

PHOENIX RISING

TASK FORCE PHOENIX NEWSLETTER

Casing the colors, heading out

Task Force Phoenix is on its way out the gate as they case their colors Oct 5 in preparation for heading to Afghanistan.

With patrol caps on and their subdued flag on their right shoulder, there is no mistaking that these Soldiers are mentally preparing for deployment.

Time is limited stateside, so most Soldiers are enjoying every bit of it with their friends and Families. Many Soldiers are sneaking in last minute fishing trips, BBQs, and movie nights at home with the Family. After the fast-paced year of training that Task Force Phoenix has had there is little doubt that both Soldiers and their Families deserve this time together.

“Family is very important,” said SPC Courtney Smith of D Company, “I spend all of my free time calling home to Arkansas to talk with my daughter, mother, and grand dad.”



Photo by SPC Amanda Brown

Above: LTC McKernan and CSM Dvorsky case the battalion colors for deployment Oct 5.



Photo by SPC Amanda Brown



Photo by SPC Amanda Brown

Left Photo: LTC McKernan stands next to SPC Zuluaga during the casing of the colors ceremony.

Right Photo: Task Force Phoenix commanders salute next to their guidons during the National Anthem.

Family Readiness Group

As Task Force Phoenix gears up for deployment, our Soldiers and Families have been busy attending trainings and workshops. Families that attended our Kids Town Hall and Couples BattleMind on Sept. 27th had first-hand experience. The knowledge gained by these events proves to be useful throughout the deployment. Children were given the opportunity to learn about the unique culture their Soldier will be experiencing and the chance to ask questions of the Task Force's Commanders and Command Sergeants Majors.

Task Force Phoenix FRG continues to make every effort to support Families and keep them informed about the deployment. The FRG has been hard at work planning events into the summer months to allow Families predictability. We would like to congratulate Kelby Magennis, Alpha Company's FRG Leader, who has been selected as our unit's Volunteer of the Month. Kelby continues to provide support and resources to her Soldiers and Families. Shery McFadden will be our representative at the AUSA FRG Conference in D.C. This is a great opportunity for our FRG Leader to gather information about the new changes in the Army for our unit.

Upcoming events:

- ✓ Nov. 2nd, 9am -noon at The Spiritual Family Life Center – **Care Team Training**: Learn what a Care Team does and decide if you would like to assist a Family in Crisis.
- ✓ Nov 3rd - **VCUSS**- 9-10am- place TBD - Volunteer Childcare in a Unit Setting- This is the training needed to watch other unit's children during an Incident Brief.

- ✓ Nov 10th- 6pm at The Spiritual Family Life Center –**TF Phoenix FRG Meeting**, this is the first monthly meeting. Come get information about the deployment, meet with your FRG Leader and Rear-D Team. Free childcare for registered children, contact your FRSA: Lisa.Kadaraitis@conus.army.mil or 315-774-1274.
- ✓ Nov 13 & 20th -10am – **TF Phoenix Powder Puff Flag Football!** Join in on the game or come cheer for your favorite team. Watch for a flyer!
- ✓ Nov 20th - 2pm- **TF Phoenix Thanksgiving Dinner**. Watch for a flyer!





PFC Sauve provides security (Story and photo as seen in Echo Company's newsletter – Executioner's Alley!)

E Company

Training, training, training....

Our pre-deployment training is nearing its completion as you receive this newsletter, which will be the final newsletter prior to the deployment of our company to Afghanistan. We have some classes, one weapon's range, a combat lifesaver course and the HMMWV Egress Assistance Trainer (HEAT) to complete prior to deployment, but that basically sums up the additional training we have left. Over the past two months, Echo Company Soldiers have gone through an enormous amount of training and preparation for deployment. The amount of effort and time (and many headaches) that our Soldiers exerted over the past few months will help keep them focused and better prepared for the upcoming deployment.

During the month of August and September, we conducted Army Warrior Tasks and Drills (AWTD), which are the basic fundamental skills that every Soldier must know. For those that have already conducted this training several times, it is a great refresher and an opportunity for them to polish their skills. The training focused around Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT), hand and arm signals, patrolling, hand grenades, reacting to fire, vehicle searches, entry control point (ECP), detaining suspects, and other areas of emphasis focused around some of our missions in Afghanistan.

The majority of our classes remaining will focus on the academic side of the deployment, such as covering the history, terrain and culture of Afghanistan, Rules of Engagement, General Order #1 and other areas that will get the Soldiers thinking and better prepared for the upcoming deployment.

A Company

Heading south for the winter

By Spec. Brian Van Sant

On September 27, three UH-60 Blackhawk pilots and three UH-60 maintainers (NCM) from A Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, aided in flying six C Company 2nd Assault Battalion UH-60 Blackhawk MEDEVAC helicopters down to Hunter Army Airfield Fort Stewart, Georgia.

C Company is set to deploy to Afghanistan later this month, along with the rest of the 10th CAB. Like other companies in the brigade, they signed over aircraft to aviation units throughout the Army which are currently stateside. All six Blackhawk helicopters landed safely and on time at the intended destination in Hunter Army Airfield September 29.

Maintenance test pilot Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bobby Mathis, A Company 3-10 GSAB, partook in the mission as a final flight as an Army pilot. When asked how she felt about no longer flying for the Army, she reflected by stating; "I'm going to miss flying through turbulence and MEDEVAC missions. While I flew missions in Iraq, they turned out relatively boring. However, when flying through turbulence or missions in Afghanistan, you tend to not know what to expect."

A Company has also relinquished all of their helicopters to another unit and is prepared to fall in on a new fleet upon arrival in Afghanistan.



Photo by Spec. Amanda Brown
UH-60 Blackhawks line the hangar floor ready to be shipped.

“Truly Superior Pilots are those who use their Superior Judgment to avoid those situations where they might have to use their Superior Skills.”

~ Found in emails around the world







Task Force Phoenix

Commander's Corner

Dear Friends and Families of Task Force Phoenix,

I would like to start by saying that I am absolutely humbled and proud to be part of such an outstanding and professional organization. The short history of this unit is marked by selflessness, courageous acts of heroism, and supreme sacrifice by our Soldiers as well as by their Families. As we embark on a third 12 month deployment in the short five year history of this unit, I want our Soldiers and Families to know that they are revered, respected and appreciated for the burden that they carry for this country. It is not lost on anyone that this unit was deployed to Iraq just 12 short months ago and will operate in Afghanistan in the coming weeks. I trust that our Soldiers will find pride and inspiration in the fact that they will participate in a defining moment in this war on terror as our country surges forces in Afghanistan. They will find their place in history – again - as they participated in the SURGE in Iraq. I am confident that Phoenix Soldiers and Phoenix Families will one day claim credit for bringing hope, peace and stability to the people of Afghanistan.

I am confident that this unit is well trained, extremely disciplined, highly motivated and ready for this mission. I encourage the families to become a member of the Family Readiness Group, to stay connected and to volunteer if able. Staying busy and engaged is a reliable technique to make time fly. We have superb Family Readiness Group Advisors, Leaders and a Family Readiness Support Assistant. Please reach out to them. Our Rear Detachment Command Team is the best there is and they are standing by to assist.

I am proud to be a part of this great team. I truly feel that this unit and this mission are larger than any of us. I also know that we are a part of something really great. I encourage our Soldiers, their Families and anyone affiliated with the unit to feel this pride.

“FEEL THE BURN”
LTC Dennis J. McKernan

B Company

Updates and Preparation

By CW2 Dane Hylan

As I type, everyone seems to be busy doing something completely different. However, we are all working toward a common goal – deployment. People are asking for help moving boxes, there is a smell of Windex and pine oil wafting out of offices that have been packed and cleaned. Some Soldiers are handwriting forms and making copies for the ‘paperless army’ that we all serve. I asked 1SG Howard if he had any thoughts on packing up and getting ready to leave. He exclaimed, ‘Bon Voyage Fort Drum!’ In afterthought, he decided it was not very ‘motivated sounding’ and told me that I could make up a quote for him. I will not presume to improve on his quote because it is a great one. Merriam-Webster’s defines ‘Bon Voyage’ simply as Farewell. While freedictionary.com adds more saying: ‘used to express farewell and good wishes to a departing traveler.’ I think his quote sums up what all of us in Task Force Phoenix are hoping for - that we all have a safe journey to the other side of the world and, even more so, that we have a safe journey home when our time is through.

This first edition of the Bravo company newsletter is brief, in part due to the frantic pace at which we’ve been flying missions the past few weeks. Some people flew to finish APART requirements, others flew in Chemical Biological Radiation flights, we even flew General Terry for a familiarity ride after he expressed interest during the AATX down in Fort Rucker, and of course the never ending maintenance flights.



Photo by Spec. Amanda Brown
D Company maintainers Sgt. Cedano and Sgt. Phommavong begin tearing down CH-47's for transportation to Afghanistan.

Add to that the pre-deployment classes, SRC, meetings that CPT Farrell, 1SG Howard, and CW3 Williams (Standardization) have been attending to make sure our transition from here to Afghanistan goes as smoothly as possible, and of course we are all trying to find time to ourselves or with our loved ones, and there just seems to not be enough time to get everything done.

In future newsletters, I would like to give more information on what Bravo Company is doing, what we are thinking, how we are feeling and - what I feel is most important - who we are. If anyone out there has suggestions, I will also write about whatever you would like to hear about, but please keep OPSEC and good taste in mind.

We WILL have our buildings emptied, cleaned and vacated before it is time to take that bus ride to the not-so-rapid Rapid Deployment Facility, and our families will be as prepared as we can make them for our yearlong absence as well. That being said, we are already starting to get that deployment mindset of ‘do your job, and be confident that the person next to you is doing theirs, toward our common goal.’ Bon Voyage!



Photo by Pfc. Rajesh Comstock

Pfc. Michael Cline poses for a photo with his brother and sister at Six Flags.

A Family reunited

By Spec. Amanda Brown

Coming to Fort Drum last January was not exactly what 19 year old Pfc. Michael Cline had in mind for post assignment after attending Advanced Individual Training. After putting in requests for the west coast he found himself in a winter wonderland in Northern New York. Originally from Washington State, Cline felt the harsh cold from the North Country beat into him, but he tried to remain positive.

Cline who is an orderly room clerk in D Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, was playing around online one afternoon and on a whim decided to look up his older sister whom he had not seen in 13 years. They had been separated to live with different grandparents due to family issues. He had always known he had a sister and had memories of her, but never thought to look her up until he was on Myspace that day. Cline found his missing sister and began corresponding with her on a regular basis.

He discovered that his 21 year old sister, Krystal Fontaine, lives in Dudley, Massachusetts. She is currently finishing her degree as a medical assistant. Cline arranged a day where he and his sister could meet up and speak in person. When they met, they exchanged childhood stories and caught up on the past 13 years they had been apart. Cline also got the chance to meet his one year old nephew, Jordan Fontaine.

"There are no words to explain how I feel," said Cline, "I found my father on Myspace too. About five months after I started talking to my sister is when we found out he got shot. My sister and I were brought closer together when our father died even though we did not know him very well. We were his only living relatives so we had to pay for his burial even though neither of us could attend the funeral. It was nice, though, because the police department helped us out a lot. One of the local churches helped us pay for the funeral, as well."

During the beginning of July, Cline arranged to meet up with his sister and his 18 year old brother, Scott Cline, who just graduated high school. He even flew his younger brother in from Yakima, Washington so they could all be together. It was the first time the three of them had been in the same place in 14 years. They travelled to Six Flags New England in Agawam, Massachusetts. Cline wanted to spend as much time with his siblings as possible before his deployment to Afghanistan this fall.

"Because of things like Facebook and Skype I think it will be easy to stay in touch with [my family during deployment] as opposed to regular mail that is slow and can easily get lost," said Cline.

With the use of the social media that brought Cline and his Family together, he will be able to keep in touch with his loved ones from whom he has been separated for so long. What started as a playful shot in the dark has turned Cline's life around and given him the chance to have the loving support from his family during his upcoming deployment.



Photo by Spec. Amanda Brown

Staff Sgt. Smith is seen here working diligently collecting data for the exercise.

Putting the data together

By Spec. Amanda Brown

Key personnel from each battalion of 10th Combat Aviation Brigade arrived at Fort Rucker, Ala. 11 Aug. to participate for nine days in the Afghanistan Aviation Training Exercise.

10th CAB performed in the Aviation Warfighter Simulation Center as the 76th group to conduct training since the center opened. These simulated wartime missions in the AWSC allow collective training through realistic scenarios to promote readiness on the battlefield for units preparing to deploy to Afghanistan.

Staff Sgt. Dianne Smith, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, is currently an all-source analyst.

Having Smith during the AATX was critical because of what her job as the intelligence NCO in charge includes. All-source analysts research and familiarize themselves with the local social behavior, economics, and religious observances. They document data and watch for patterns in activities.

"It is our job to provide enemy awareness for Army aircraft," said Smith.

Since Smith was given the chance to utilize her skills during the AATX, it helped give her a complete picture of the internal administrative involvement during deployment settings.

"I have the knowledge now of how [my shop] fits into Tactical Operation Center operations," said Smith, "It also gave me a sense of the battle rhythm of a typical day."

Smith expressed that this new knowledge will be very valuable for her three Soldiers – who will also be deployed for the first time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return."

~ Quote Unverifiable

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“I feel prepared personally [for the upcoming deployment]. I'm good to go. As far as my family goes, the InfoFair, over at 277th ASB, answered some questions we had. We still have some more classes to go to, but we're getting there as a family. I feel confident my family will be prepared by the time the pre-deployment classes are done,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy Clayton, 3rd flight platoon sergeant in B Company.

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“When we are afraid we ought not to occupy ourselves with endeavoring to prove that there is no danger, but in strengthening ourselves to go on in spite of the danger.”

~Mark Rutherford



Photo by SPC Amanda Brown
SPC Gonzalez, of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, smiling and ready to go.

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