat patch on her Soldier's shoulder during one of 2-1 GSAB's patch ceremonies on Camp Taji, Iraq May 2

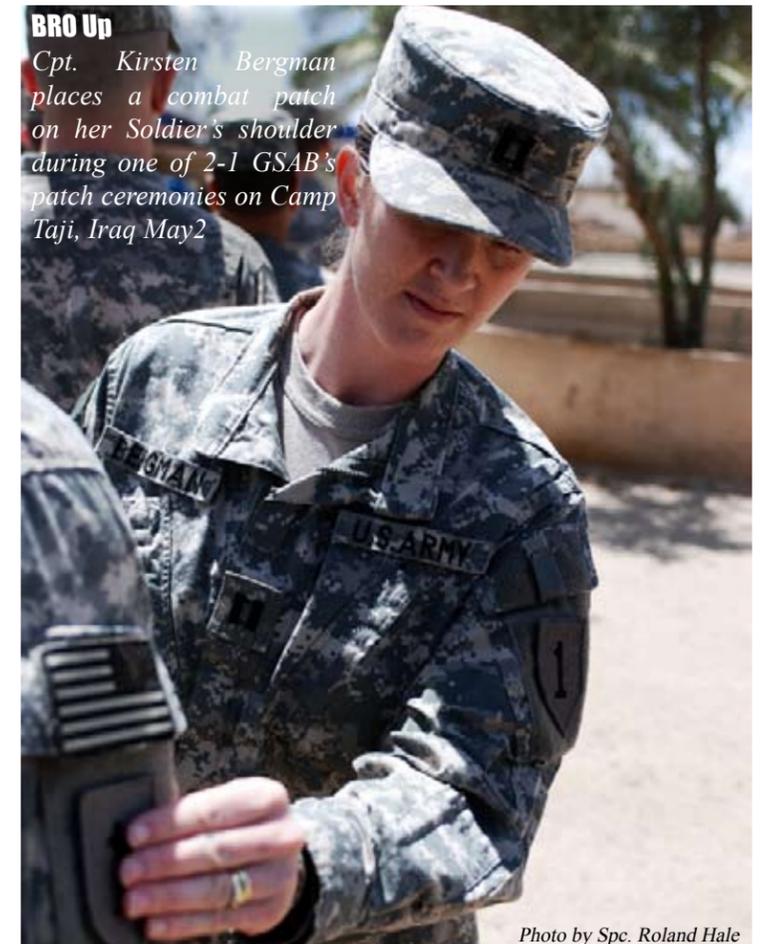


Photo by Spc. Roland Hale

The history of the combat patch dates back to the end of World War II, when the wear of a unit patch on the right shoulder was approved to denote service in combat with that unit. The combat patch symbolizes not only serving with a specific unit during combat, but also that Soldiers of the unit are forever bonded to the past and now

share a visible statement of shared commitment, value and hardship.

"Today you have earned the right to proudly say, 'I have served in combat,' and with even more pride and greater enthusiasm I have not only served in combat, but I had the honor and distinction to serve in combat with the oldest, most historic division in the United States Army," Muth said.

CAV Pride A Soldier from 1-6 CAV fits his troops with a fresh set of spurs, a tradition in the cavalry-world symbolizing combat experience. In addition to combat patches, new air-cav Soldiers were awarded their spurs in an early-morning ceremony on Camp Taji, Iraq May 2

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Troth

Photo by Spc. Roland Hale

Mother's Day Surprise

Mother surprises son with holiday visit while deployed to Iraq

Story and Photos by Spc. Roland Hale

In an early Mother's Day surprise, two Soldiers—a mother and her son—were reunited in Iraq through a visit to Camp Taji.

Command Sgt. Maj. Rue Mayweather, who works in United States Forces- Iraq's Critical Thinking cell, traveled to Camp Taji to visit her son, 1st Lt. Kenieth Mayweather, May 5. The two had been working within their chains of command to arrange a Mother's Day visit, but Kenieth had no idea his mother was coming to visit him early.

"She's always up to something," the lieutenant said to friends after the surprise. Kenieth had been sternly told by his battalion's operations officer to report to the conference room. Hesitantly, and trying to recall what exactly he could have done wrong, he reported.

"I opened the door and there she was," Mayweather said. "It was a priceless moment."

Kenieth is an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter pilot and a

battle captain for the 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

During his mom's visit, 1st Lt. Mayweather took her on a tour of Taji, introducing her to his peers, commanders and his favorite – the Apache attack helicopter.

Walking around the Taji facilities, the mother and son acted as if they were simply spending a regular afternoon together. While the circumstances of this Mother's Day visit may seem extreme to some, both have grown accustomed to military life. Command Sgt. Maj. Mayweather had already been in the Army for 16 years before her son told her he wanted to join the service.

"I told my mom and she was there the whole time with the recruiter," said Kenieth. Initially he enlisted in the Army. After serving several years and reaching the rank of sergeant, he left the military to pursue a college education. After obtaining a degree, he was

commissioned as an officer and attended flight school.

When he first joined, Kenieth stood at parade rest for his mother; a sign of respect Soldiers give to those who outrank them. Now, it is Rue who pays respect by saluting her son, a commissioned officer.

The two have a total of 43 years of service in the Army: Rue with 29 and her son with 13.

Over the years, this is the first time the Mayweathers have been deployed to the same country.

"I never thought that Kenieth and I would deploy together," said Rue. "This is an honor for me to actually serve with him at the end of my tour."

Rue plans to retire after her tour in Iraq. However, both Soldiers plan to continue visiting each other when possible, throughout the deployment.

"It's wonderful. It's one of the best Mother's Day presents I've had. It isn't materialistic. There's no money, there's no flowers—it's just my favorite son, in the flesh—and it's wonderful," said Rue.



Show and Tell

First Lt. Kenieth Mayweather shows his mother, Command Sgt. Maj. Rue Mayweather, an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, the aircraft he flies with the 1-1 ARB, CAB, 1st Inf. Div. Kenieth is a trained pilot but also serves as a battle captain, tracking the battalion's operations

Meeting the Family

First Lt. Kenieth Mayweather introduces his mother, Command Sgt. Maj. Rue Mayweather to friends during lunch at a Camp Taji dining facility





Hellfires Away

A Kiowa Warrior from Task Force Saber lets loose a hellfire missile, sending it tearing toward its target

Fire for Effect

CAB conducts air-ground integration with Iraqi Army

Story and Photos by Spc. Roland Hale

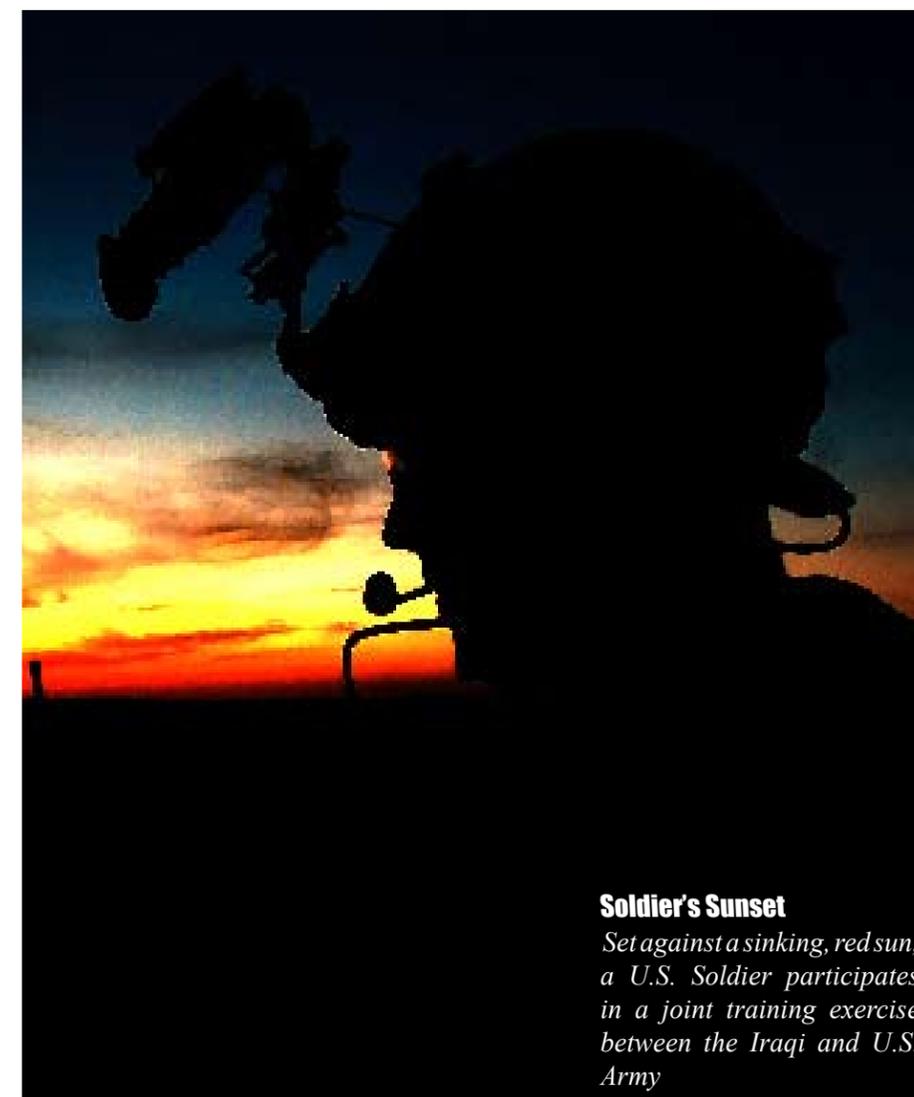
Iraqi Army Soldiers recently got a lesson from their American counterparts on how to coordinate and control aerial firepower.

Pilots from Task Force Saber of the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, teamed with field artillerymen from 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82 Airborne Division, and 27th Iraqi Army Fires Brigade for a unique training exercise outside of Camp Al Asad, May 21.

The pilots, flying OH-58D Kiowa Warriors, demonstrated their firepower and ground support capabilities as U.S. Soldiers walked the Iraqis through the process of coordinating and controlling their aerial firepower.

This is one of the first times the U.S. Army has included Iraqi personnel in their air-to-ground integration training.

For aerial operations, the Iraqi Army relies primarily on the Iraqi Air Force, which does not have attack and reconnaissance helicopters, making it essential for



Soldier's Sunset

Set against a sinking, red sun, a U.S. Soldier participates in a joint training exercise between the Iraqi and U.S. Army

Iraqi troops to receive training on how to coordinate with the U.S. assets as they continue to assume the lead in combat operations throughout the nation.

'This technology is a beautiful thing. It's the greatest thing to support your troops -- I love it -- I would love to see the Iraqi military have this capability.'

---2nd Lt. Mohammed Mana Jata,
Iraqi Army

The training began weeks before the first hellfire missile hit the target. Leaders from Task Force Saber, 1-82 AAB and the Iraqi Army coordinated their efforts to integrate the training into their busy training schedules.

After weeks of complex preparation, the training manifested itself on the Al Asad flight line as the small group of Iraqi soldiers participating in the exercise was given a block of instruction on air-to-ground radio communication and a tour of task force aircraft.

"[Getting] the IA coordinated with a timing that worked for them and their operational schedule was probably the most difficult [piece]. The actual training piece went fine," said Maj. John Steen, the officer in charge of the Task Force Saber element on Al Asad.

With all the pre-execution training completed, a convoy of Iraqi and U.S. vehicles rolled outside of Al Asad to set up their range in the Iraqi desert. Several Task Force Saber pilots prepared to receive the ground troops' requests for air support.



Birds inbound

Two OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters from Task Force Saber, a small element of the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, fly past Iraqi Army soldiers while conducting call-for-fire training outside of Camp Al Asad, Iraq May 21. The Saber pilots practiced engaging targets, as the Iraqi troops practiced coordinating aerial assets into their operations. The Iraqi Army relies primarily on the U.S. for air support, as the Iraqi Army's aviation branch does not have attack or scout capabilities

The communication between ground and air assets is often complicated, said Steen. It was made more difficult by the language barrier between U.S. and Iraqi personnel. They overcame this challenge with the use of interpreters.

The interpreters relayed translated calls for fire from the Iraqi field artillerymen to task force

Kiowa pilots. Steen said he was pleased with the results.

Working closely with their 1-82 AAB counterparts, Iraqi field artillerymen also took turns communicating with the pilots overhead. The ground troops coordinated several series of aerial strikes to simulate receiving hostile fire.

After receiving transmissions

from the Iraqi soldiers, the Kiowa pilots used their aircraft weapon systems to assault a simulated enemy location.

With the launch of hellfire missiles and the rapid buzz of .50 caliber machine guns, the pilots attacked locations marked by the ground troops.

"We used tracers, smoke and lasers to mark the targets for the

aircraft," said 2nd Lt. Mohammed Mana Jata, commanding officer of the Iraqi troops conducting the exercise.

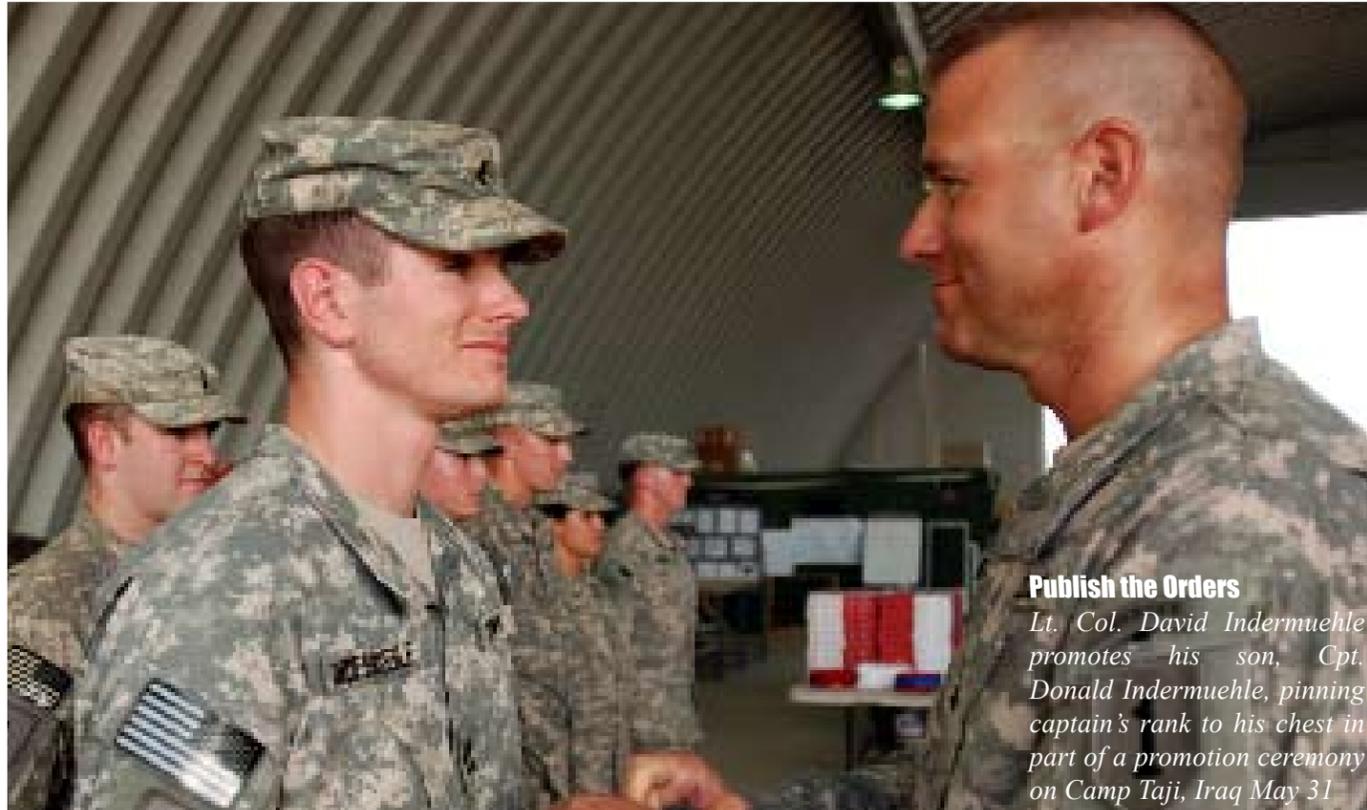
Task Force Saber, which recently deployed to Iraq, will continue to include the Iraqi Army in future air-to-ground integration operations for as long as the Iraqi Army needs them.

The Iraqi troops' ability to

coordinate with U.S. helicopters proved useful as U.S. Army aviators learned to effectively support them, said Jata. He hopes, though, his troops will someday be talking back to Iraqi aviators.

"This technology is a beautiful thing. It's the greatest thing to support your troops -- I love it," said Jata. "I would love to see the Iraqi military have this capability."

A Father's Pride



Publish the Orders

Lt. Col. David Indermuehle promotes his son, Cpt. Donald Indermuehle, pinning captain's rank to his chest in part of a promotion ceremony on Camp Taji, Iraq May 31

Story and Photo by Spc. Roland Hale

The war in Iraq has separated countless families over the last seven years. This Memorial Day, however, it brought together a father and son serving in Iraq.

Lt. Col. David Indermuehle and Capt. Donald Indermuehle, both serving in brigades from the 1st Infantry Division, were reunited at Camp Taji May 31, as David attended his son's promotion ceremony.

David, an infantry officer, is serving with 4th Brigade, 1st Inf. Div. Donald, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter pilot, arrived in Iraq with Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Inf.

Div., earlier this spring.

Two Soldiers from two different sides of the Army, the Indermuehles nevertheless share a common bond as Soldiers, David said.

"The military has provided a common ground for us," said Donald.

Donald said he remembers watching his father's promotion to captain as a child. Now, it was his father's turn to take part in Donald's promotion. In a mid-afternoon ceremony, David removed the rank of first lieutenant from his son's chest, replaced it with captain insignia and returned the salute rendered by his son.

"I'm proud of the type of man he is, serving his country," said David.

"I'm proud to serve with him. We're both in Iraq, both part of the same division, the Big Red One."

Salutes and ceremony aside, Donald said it was good to see his father.

"The last time we were together was this January," said Donald. "It's good to catch up, even during the hottest hours of the day in Iraq."

After the ceremony, duty again separated the two Soldiers. David returned to his brigade in northern Iraq, while Donald remains at Camp Taji.

The father and son will be reunited again, however, as David is scheduled to return to Iraq with another 1st Infantry Division brigade sometime this fall.



Fuel for the fight

Since opening shop this March, the Camp Taji Forward Arming and Refueling Point, or FARP, is cranking out some big numbers. The FARP is a 24/7 one-stop-shop for all the Demon Brigade's aircraft to receive fuel and armament before leaving the wire--and business is good. The FARP has provided 574,572 gallons of fuel to 3,516 aircraft. These numbers reflect the brigade's main FARP on Camp Taji. The brigade has several other FARPs around Iraq to support long range missions. The amount of armament provided at the FARPs has decreased in proportion to the decrease of violence in the war.

Demons become

eCAB

Story and Photo by Spc. Roland Hale

As U.S. forces gradually leave Iraq, the need for the Army's aviation branch to provide transportation and aerial security for ground troops is paramount. Army aviation, however, is also required to reduce its presence in Iraq – a dilemma that the Army is addressing with the formation of a single, larger-than-ever aviation brigade.

The Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, which deployed to Iraq this spring, became United States Forces – Iraq's corps-level aviation brigade June 7, when it assumed responsibility of the 38th Combat Aviation Brigade's area of operation in a transfer of authority ceremony on Joint Base Balad. The CAB, 1st Inf. Div. is scheduled to conduct several more such ceremonies this summer, becoming the Army's sole aviation asset in the country by the end of August.

The CAB, 1st Inf. Div. will become the Enhanced Combat Aviation Brigade, and is the first Army unit to do so.

"The CAB is expanding, is growing in size, in both aviation assets and Soldiers," said CAB Commander Col. Frank Muth, "and at the same time its scope

CAB becomes corp level asset, expands across Iraq



Colors Fly

Col. Frank Muth and Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Thomson unfurl the CAB colors on Joint Base Balad June 7

of responsibility is increasing to incorporate the entire country of Iraq."

The eCAB will command over 200 aircraft, seven battalions, and nearly 4,000 troops. The aircraft and the Soldiers that fly and maintain them will "conduct full-spectrum aviation operations across an area as long as California and as wide as Texas," said Muth.

"It [aviation support] allows for freedom of maneuver for our leaders and Soldiers, allowing them to move without being restricted to roads," said Muth.

The eCAB's transportation assets will not eliminate the use of roads in Iraq, however, putting some U.S. Soldiers at risk of improvised explosive device attacks – the number-one killer of Soldiers in Iraq. The CAB, 1st Inf. Div. attack and reconnaissance helicopters will also play a role in mitigating these risks.

"Our attack and reconnaissance

assets allow for both route clearances and convoy security," said Muth.

Along with increased responsibility, troops and aircraft, the eCAB will continue to partner with helicopter units from the Iraqi Army.

The CAB is already partnering with Iraqi aviators in the Baghdad area, focusing mainly on scout and reconnaissance missions, said Muth. Also, at Camp Al Asad, CAB aviators recently participated in an air-ground integration exercise with Iraqi ground troops, whom they increasingly support as Iraqis lead combat operations.

The CAB, 1st Inf. Div.'s assumption of the 38th CAB's mission is the brigade's first step towards becoming an enhanced CAB. In September, the only Army aviation unit with a birds-eye view of the country – the eCAB – will play a key-role in the start of Operation New Dawn.

Changing hands

New command sergeant major takes reigns of 601st ASB

Story and Photo by Spc. Roland Hale

The 601st Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade said goodbye to one leader and welcomed another June 20 in a transfer of responsibility ceremony on Camp Taji, Iraq.

Command Sgt. Maj. Aaron Alexander replaced Sgt. Maj. Brian Hauke, who served as 601st ASB's senior non-commissioned officer through the unit's first three months of deployment.

The CAB, 1st Inf. Div. is currently on 12-month deployment schedule in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The ceremony took place in front of the battalion's headquarters building, and even in a combat zone, was performed with the typical grandeur of military drill and ceremony. In the center-piece of the ceremony, Alexander took hold of the non-commissioned officers sword, signifying his assumption of responsibility and authority in the battalion.

As the new senior NCO, Alexander will guide the battalion through the remainder of its deployment, a task he said "will be full of surprises and challenges."

The brigade is projected to be the Army's lone aviation asset in Iraq, and is already expanding across the country. The increased area of responsibility will increase the amount of work for 601st, the brigade's only dedicated support battalion.

Since deploying to Camp Taji in



Ready Hands

Command Sgt. Maj. Aaron Alexander takes the NCO sword from the brigade's senior NCO, symbolizing his assumption of responsibility with the 601st ASB June 20

March, the battalion has pumped over 500,000 gallons of fuel, completed 28 aircraft phases and completed over 2,000 work orders. The battalion is also responsible for Camp Taji's dining facilities, which feed approximately 10,000 Soldiers and civilians.

"I look forward to the challenges," said Alexander in a speech concluding the ceremony, "and I know as a team – one team – we will overcome anything in our way."



The Return

A recent trip to Iraq with a program called Operation Proper Exit brought retired Staff Sgt. Christopher Bain – a man who died for ten minutes and received four blood transfusions from Iraqi troops – back to the place where six years earlier the blast of a mortar tossed him like a rag doll yards away from his buddies. The program, which is designed to offer wounded warriors a sense of closure from the war, takes them to ground-zero of their pain. And that's where Bain knelt June 13, digging a knife into the spot where the mortar landed.



The Spot

Retired Staff Sgt. Christopher Bain collects a handful of dirt from the ground where a mortar struck him in 2004

When Staff Sgt. Christopher Bain was ambushed in Iraq April 8, 2004, he died - for 10 minutes. Fortunately, he received four blood transfusions from Iraqi soldiers and survived, but did not escape facing years of torment.

Bain walked out on his first medical board. With war wounds resulting in the loss of the use of his left hand and minimal use of his right, Bain felt he deserved more - at least more than the 30 percent disability the medical board offered him.

Bain spent three years in care, and like many wounded combat veterans, battled with the pervasive terror called memory.

But Bain is now one step closer to healing. A recent trip to Iraq with a program called Operation Proper Exit brought Bain back to the place where six years earlier the blast of a mortar tossed him like a rag doll yards away from his buddies. The program, which is designed to offer wounded warriors a sense of closure from the war, takes them to ground-zero of their pain. And that's where Bain knelt June 13, digging a knife into the spot where the mortar landed.

On Taji, the veterans were hosted by the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, a unit that among other things, flies the type of medevac aircraft that evacuated many of the wounded Soldiers. CAB Soldiers led the wounded warriors on a tour of the brigade; many of the wounded warriors were unconscious during their first encounter with a medevac helicopter, and do not remember it.

"So this is what those things look like," remarked a veteran.

The wounded warriors toured

Taji, making an emotional stop at Gunner Gate, the spot where Bain was injured. There, they followed Bain as he re-lived that afternoon six years ago.

When the wounded warriors arrived at the gate, it took a minute for the emotions to sink in. They joked with each other like any Soldiers would, often making light of their handicaps.

Bain stood apart from the rest of the group. Leaning with his good hand on a tree, he looked toward the gate. After a few minutes, Bain found the spot where he thinks the mortar landed. He took a knee and asked his buddies for a knife.

The mood had shifted from a seemingly incongruous cheer to sympathy, and as Bain used the knife to scrape dirt from the ground, another wounded warrior collected it in a small plastic bag.

"I came here to get closure - to feel the dirt - to walk on the ground that I couldn't walk away from before," said Bain.

Operation Proper Exit is a program of the Troops First Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in 2008 by Rick Kell and David Feherty.

Bain and 11 others are participating in the program's seventh tour and will bring the total number of involved veterans to 50. "They want to come back and see that their sacrifice is meaningful," said Kell, the executive director of the Troops First Foundation.

After visiting Gunner Gate, Bain talked to Soldiers during a town-hall-style meeting.

Bain left Iraq in 2004. Since then the number of casualties has greatly decreased. In 2004, 4,506 U.S. Soldiers were wounded in action. Halfway through the calendar year



Memory Lane

Retired Staff Sgt. Christopher Bain looks toward Gunner Gate, where he was ambushed in 2004

of 2010, the number of troops wounded in action is a mere 221.

Bain also described to the Soldiers the purpose of Operation Proper Exit.

"I didn't get to go home and visit my family," he said. "I woke up in a hospital room. Then I spent three years there. Now I get to return the

right way."

Bain was medically retired during his sixteenth year of service, and he is now a motivational speaker and certified mentor for the Wounded Warrior Project.

"I don't need a uniform to serve," Bain told Soldiers on Taji. "I can still serve all of you."

Foreign Fires

CAB troops help Iraqi Army transition from AK-47 to M16

U.S. Soldiers serving on Camp Taji, Iraq trained Iraqi troops on the fundamentals of marksmanship with the Colt M16 rifle June 15. The training was part of a continued effort by the U.S. to phase out the Iraqi Army's use of the Soviet-era AK-47 Kalashnikov assault rifle.

The swap between the two weapons has gun-enthusiasts across the military and social-media sites up-in-arms, as fans of both weapons debate the practicality of the initiative.

The AK-47, which has become symbolic of Middle Eastern militaries, has been used by the

Iraqi Army since the 1960s. The weapon is less accurate than the western M16 rifle, yet its more durable design makes it a more suitable match for a desert climate, critics say.

But the transition to the M16 is not based solely on the weapons capability. As the rifles are issued to Iraqi soldiers, they will be registered individually – a measure intended to reduce the number of American weapons being acquired by insurgents.

The new M16s will also update the Iraqi Army's arsenal, as many of their AK-47s are in varying states of disrepair, military officials said.

On Camp Taji it was all smiles from the Iraqi troops, as the U.S. Soldiers walked them through the basics of firing the M16.

“For their first time, they shot very well – even compared to some U.S. Soldiers,” said Sgt. Kevin Averre, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the training. Averre is assigned to the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, serving as a battle NCO in the brigade's tactical operations center.

In 2003, Averre served with Iraqi Security Forces as an infantryman assigned to the 4th Infantry Division.

“Even in 2003 they spoke very highly of the M16's accuracy,” said Averre.

The training focused primarily on “zeroing” the weapons, a process by which firers adjust the weapon's sights to align with their eyesight. The Iraqi soldiers also received instruction on weapons maintenance, something that was seldom necessary with the durable AK-47.

While the Iraqi Army has already received thousands of weapons in accordance with the proposed one-for-one swap of AK-47 for M16, receipt of the weapons is prioritized by necessity. Many Iraqi soldiers on Camp Taji do not use M16s, and as the weapons continue to arrive, U.S. units like the CAB, 1st Inf. Div. will continue to train the Iraqi Army.



Shot Grouping

First Sgt. Devin Horsley, CAB 1st Inf. Div., helps an Iraqi soldier zero his M16 rifle during training on Camp Taji, Iraq June 15

Precision Tuning An Iraqi Army soldier serving on Camp Taji, Iraq adjusts the front sight post of his M16 rifle during training with U.S. Soldiers June 15. Most Iraqi troops still use the less accurate AK-47 Kalashnikov but the U.S. is continually bolstering the Iraqi Army's arsenal with new M16 rifles

Story and Photos by Spc. Roland Hale



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Troth



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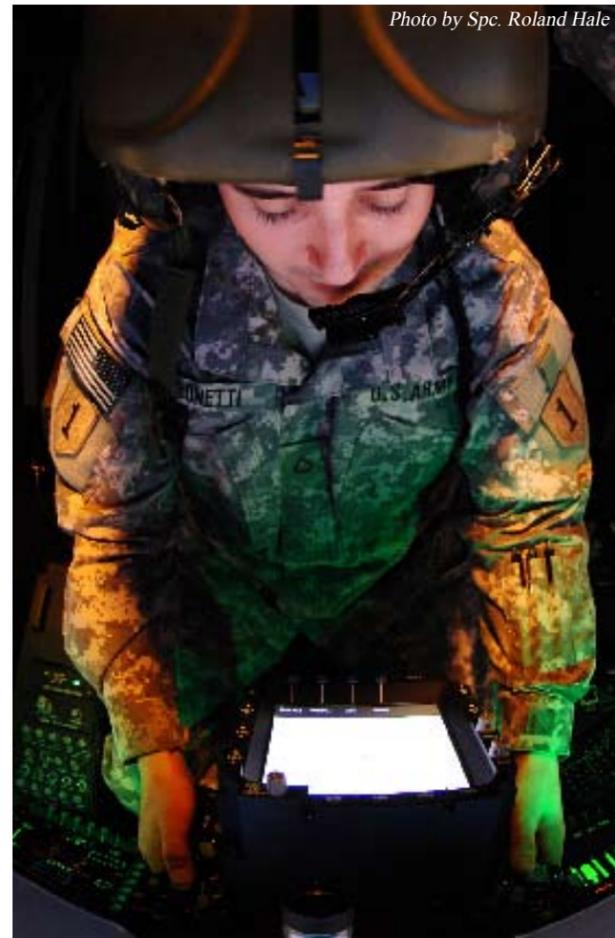


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