

The Spartan Scroll

Winter 2014



SPARTAN COMMAND REPORT



Happy New Year Spartans and Spartan Families,

In my short time in command, I have been immensely impressed with our SPARTANS and the impact they are having across the globe. From Kosovo to Laos to the Philippines, SPARTANS are spreading the name of the brigade through their actions. In addition to the global missions we are currently supporting, we continue to stand ready to deploy on short notice as an Army Contingency Response Force (ACRF) for the PACOM Commander and the Ready Response Force (RRF) for the NORTHCOM Commander. Through all of this, we demonstrate who the Spartan Paratrooper is:

- Exceptionally Disciplined, Unfailing Professional, and Respectful of Others
- Fanatically Physically Fit
- Mentally Tough, thriving in Uncertain and Austere Environments
- Ready to Deploy on Short Notice
- A Team Player who understands it takes a TEAM to accomplish anything
- An Elite and Lethal Paratrooper who is a master of his or her craft as a professional warrior

As a joint forcible entry force, our goal is to promote security and peaceful development in the Asia-Pacific and Arctic regions. This will be accomplished as we continue to seek out the most challenging missions in the Arctic and Pacific as we live up to the motto: Anywhere, Anytime, In Anything, Airborne! WIN!

Our core priorities for 2015 are:

1. READINESS- Ready Paratroopers, Ready Equipment, and Ready Families. A "Winning Attitude!"
2. LEADER DEVELOPMENT- Masters of our craft and Leaders of Character
3. TRAINED AND LETHAL "ARCTIC" PLTs & COs- Marksmanship, Battle Drills, Thrive in the Arctic
4. AIRBORNE OPERATIONS- Battalion Task Force Airfield Seizure/BN TF ACRF
5. COMMAND AND CONTROL- Trained C2 Nodes from Company to Battalion to Brigade

As Spartans, we demonstrate mastery of the fundamentals through aggressive repetition that builds mastery. Learning and adapting the "Spartan Six" will help us to be an agile, adaptive force:

1. Small Unit Drills (React To Contact/HA)
2. Physical Fitness: Functional Fitness, Foot Marches, and Combatives
3. Airborne Operations
4. Rifle Marksmanship
5. Tactical Medical Skills
6. Arctic Skills

As Spartans we must maintain a positive attitude and stay motivated. Discipline is paramount to our success as a team. Ensure you and your Paratroopers are doing the right thing, especially when no one is looking. Never lose sight of the fact that we are the only Arctic Airborne Brigade Combat Team in the entire Department of Defense. There is no one else in our entire defense apparatus who can do what we do or provide what we provide to our nation. We are an elite group of two time volunteers who provide the protection our nation needs. As the Spartan King stated when asked why his city had no walls, "These Are The Walls of Sparta." You, the less than 1% who volunteered to serve in a time of war, are today's "Walls of Sparta" for our nation. I am extremely proud to serve alongside you and to be your commander. I wish all of you a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

SPARTAN 6

"Sparta Lives"

"Arctic Tough"



'Last Frontier' Army and Air Force leaders come together for leader development

Story and Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith



U.S. Air Force Col. David Nahom, the commander of the 3rd Wing at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, delivers an instructional brief on the specifics of the F-22A Raptor, and what it can bring to a fight to a group of Army leaders with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division during a leader professional development event Aug. 8, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The event focused on relationships and ways to better synchronize combat power between the Army and Air Force components located at JBER. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)

Leaders from the U.S. Air Force at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson hosted Army leaders with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division for a professional development event focusing on joint integration and better understanding of some of JBER's Air Force platforms and their capabilities Aug. 8, 2014, here.

Close to a hundred leaders from across the 4/25 attended the event, which featured tours of aircraft and facilities on JBER's Elmendorf side. They were also given classroom instructions on aircraft platforms and their capabilities.

Main highlights included tours of a C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft, an E-3 Sentry Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft, and an F-22A Fighter aircraft.

Participators and event organizers agreed that better understanding on Air Force capabilities to support ground forces helps to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in battle.

U.S. Air Force Col. David Nahom, the commander of the 3rd Wing at JBER, said, "We work together. Here, and in the Pacific, so getting the 4/25 out here to show them what we do, and what we can do to support the Soldiers, makes for a better understanding."

The unique relationship at JBER brings the two services together, so mutual understanding and effective integration is a key component to jointly working together according to Nahom.

"You just don't know what the next battle is going to look like," said Nahom. "I think when you look up here in Alaska, with the capability like the 4/25 has, and the capability of the 3rd Wing, at some point in some battlefields we will be working together."

Capt. Gabriel Dearman, commander of Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, said, "I think, especially because we are at a joint facility, it is important to understand the capabilities the Air Force brings to the fight, because as the Army's contingency response force, if we are called upon, we will be working with the Air Force. So, understanding the Air Force, and understanding what they bring to the fight helps us to do our job better."

Dearman added that building relationships, and just talking with each other helps create mutual understanding while establishing trust and confidence in each other's capabilities.

First Lt. Daniel Knots, an F-22 pilot with the 525th Fighter Squadron, said, "I've been learning how the Army and the Air Force can integrate better, like how we can use our AWACS [airborne early warning and control aircraft] to bridge the links between the needs of the ground forces and what the Air Force provides in the air."

"We've discussed today on how we can expand that role, and how we can train to how we fight," said Knots.

Leaders with the 4/25 also learned about several of the munitions the Air Force employs to aid in both air-to-ground support and air-to-air battle engagements.



U.S. Army Maj. Frank Fisher, a fires officer with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, looks under the belly of an F-22A Raptor Fighter aircraft during a leader professional development event Aug. 8, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The event focused on relationships and ways to better synchronize combat power between the Army and Air Force components located at JBER. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)

'Sparta Lives': New commander welcomed

Story by Sgt. Daniel Love

Col. Scott A. Green assumed command of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division from the outgoing commander, Col. Matthew W. McFarlane, during a change of command ceremony Nov. 26, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The event was attended by many dignitaries and Family members from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson including U.S. Army Alaska commander Maj. Gen. Michael H. Shields and Alaska representative Dan Saddler.

After greeting the many distinguished attendees, Shields described the conditions in which McFarlane took control of the brigade.

"This was a brigade built for war," Shields said. "The Spartans had just returned from their third deployment in only seven years of existence. His mission was to reset, rebuild and refocus a team freshly returned from combat in Afghanistan. He's done that and more. It is

now the most operational, versatile, and active unit in the Army."

Shields listed 14 places among four continents in which the brigade operated in the last year.

"The Spartans are truly ambassadors for our nation, building trust and reassurance across the Pacific," Shields said. "Under [McFarlane's] leadership, the 4th of the 25th was continuously marked by excellence. Your energetic style of leadership allowed this brigade to exceed all expectations over the past two years."

Shields said the paratroopers looked great as they stood in formation for the ceremony. He also took a moment to thank the U.S. Army Alaska Band for their continued performances over the years.

When McFarlane's turn came to speak he was full of thanks. He thanked all of the leaders in the 4/25, from top to bottom.

"I loved serving in the Spartan Bri-



gade because of the people," McFarlane said. "The very special people of all ranks, of all types, of various backgrounds with a sense of service to their country. You are the reason I love to serve. Not only do you make our military better every day, you have made me a better person. For that, I am grateful."

Lastly, McFarlane thanked his wife, Kelly, for her lifelong commitment and continued support.

McFarlane gave Col. Green and his wife Karla his best wishes as he stepped away and relinquished



Col. Scott A. Green, incoming commander of 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division gives his first orders as brigade commander during a change of command ceremony at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Nov. 26.

command of the brigade.

McFarlane will be moving on from here to take the position of executive officer of U.S. Army Forces Command in Fort Bragg, N.C.

Green thanked McFarlane and his wife for their help during the Greens' move and transition into the brigade and Alaska.

Green went on to thank many members of the Armed Services, his parents, his wife Karla, and his three daughters for their support throughout his career.

Green took a moment to address the 4/25's paratroopers and their Families and friends.

"As I look across this formation I'm reminded what the Spartan king, Agesilaus, said when he was asked why Sparta had no walls in a time when cities used walls for defense," Green said. "He pointed to his men in full armor and replied, 'these are the walls of Sparta'. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and among the many things I'm thankful for, I'm immensely thankful to have the opportunity to serve as your commander and I'm honored to stand in your ranks."

The ceremony concluded a long string of change of command ceremonies held within the brigade over the last several days which saw four of its battalion's receive new commanders.

From here, the brigade will continue to focus its attention on fulfilling its mission as the only airborne brigade in the Pacific Theater.



(Far left) Major General Michael H. Shields (left), commanding general of U.S. Army Alaska, passes the colors of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division to the brigade's incoming commander, Col. Scott A. Green, as the outgoing commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane (right) stands at attention during the brigade's change of command ceremony Nov. 26, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Green assumed command of the storied brigade as McFarlane will continue his Army career serving in a senior position with U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)

(Right) Col. Matthew W. McFarlane (left), the outgoing commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, and Col. Scott A. Green, the 4/25's incoming commander, shake hands as they trade the speech podium during the brigade's change of command ceremony Nov. 26, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. McFarlane is moving on to a senior position at U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg as Green assumes command of the arctic, airborne unit. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love)

(Above) A cake to welcome and celebrate the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division's incoming commander, Col. Scott A. Green, awaits guests during the Spartan Brigade's change of command ceremony Nov. 26, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Green assumes command of the storied brigade as the outgoing commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane, prepares to set out for Fort Bragg, N.C. for a senior position with U.S. Army Forces Command. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Ragin/Released)



Spartan Brigade gets new leadership, welcomes four new battalion commanders

Story by Sgt. Brian Ragin

The 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division underwent significant changes in leadership recently by holding four battalion-level change of command ceremonies at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Nov. 24 and 25, 2014.

Incoming commanders with the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, and the 725th Brigade Support Battalion (Airborne) formally assumed commands of their respective battalions as the outgoing commanders passed their battalions' colors during the traditional "passing of the colors" events.

The first ceremony featured Lt. Col. Patrick S. Altenburg, the 3/509th's outgoing commander, welcoming the incoming commander, Lt. Col. Matthew J. Hardman, with jokes and praises of his battalion's accomplishments.

"It was what I felt was my last jump, four jumps ago, which really illustrates why I love jumping with these paratroopers," said Altenburg. "I don't like jumping, but I love these paratroopers, platoon leaders and XO's (executive officers). It's my greatest honor to be a part of bringing you into the airborne infantry and watching you grow into future Army leaders."

The 9th Army Band made the trip from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, to add live music to the events, which was well-received by guests. The 4/25's brigade commander, Col. Matthew W. McFarlane, said the band adds excellence and tradition to the ceremonies.

Next on the busy week's schedule featured the 2/377th PFA's incoming commander, Lt. Col. Benjamin Luper, accepting the battalion's colors as he formally assumed command. The outgoing commander, Lt. Col. Christopher J. Ward, spoke of accomplishing great tasks over his two years in command, including being the best airborne artillery



unit to go to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

"The 82nd Airborne Division needed to be out there," said Ward. "They need to be taking notes. That training event was the hugest success of this battalion and put PFA on the map within the artillery community. While we walked away with many lessons and areas to improve, it was obvious that this battalion at the time was the best airborne artillery battalion in the Army."



Lt. Col. Matthew J. Hardman, the incoming commander of the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, formally takes command of the 3-Geronimo Battalion as he accepts the battalion's colors from the 4/25's commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane, during the battalion's change of command ceremony Nov. 24, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Hardman assumed command of the 3/509 as Lt. Col. Patrick Altenburg, the outgoing commander completed his 2-year command of the battalion. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Ragin/Released)

The 1/501 Infantry and the 725th BSB change of commands followed on Nov. 25. Lt. Col. Tobin A. Magsig, the 1/501 outgoing commander, kept his speech brief with heart-felt remarks about his years in command and his experiences with the 1-Geronimo Battalion. The incoming commander, Lt. Col. Jason W. Condrey, followed with his incoming speech focusing on the way ahead for the battalion.

Lt. Col. Peter J. Crandall, the outgoing commander of the 725th BSB, kept his remarks short noting that the Army is big, yet small at the same time as he knew the incoming commander, Lt. Col. LaHavie J. Brunson, back when they both were stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The week's change of command ceremonies wrapped up just before the Thanksgiving weekend, culminating with a brigade change of command ceremony. The 4/25's outgoing commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane, passed the unit's colors to U.S. Army Alaska's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Michael Shields, who then in turn, passed the colors to the incoming commander, Col. Scott A. Green.

Lt. Col. Benjamin R. Luper, the incoming commander of the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, stands at the position of attention in the beginning moments of his new command of the Spartan Steel Battalion Nov. 24, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Luper assumed command of the 2/377 as Lt. Col. Christopher Ward, the outgoing commander completed his 2-year command of the battalion. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)



(Above) Lt. Col. LaHavie Brunson, the incoming commander of the 725th Brigade Support Battalion (Airborne), 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, stands at the podium as he delivers his first speech as commander of the Centurion Battalion Nov. 25, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. LaHavie assumed command of the 725 as Lt. Col. Peter Crandall, the outgoing commander completed his 2-year command of the battalion. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)

(Far left) Lt. Col. Jason Condrey, the incoming commander of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, formally takes command of the 1-Geronimo Battalion as he accepts the battalion's colors from the 4/25's commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane, during the battalion's change of command ceremony Nov. 25, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Condrey assumed command of the 1/501 as Lt. Col. Tobin Magsig, the outgoing commander completed his 2-year command of the battalion. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)



Spartans shoot for excellence in EIB

Story by Sgt. Brian Ragin

Paratroopers from the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division tested for the Expert Infantry Badge Tuesday through Saturday last week at Camp Mad Bull, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The EIB is awarded to U.S. Army Soldiers who hold infantry or Special Forces military occupational specialties. To earn the EIB soldiers must complete level 1 task infantry skills.

In 1944, Chief of Staff George C. Marshall initiated the development of an award to honor the U.S. infantryman. Then, on March 29, 1944, Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair presented the first EIB.

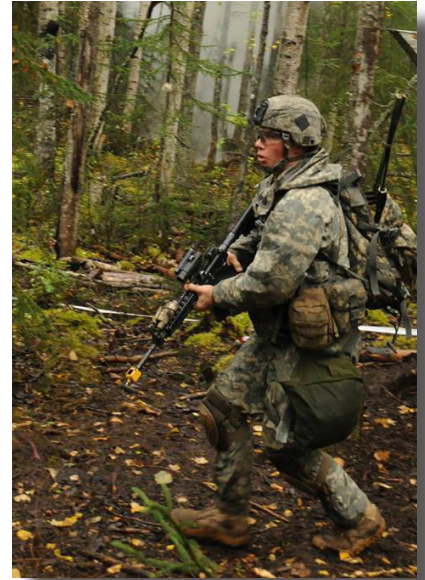
Testing for the EIB is done over a five-day process, which tests Soldiers on the Army physical fitness test, day and night land navigation, weapons master skills testing stations, individual tactical test lanes, and a 12-mile foot march.

The APFT kicked off Tuesday morning with over 600 hundred candidates in attendance. The APFT is the first graded event and is not retest able. The APFT measures the candidates' physical endurance and conditioning.

"EIB usually loses about 30 percent of the candidates the first day because of the PT test," said Staff Sgt. Stuart Williams, EIB Cadre. "Then probably about half of them [candidates] to land navigation."

Land navigation tests took place Tuesday afternoon and night after the APFT. Land navigation tests the abilities of the candidates to navigate from one point to another using a map and compass while equipped with individual combat gear. This is the second graded event and is not retest able. With the unusual down-pour of rain, the candidates' morale was tested.

"Weather definitely has had a factor," said Staff Sgt. James Martell, EIB Cadre. "You can definitely see morale dropping. They're wet,



they're tired, and for the most part they're hungry."

The master skills testing stations and individual tactical test lanes were split into three separate sections: blue, red and white. The MST stations evaluate an individual's proficiency in common infantry weapons systems. The ITT lanes evaluated a candidate's ability to demonstrate their tactical and technical proficiencies on infantry tasks to standard.

The lanes were conducted over the next three days ending on Friday



Col. Matthew McFarlane (right), commanding officer of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, and Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Hacker (left), the senior enlisted adviser of the 4/25 IBCT (ABN), pin Expert Infantryman Badges on EIB candidates who successfully completed five days of rigorous testing in order to earn the coveted badge at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Sept. 13, 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Ragin/Released)

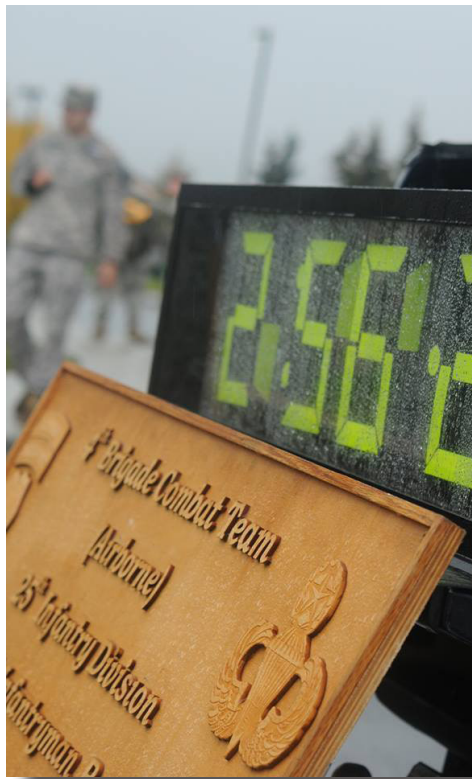
night.

“I got my EIB in 2009. It was one of the first lane style EIBs that went through,” said Staff Sgt. Benjamin Cross, EIB Cadre. “I took as many notes as I could, studied all the material they gave me. I took one task at a time. I didn’t get ahead of myself thinking about the next lane for the next day. I focused on the lane ahead of me.”

“I remember this day when I came through,” said Martell. “Every time I went through a lane I was nervous. You just have to keep a clear head and not let it fluster you. Stay cool, calm, and collective. Make sure your hitting your performance measures, and talk yourself through the task.”

On Saturday morning the candidates finished off testing with the completion of the 12-mile foot march. They were given three hours to complete the march. At the end they were given a weapons proficiency skill test in which they broke down their individual M4. Completion of this event was the end of testing and the candidates received their badges in a ceremony.

“When I was a squad leader,” said Sgt. Maj. Mario Barber. “I took a squad of nine soldiers [to EIB]. Eight of the nine received their EIBs that day. It was a very proud moment for most of them and I. All 18 to 24 years old receiving their EIBs.”



(Left) The official clock ticks down the final moments of the 12-mile foot march portion of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division's Expert Infantryman Badge test at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Sept. 13, 2014. Infantrymen throughout the brigade have spent the last five days undergoing rigorous testing of their infantry skills in order to earn the coveted badge. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Ragin/Released)

(Far left) Spc. Vincent Alaimo, an infantryman with 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, runs through an individual tactical test lane as part of the Expert Infantry Badge testing September 10, 2014 on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Sept. 9, 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Ragin/Released)

(Below) An infantryman with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division works with a Mk 19 automatic grenade launcher Sept. 4, 2014 during training for the upcoming Expert Infantryman Badge qualification at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The EIB qualification event is a major undertaking, featuring more than 700 Soldiers on the training ground preparing for their try at the coveted skill badge. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)



Arctic Warriors join international partners to conquer the Himalayas

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith

Two Army officers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division recently became the latest ambassadors across the Pacific. The mission was to train with partnering nations and joint forces on mountain warfare operations in the Himalayan Mountain Range in Nepal.

First Lts. Matthew Mitchell and Devan Zimmerman, who are both scout platoon leaders for the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, and the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, respectively, made their trip half-way around the world to Nepal in the beginning of August training through the latter part of September.

Mitchell and Zimmerman represented the U.S. part of an international partnership class of students from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand, China, U.K., Canada, the Republic of Korea and Nepal.

Navy Lt. Justin Bowles and Marine Sgt. Jeffrey Morrison, joint force service members from the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, joined the Army officers in representing the U.S.

The Nepal Army High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School in Jomsom sits at 9,500 feet above sea level, so first on the list was acclimatizing to the higher elevations.

The team spent three weeks in Jomsom, training in various mountaineering tasks including rope and

anchor systems, vertical face rock climbing, and other rigorous physical tests of endurance.

A particularly challenging aspect was a 10-mile endurance test which required students to finish in 100 minutes or less while donning full uniforms, boots, and rucksacks. At above 9,000 feet, the rocky and mountainous terrain around Jomsom proved to be challenging.

While both officers are highly skilled at mountaineering operations, the limited air pressure and low oxygen levels took some getting used to.

"I'd say the biggest challenge was the acclimatization," said Zimmerman. "Here [Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson], I live at or around sea level, and when I get to Jomsom its 9,500 feet in elevation, and it's just a huge change in breathing."

From Jomsom, they continued their mountain movements to a Glacial Base Camp near Mukti-nath where they conducted glacier training. Tasks included ice climbing, movements across a moraine-covered glacier, climbing with walking axes, moving in rope teams, and crevasse rescue.

The class was broken down into four-man rope teams led by Nepalese team leaders, who are referred to as

"Tigers."

Mitchell and Zimmerman were paired up in a team along with a master sergeant from the Korean army.

(Below) United States Service Members hold the American Flag at the top of Thorong Peak, a 20,200-foot mountain in the Himalayan Mountain Range in Nepal, Sept. 13, 2014. The team was there participating in an international class of military service members at the Nepal Army High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School in Jomsom. Pictured here from left is Army 1st Lt. Matthew Mitchell, a scout platoon leader for the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, 1st Lt. Devan Zimmerman, a scout platoon leader for the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4/25 IBCT and Navy Lt. Justin Bowles with the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center. (Courtesy photo by Canadian Army Master Cpl. Bradley Turk/Released)





Field grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division jump onto Geronimo Drop Zone on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, March 20, 2014 as part of the airborne community's ceremonial "Prop Blast." The origins of the Prop Blast began in the very early days of the Airborne's formation shortly before World War II and evolved into a lengthy and elaborate multi-stage team-building event, rich in symbolism and replete with sacred objects and special lore. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Epperson)



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Matthew Mitchell, a scout platoon leader for the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, looks back to snap this photo as he and his rope team approach the summit of Thorong Peak, a Himalayan Mountain in Nepal Sept. 13, 2014. Mitchell, along with three other U.S. service members were in Nepal to train alongside service members from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand, China, the United Kingdom, Canada, Republic of Korea and Nepal in mountaineering and high altitude training. (Courtesy photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Matthew Mitchell/Released)

The ending phases of the course progressed as the students continued their trek into the Thorong Pass, stopping at various base camps along their way to the culminating event, Thorong Peak, a mountain with an elevation nearly as high as Mount McKinley at 20,200 feet.

Mitchell, who used his experiences from the U.S. Army Alaska, Northern Warfare Training Center's Basic Military Mountaineering Course and Assault Climbers Course as a bed rock for this training, said he and Zimmerman are both skilled in mountaineering operations, but had to remain focused while they persevered through the dangers and extended periods of movement in the extremely high elevations.

"It was more about remaining calm when you are on an 18-hour trek at 18-thousand, 20-thousand feet, going over a snow crevasse, which is 200 feet below you, but there is just enough snow in between it that you can safely walk quickly."

The extreme elevations continued to test the climbers as they pressed forward.

"Almost everyone in the course got some sort of Altitude sickness or were showing signs of AMS [acute mountain sickness]," said Mitchell.

Zimmerman added, "When you get into Thorong Pass, where you get up to 20,000 feet eventually, although you are acclimatized, getting up into that higher elevation is difficult. Like every third or fourth step you're gasping for air, and then you just keep kick-stepping into the

snow and ice to keep going up."

The pair was further challenged when their rope-team member from the Republic of Korea sprained his ankle and had to be belayed down the mountain several thousand feet to the snow line.

"We actually had to lower him down the mountain. It was an experience I will never forget," said Mitchell.

Mitchell said the experience of all of the service members from all of the different countries roped together, helping each other, and working together to get to the 20,000-foot peak was a memorable experience.

"It's definitely something I will remember," said Mitchell "I had a Korean soldier who barely spoke any English with a 'Tiger,' Nepalese instructor leading our rope team, who spoke no English!"

"It was a unique opportunity. Some of the advantages were the cultural immersions," Mitchell continued. "I think working with all of the different countries and listening to other people's input is a valuable part of the training that I can take away from Nepal."

Living and training with their international partners was good training in itself according to Zimmerman, who shared some stories on his experience.

"A funny story is, on the first day we were there having breakfast. We had curried potatoes for breakfast and one of the Canadian guys said

'Wow, these are great! I could have these every day.' And we did! We had curried potatoes every day, and every meal of every day."

Other frequent items on the menu included rice, noodles, meat, and roti bread.

The Nepalese were humorously surprised at the physical size of Zimmerman in another story.

Zimmerman, who weighs over 200 pounds, said, "They were all amazed at my size, I guess because I out-weighed probably the average Nepalese guy by 50 to 60 pounds. So, when they would ask me how much I weighed, I would tell them '100 kilos,' and it was astounding to them. They would be like, 'wow, that's twice my weight!'"

He said he had to explain to them that most people in America are larger.

"I forget my nickname, but it meant 'Big Man' in Nepalese," Zimmerman said.

The Spartan officers took away some good memories, but also some valuable training and lessons learned in operating in extreme altitudes.

As scout platoon leaders, some responsibilities are to lead a rifle company through a mountainous environment. They provide commanders with recommendations on how to move through the terrain, where to set up rope systems, what terrain is restrictive and severely restrictive, and how fast to safely move a unit through based on the

elevation and terrain, Zimmerman explained.

A key takeaway from the training was the effects altitude has on operations and how important it is to plan for contingencies and pack additional safety gear.

Additionally, the professional exchange amongst all of the partner nations helped to strengthen international bonds.

“The experience was definitely unique,” said Mitchell. “There’s only [been] 50 Americans that have participated in the course since 1992, so I’m glad that I can say I represented our Army.”

For Zimmerman, mountaineering in the Himalayas was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

“It was certainly an eye-opener,” Zimmerman said. “I got to climb a 20,000-foot peak! It was an amazing opportunity, I don’t know if the Army will ever give me that chance again, so I was grateful.”

Both officers plan to continue climbing and hope to summit another 20,000-foot peak, but staying local this time, with an attempt on Mount McKinley.



A class of international service members attending the Nepal Army High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School pose for a photo Aug. 26, 2014, on top of Thorong Peak in the Himalayan Mountain Range in Nepal. Students gathered from countries all around the world for the seven-week course based out of Jomsom, Nepal. A group of four United States service members were joined by service members from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand, China, the United Kingdom, Canada, Republic of Korea and Nepal for the rigorous mountaineering and high altitude training. (Courtesy photo by the Nepal Army High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School/Released)



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Devan Zimmerman (center), a scout platoon leader for the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fires Nepalese Armed Forces pistols with a Republic of Korea soldier (left) and a Canadian army soldier (right) during training at the Nepal Army High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School in Nepal Sept. 7, 2014. (Courtesy photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Matthew Mitchell/Released)

Eagle River High School hockey players work out with 1-Geronimo paratroopers

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith

Paratroopers with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division paired up with hockey players from Eagle River High School for a day of leadership development Oct. 25, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The day's event started with team-building, cross-fit exercises at Hangar 5 on the Elmendorf side. The high school hockey players and paratroopers flipped tires, ran the perimeter carrying weights and worked together as they completed team events.

From there, they went to the Wilderness Inn Dining Facility to dine and replenish energy for the rigorous afternoon filled with more physical tests of endurance and teamwork.

The first event of the afternoon was the Humvee push. The hockey players and paratroopers teamed up again to push a Humvee for about 100 meters to an equipment donning area. At the donning point, the teams put on ballistic armor vests, protective masks, and carried "dummy" weapons as they started off on a run to the base of the hill on Otter Lake Road. At that point, they donned the protective masks for a gut-check run up the hill.

At the top, everybody was able to turn in their equipment, but their

run was not over. They continued running to the railroad crossing where a litter bearing a simulated injured Soldier awaited. The team gathered up the litter, and continued for another mile or so where they found the simulated evacuation point. From there, they picked up a railroad tie and ran another mile to the finishing point at the Arctic Warrior Combatives Academy.

At the academy, the teams learned some techniques in Army combatives, and finished up the day wrestling on the mats.

It was a really good leadership development and team-building event according to many involved in the day's activities.

Bill Comer, the ERHS hockey head coach, said, "We thought it'd be a good idea to just get them out here early like this, and get them together, and do some team bonding."

First Lt. Michael Vansickle from the 1/501 said the event was all about team building.

"This is fun and rewarding for us" said Vansickle. "We can show them what we do a little bit, and hopefully we can help them be a little more cohesive as a team."

Vansickle said events like this are important, because our local community is small and is intricately integrated into the military community. "We're pretty committed to

our school partnership program."

The high school players and paratroopers alike, both enjoyed the day, and were able to learn from each other about the importance of working together as a team to get things accomplished.

"It was fun. We had a good time," said Pfc. John Wendling from Comanche Company, 1/501. "As much as they learned from us, we definitely learned from them, just by how team work and team play can be effective for both our jobs and their team."

Jesse Johnson, the ERHS hockey varsity team captain, said the event will benefit his team this year by helping them work together.

"We all need to work as a team, and if we work as a team, we're going to win," said Johnson.

He was also happy about being able to come to JBER for the event.

"I hope we can do this again some time," said Johnson. "I think it's awesome to work with the Soldiers."

Coach Comer was also glad to spend the day with JBER paratroopers.

"Soldiers are great. It's amazing how disciplined they are, and how accommodating they are for our players, and they really are great role models for our boys to see,"



Hockey team players from Eagle River High School make their way up a steep hill while wearing ballistic armor vests and protective masks during a leadership development day hosted by paratroopers with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Oct. 25, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

said Comer. "This is a great event for the kids. I think they will remember this for a long time."

The leadership development day at JBER was one of the first things on this year's agenda for the ERHS hockey team, and the coaches and players look to use their experiences working together as a team as a solid base for a successful upcoming season.



Hockey team players from Eagle River High School carry a litter with a simulated injured person on it during a leadership development day hosted by paratroopers with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Oct. 25, 2014, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

Spartan ceremony formally honors unit for deployment to Kosovo

Story by Sgt. Brian Ragin

Approximately 350 Spartans from the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division are scheduled to deploy to Kosovo on a nine-month-long rotation to conduct peace and support operations as part of Kosovo Force, Multinational Battle Group-East, and the unit formally honored its paratroopers in a deployment ceremony here at Buckner Gym Sept. 19, 2014.

A small contingent of paratroopers assigned to the brigade's Headquarter Company and several hundred paratroopers assigned to the 1st Squadron (Airborne), 40th Cavalry Regiment will support ongoing peacekeeping operations in Kosovo as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force.

The 1/40th's most recent deployment was to Afghanistan's Khost province, where the unit partnered with Afghanistan Security Forces until its redeployment in October 2012. Today, the 1/40th, nicknamed, The Denali Squadron, stands ready to deploy to the European Command area of Operations in support of KFOR19 to ensure a safe and secure environment for the people of Kosovo.

While operating as a part of the battle group, Spartan paratroopers will work daily alongside military service personnel from not only Kosovo, but from several partner nations as well, including Romania, Armenia, Moldova and Kazakhstan.

"I am kind of anxious; a little nervous leaving the family, especially here in Alaska," said Staff Sgt Gerald Neal, an intelligence analyst for the 1/40th, who is beginning his first deployment. "The winter is coming up, and it is kind of harsh."

Fortunately, for paratroopers living on post, there is a program that helps out with driveway and sidewalk snow removal while the service member is deployed.

The main body deploys late this month and will travel to Germany for a monthlong training exercise before beginning the rotation. The unit is scheduled to return in late summer 2015.

The peacekeeping mission is new for the Spartan Brigade, as its deployments have largely been combat operations in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

"Just for the safety factor, I am glad it is not a combat deployment," said Neal. "But, because it is not a combat tour, it might move slower, but we will see."

"I feel good about it," said his wife, Brittney.

As it conducts the Kosovo Force mission, the multifaceted Spartan Brigade will continue to hold its responsibilities as a U.S. Army Pacific Command rapid contingency response force.

Lt. Col. Mark D. Federovich (left), the commander of the 1st Squadron (Airborne), 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, and Command Sgt. Maj. Jan C. Araneta (right), the senior enlisted advisor of Denali Squadron, case the unit's colors during the squadron's deployment ceremony September 19, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.



(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)



Lt. Col. Mark D. Federovich (left), the commander of the 1st Squadron (Airborne), 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, and Lt. Col. Clinton J. Baker, commanding officer of Multinational Battle Group-East, Kosovo Force, stand at Parade Rest in front of the Color Guard during the Denali Squadron's deployment ceremony Sept. 19, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)

Spartan Brigade bids farewell to the 425th BSTB, welcomes 6th BEB in its place

Story by Sgt. Brian Ragin

The 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division formally inactivated the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion (Airborne) and immediately activated the 6th Brigade Engineer Battalion in a ceremony October 17, 2014 on Pershing Field at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The newly activated battalion will take on all subordinate units from the 425th BSTB. It will also bring increased capability in engineer mission command structure. The new organization will be able to support the brigade combat team with two full companies of engineers, one to provide combat and stability operations, and another to conduct horizontal construction and route clearance.

The ceremony on Pershing Field featured Paratroopers of the battalion in ceremonial formation along with several static displays from the inventory of 6th BEB platforms, which included several military vehicles and an unmanned aerial vehicle.

“The soldiers you see on the field before you represent the best of two exceptional units,” said Lt. Col. Kevin J. Perera, the outgoing commander of the former 425th BSTB. “Blending the accounts of October, 2005 and three combat deployments with the campaign streamers from the Civil War, World War One, and World War Two, we now recognize the 6th Brigade Engineer Battalion as the amalgamation of these two destinies, and one of the most decorated battalions within our modern Army.”

The 425th BSTB’s inactivation is part of Army Force

Structure organization to achieve the Army’s 2020 plan. The 6th BEB is a representation of the Army of 2020’s way of strengthening the force by consolidating and preparing leaders and organizations for future missions and by creating a more adaptive and agile force.

“Building on the success of the BSTB, the 6th BEB stands ready to provide essential combat enabler support to the Spartan Brigade with military intelligence, signal, CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear,) military police, engineers and expanded mission command capabilities,” said Lt. Col. George H. Walter, the 6th BEB’s commander.

Also supporting the ceremony was U.S. Army Alaska’s 9th Army Band from Fort Wainwright by providing live ceremonial music.

The band complimented the superb fall weather and amazing Alaskan scenery said the 4/25’s commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane.

The ceremony culminated with a pass and review featuring all of the unit’s Paratroopers marching by and saluting their commander as they moved off the parade field and back to work.

Paratroopers of the newly activated 6th Brigade Engineer Battalion (Airborne) represent their unit in formation during the unit’s activation ceremony as it joins the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division Oct. 17, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada)





(Left) The original commander of the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion (Airborne), 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Col. Tom Roth (black beret), who is now with U.S. Army Alaska, and the last commander of the 425th, Lt. Col. Kevin Perera, roll up the battalion's colors to case them, formally inactivating the battalion during the unit's inactivation ceremony Oct. 17, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The 6th Brigade Engineer Battalion (Airborne) will assume the duties of the inactivated Warrior Battalion for the Spartan Brigade. The 6th BEB brings increased engineer command structure and presence while maintaining the readiness provided by the outgoing 425th. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)

(Below) The color guard for the newly activated 6th Brigade Engineer Battalion (Airborne), 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, stands in front of the battalion's formation during the unit's activation ceremony Oct. 17, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The 6th BEB (ABN) will assume the duties of the inactivated 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion (Airborne) for the Spartan Brigade. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)



The distinctive unit insignia of the 6th Brigade Engineer Battalion (Airborne), 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, originally approved for the 6th Engineer Regiment on September 17, 1925. The silver oak leaf and two acorns are taken from the crest of the coat of arms and refer to the capture of Clairs Chênes (White Oaks) Woods in France on October 20, 1918. The motto on the black oval scroll "Clairs Chênes N'Oubliez. Jamais (The Cleared Oaks - Never Forget Them) alludes to this action. (Courtesy image)

Spartan Pegasus: An exercise in rapid emergency response

Story by Sgt. Brian Ragin

Paratroopers with the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division conducted an arctic mobility exercise called Spartan Pegasus on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and on the Buffalo Drop Zone at Fort Greely, Alaska, Oct. 23, 2014.

Spartan Pegasus is a cold-weather, rapid entry operation demonstrating U.S. Army Alaska's unique capacity to provide rapid response, ground forces to the joint forces commander throughout remote, arctic environments.

The scenario set up for the exercise was to alert, prepare and deploy forces on short notice into a remote, arctic environment to secure a crash site in an area not accessible by road. U.S. Army Alaska is the only command in the U.S. Army trained and equipped to provide extreme cold-weather airborne forces support to the joint force.

"The airborne brigade that we have up here in Alaska is arctic and airborne trained," said Capt. Vincent Mullin, a Brookline, Mass., native, and Able Company's commander. "We can really go any place at any time and complete any mission that USARAK, the brigade, and the U.S. government deems that we need to go and do."

The 4/25 also had a platoon that participated in a Stress Shoot. The Stress Shoot training tested their ability to accurately engage targets on a firing range despite extreme stress and exhaustion.

"We are paratroopers. We're prepared for any type of issues or circumstances that may arise," said Mullin. "As infantrymen, especially as paratrooper infantrymen, we're able to come up with a solution to any type of issue that we face."

"There is no other unit like it," said Pvt. 1st Class Michael Weidman, a Hammond, Ind., native and 3rd



The commander of the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Lt. Col. Patrick Altenburg, is assisted by Capt. Franklin Brown, the unit's physician assistant, in donning an Army T-11 parachute system in preparation for the Spartan Pegasus airborne operation Oct. 23, 2014 at the Joint Mobility Complex at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Spartan Pegasus is a cold-weather, rapid-entry operation demonstrating U.S. Army Alaska's unique capacity to provide rapid-response ground forces to the joint forces commander throughout remote, arctic environments. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)

Platoon's medic. "To go from two degrees here at JBER and jump in another country at 98 degrees, (Exercise Cobra Gold 2014) I don't think any other unit does that, or capable of doing, I think we probably have one of the best brigades out there."

Spartan Pegasus allowed the brigade to maximize training resources across multiple units to maintain readiness on a wide array of mission sets across the Pacific and arctic regions.

"I am very proud of what Able Company was able to accomplish in the 24 to 48 hours," said Mullin. "Some long nights, minimum sleep, a lot of mission planning and a lot of different missions that Able Company was able to accomplish, the Soldiers did very well."



(Above) Paratroopers with Able Company, 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division await the arrival of a litter team during Spartan Pegasus on the Buffalo Drop Zone at Fort Greely, Alaska Oct. 23, 2014. Spartan Pegasus is a cold-weather, rapid-entry operation demonstrating U.S. Army Alaska's unique capacity to provide rapid-response ground forces to the joint forces commander throughout remote, arctic environments. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Ragin/Released)



Air Force joint terminal attack controllers (first two from left) and their joint partners with the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division make last minute uniform and equipment adjustments before jumping out of a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft approaching the drop zone at Fort Greely, Alaska in support of Spartan Pegasus Oct. 23, 2014. Spartan Pegasus is a cold-weather, rapid-entry operation demonstrating U.S. Army Alaska's unique capacity to provide rapid-response ground forces to the joint forces commander throughout remote, arctic environments. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)

Fire from the sky: Airborne artillery warms up JBER winter nights

By Staff Sgt. Daniel Love

“Is that a fly-by or are they jumping?” a paratrooper asked another as they set up a M105 howitzer that had dropped from a plane less than an hour ago. A C-17 Globemaster III aircraft was approaching low and slow. The Soldiers stomped around the gun in the cold, dark and snow, making adjustments and preparing it to fire. The C-17 flew over their heads, littering paratroopers into the sky behind it. “Oh yeah, they’re jumping. Heads up! Don’t take a ruck(sack) to the head!”

Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, filled the skies with parachutes and artillery rounds Dec. 9-11, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The exercise started Dec. 9 at the JBER Joint Mission Complex. Paratroopers with the Spartan Steel Battalion rigged up to jump and boarded a C-17 aircraft. Another two C-130s carried their equipment for the drop. When the time came, the planes took off and littered the skies above the Malemute Drop Zone with paratroopers and equipment.

“When we jump into an open drop zone like this we are practicing jumping into hostile territory, and we want to get in, take control of the area, and get set up as fast as we can,” said Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Burnett, platoon sergeant of 1st Platoon, A Battery, 2/377 PFAR. “The ability to run night-time operations in PFAR is the ability to do our job under the cover of darkness.”

The darkness and location also presented difficulty.

“Training at night in the cold makes everything more challenging, from laying the guns, to erecting the OE-254 (radio antenna), to operating the sights on the howitzer to aim them,” said 2nd Lt. Benjamin Luedtke, platoon leader of 2nd Platoon, A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 277th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment (Airborne). “By exposing our paratroopers to these challenges, they learn how to overcome them, both from the experience of their fellow paratroopers, and from trial and error.”

Temperatures dipped below 10 degrees and the para-



Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, jump out into the darkness over the Malemute Drop Zone Dec. 9, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The 2/377 loaded up several aircraft of paratroopers and equipment for the jump and follow-on, multi-day training event. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)

troopers' cold weather gear and training were put to the test.

"Field Artillery prides itself in being the all-weather fire-support system," Luedtke said. "If the weather is bad, planes can't fly to give you close air support, but rain, snow, sleet or fog, howitzers can always shoot."

"We have to dress differently here than I ever have before, like using layers," said Pvt. William Conrad, an artilleryman with 2nd Platoon, A Battery. "We have special boots and a special heater. Really, up here you're fighting the cold as well as your enemy. I'm from Florida; I'm not used to this yet."

This was Conrad's first training exercise in Alaska. The airborne artillerymen fired their howitzers well into the night Dec. 10.

"The more we do this, the better we become at it," Burnett said. "I love artillery. I love the smoke and sending the rounds downrange. I love doing it here because this is another one of those environments that we can use to go out and prove that we can operate anywhere in the world."

"The 2-377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment is the only arctic airborne field-artillery battalion in the United States Army," Luedtke said. "Our ability to execute training like this: jumping in, firing live rounds, and operating in the bitter cold and dark, is what gives us our identity. This is who we are."



Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, prepare for an airborne operation exercise as they board an Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft loaded with a heavy-drop-rigged Humvee Dec. 9, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. The paratroopers and the Humvee exited the aircraft over the Malemute Drop Zone on JBER later that evening. The Humvee was used as the prime mover for a 105mm howitzer as the paratroopers continued on with a multi-day, follow-on mission. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)

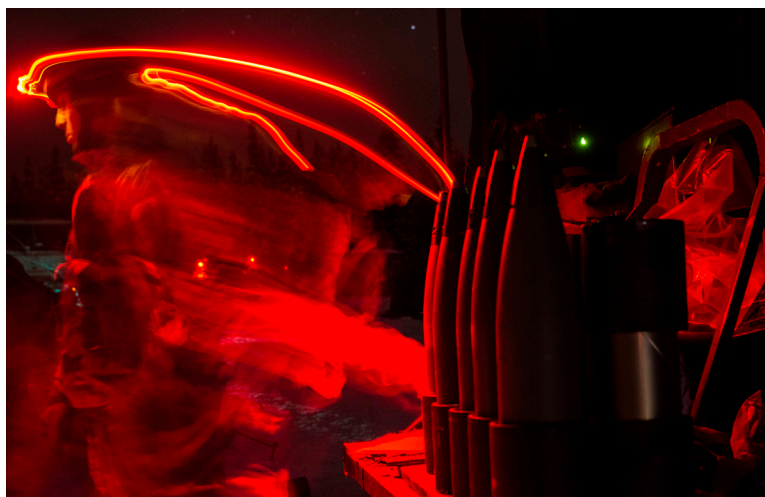


Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fire 105mm howitzers during a night-fire training event Dec. 10, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Paratroopers of the unit are using the dark and arctic conditions to gain proficiency in operating in austere environments during the multi-day training exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada/Released)



Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fire 105mm howitzers during a night-fire training event Dec. 10, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Paratroopers of the unit are using the dark and arctic conditions to gain proficiency in operating in austere environments during the multi-day training exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)

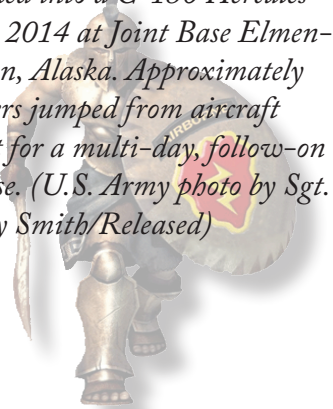
A paratrooper with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, illuminates his area with a red head lamp as he works at a 105mm howitzer firing point Dec. 10, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Paratroopers of the unit are using the dark and arctic conditions to gain proficiency in operating in austere environments during the multi-day training exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)



Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fire 105mm howitzers during a night-fire training event Dec. 10, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Paratroopers of the unit are using the dark and arctic conditions to gain proficiency in operating in austere environments during the multi-day training exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Love/Released)



A heavy-drop-rigged 105mm howitzer, belonging to the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, is prepared to be loaded into a C-130 Hercules aircraft Dec. 9, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Approximately 100 paratroopers jumped from aircraft later that night for a multi-day, follow-on training exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)



Paratroopers with the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fire 105mm howitzers during a night-fire training event Dec. 10, 2014 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Paratroopers of the unit are using the dark and arctic conditions to gain proficiency in operating in austere environments during the multi-day training exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada/Released)



High School JROTC Raider Cup

Story and Photos by Sgt. Brian Ragin

Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets chosen from the best athletes from Anchorage's eight JROTC program competed in the 2014 Raiders Cup Competition Friday and Saturday at Camp Carroll, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, to see which high school had the most physically fit JROTC cadets.

Paratroopers of the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, helped host The Raider Cup. The competition is fitness-based, and is comprised of 10 events over two days.

Dimond High School sponsored the two-day event. Schools that participated were Bartlett High School, Chugiak High School, Dimond High School, Eagle River High School, East High School, Service High School, South High School, and West High School.

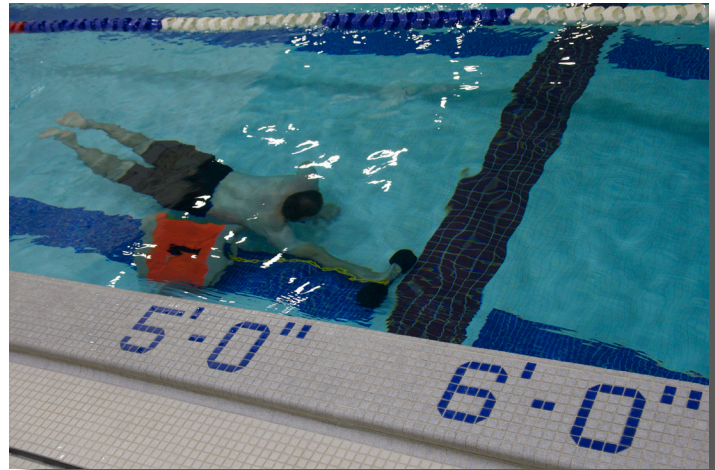
Each team consisted of six females and six males, with 10 cadets participating in each event from each school. Each event had two reserves in the event they had to alternate.

The competitions included a climbing wall, an inflatable obstacle course, the inverted crawl, run-dodge-and-jump, tug-of-war, a 20-meter pacer (Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run), a one-mile run, basketball toss, 60-meter relay, and the Davey Jones relay. Due to inclement weather, some events had to be canceled due to safety concerns.

One senior noncommissioned officer and 14 enlisted Soldiers with the 725 BSB were graders at the event.

"The cadets are really having fun out here today," said Pvt. D. Jaye Latham. "You can really tell that these guys came out here to compete. They are really at each others' throats. The teammates are pushing each other to do better than the next team."

One of the events canceled due to rain was the obstacle course.



A cadet participates in the Davey Jones Relay as part of the 2014 Raider Cup at Buckner Gym on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska Sept. 6, 2014. The Raider Cup is a JROTC physical fitness competition comprised of 10 events contested over two days.

"We are a little disappointed this year," said Gunnery Sgt. A Rene Dervaes III, a retired United States Marine Corps, and Chugiak High School's JROTC naval science instructor. "The rain stopped the main event [the obstacle course], but wait till March that's the one that gets real competitive."

The tug-of-war teams were placed by random draw in a double-elimination bracket. The event started Friday evening and went on to be the talk of the competition.

"It was one of the longer events," said Sgt. 1st Class Taylor, 725's noncommissioned officer in charge of the graders. "There were so many teams. It just was a long process to get to the end. But the Navy JROTC team, they had it down to a science, they won that event. No doubt about it."

The overall winner of the Raider Cup was determined by computing all event times together. The winner would be determined by the lower time across the board of all events.

Dimond High School's Army JROTC program won the competition.

The 716th EOD Company's Executive Officer, 1st Lt.

Josiah Hennig, who hails from Stratford, Conn., said, “The 4-25 has been very welcoming, and we are excited to work with them and be a part of the team.”

The 4-25’s Commander, Col. Matthew McFarlane, said, “This ceremony is a great way to punctuate that the 716th EOD and the 4th Quartermaster are now part of the Spartan family.”

“There are many aspects that go into this,” said McFarlane, “from mission command responsibilities of equipping and sustainment to family care. We are ensuring we guide our leaders and all of our soldiers in leader development, and interacting with post agencies to make sure we can take care of the entire formation and their families.”

Units across Alaska are meeting the challenges presented by the Army’s force restructuring, according to Maj. Gen. Michael H. Shields, USARAK commanding general. He

said the patch ceremony is the right way to welcome new units as they transition throughout his command.

“This is a progression of several moves within USARAK, and this is a great way to recognize these units and soldiers for their service and of course, the great history and tradition of the 4th of the 25th,” said Shields.

Shields said USARAK has plans to restructure many units in the future, to include some aviation units, as the command continues to realign its force structure both at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and at Fort Wainwright.



A paratrooper from 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division paces a cadet in the 20-meter PAC-ER (Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run) as part of the 2014 Raider Cup Competition at Camp Carroll on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Sept. 6, 2014. The test is progressive in intensity in that it is easy in the beginning and gets harder toward the end.

Spartans show they have what it takes to be one of The Few, The Proud, The Marines

Story and Photos by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada

CAMP HANSEN, OKINAWA, Japan - Arctic Warriors were given an opportunity to experience Marine combat training while participating in Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian (UFG) 2014, an annual joint/combined command post exercise designed to enhance the Republic of South Korea's defensive capabilities in the face of an aggressor threat.

Paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division along with Airmen of the 3rd Air Support Operations Squadron assigned to the Spartan Brigade, home-stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, participated in the Marine Corps' combat fitness test (CFT) to build esprit de corps and learn more about the Marines' training requirements.

"Since we're here at Camp Hansen and Camp Courtney conducting the UFG exercise and we're doing joint operations with the Marine Corps, we thought it would be a great way to understand some of the Marine mentality," said Maj. David Nelson, operations officer for the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4/25 IBCT (ABN).

The CFT is taken once a year and includes a sequence of physical exercises that evaluates a Marine's ability to perform several combat-related activities. The CFT was designed to complement the physical

fitness test (PFT) in order to provide insight into a Marine's overall fitness level.

Before the inception of the CFT in 2008, Marines took the PFT once every six months. The Marine Corps then changed it up a bit, shifting more towards a combat fitness-type test.

Since 2008, between January and June, the Marines run a PFT, which consists of pullups, crunches and a three-mile run for males. For females it consists of a flexed arm hang, crunches and a 3-mile run.

Between June and December a Combat Fitness Test is conducted.

"I think it's excellent. Running three miles, doing 20 pull-ups, doing 100 crunches, becomes normal," said U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Pete O'Brien, the company



Maj. David Nelson (left), the operations officer for the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, grades Lt. Col. Christopher Ward (right), commander of 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4/25 IBCT (ABN), as he lifts a 30-pound ammunition can overhead from shoulder height repeatedly for two minutes as part of the U.S. Marine Corps' Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014. Elements of the Spartan Brigade are in Okinawa to participate in Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian 2014, a joint/combined command post exercise designed to enhance the Republic of South Korea's defensive capabilities in the face of an aggressor threat.

gunnery sergeant for Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, who also facilitated the CFT for the Arctic Warriors.

"This mixed it up and now there's a whole bunch of things we have to start working on," said O'Brien, a



Lt. Col. Jeffrey Crapo (right), deputy commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, sprints 10 yards during a “maneuver-under-fire” event, a timed 300-yard shuttle run where Soldiers are paired up by size and perform a series of combat-related tasks as part of the U.S. Marine Corps’ Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014.

Boston native. “You have to work on your combat conditioning, your flexibility, your upper body strength and things like that.”

The CFT consists of three events:

- An 880-yard “Movement to Contact” run in boots and utility pants.

- Two minutes of lifting a 30-pound ammo can over the head, earning two points for each number done in the time limit.

- A “Maneuver Under Fire” drill, that is part obstacle course, part conditioning and part combat test, which consists of the following:

- 10-yard sprint

- 15-yard crawl (low then high crawl)

- Hauling a simulated casualty using two different carries – drag and fireman’s carry – over 75 yards while zig-zagging through cones

- Sprint while carrying two 30-pound ammo cans over 75 yards through the same cones

- Throwing a dummy hand grenade into a marked circle 22.5 yards away (five seconds added to total time if missed)

- Three pushups and a sprint with the ammo cans to the finish line.

“It’s a pretty good assessment,” said 1st Lt. Jonathan Razack, a Dallas native assigned to the 1-501 IN, 4/25th IBCT (ABN).

Razack compared the event to the Army’s Ranger Physical Assessment Test, noting the similarities of

running in boots and utilities with body armor on.

“I definitely think it’s a good measure of combat fitness and it’s something a little different,” said Razack. “It’s good for team building.”

“Learning to see how [the Marines] train and actually [execute] the training are great lessons learned and maybe we can take some of this training and incorporate it with our own units,” Razack added.

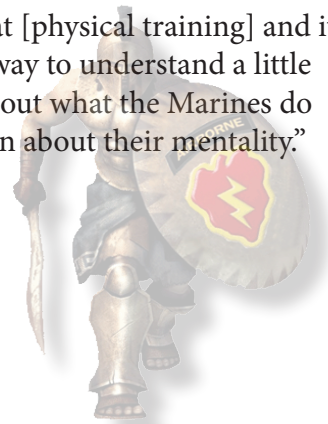
O’Brien said the scores were right on par with the Marines. Noting that like everything else in a unit, there are high scores and then there are scores that indicate areas for improvement.

“I think they are doing pretty good,” said O’Brien. “If you took these scores and put them next to a Marine’s score, you wouldn’t know who ran what from the score.”

This is Nelson’s second time participating in the event.

“I did it last year with another group of Marines,” said Nelson. “It’s a smoker, but I think it’s a great test of your ability to execute some of those tasks that have to be done in combat.”

“It’s great [physical training] and it’s a good way to understand a little more about what the Marines do and learn about their mentality.”





(Left) First Lt. Samantha Larson (center) with Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fireman carries Staff Sgt. Jennifer Berger (right) with 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4/25 IBCT (ABN), during a “maneuver-under-fire” event, a timed 300-yard shuttle run in which Soldiers are paired up by size and perform a series of combat-related tasks as part of the U.S. Marine Corps’ Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014. The paratroopers participated in the event to build esprit de corps and learn more about their joint partners training requirements while in Okinawa to participate in Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian 2014.



(Right) Capt. Philip Sakala, a field artillery officer with 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, performs a high crawl during a “maneuver-under-fire” event, which is a timed 300-yard shuttle run where Soldiers are paired up by size and perform a series of combat-related tasks as part of the U.S. Marine Corps’ Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014.



Capt. Jacqlyn Tsao (left) with 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, 1st Lt. Samantha Larson (center) with Headquarters Company, 4/25 IBCT (ABN), and Staff Sgt. Jennifer Berger (right) with 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4/25th IBCT (ABN) lift a 30-pound ammunition can overhead from shoulder height repeatedly for two minutes as part of the U.S. Marine Corps’ Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014.





U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Pete O'Brien (left), the company gunnery sergeant for Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, explains to paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, how to properly lift a 30-pound ammunition can overhead from shoulder height repeatedly for two minutes as part of the Marine Corps' Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014. The paratroopers participated in the event to build esprit de corps and learn more about their joint partners training requirements while in Okinawa to participate in Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian 2014.



(Above) Warrant Officer Jean Simon, an intelligence technician with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, sprints while carrying two 30-pound ammo cans over 75 yards during a "maneuver-under-fire" event, a timed 300-yard shuttle run where Soldiers are paired up by size and perform a series of combat-related tasks as part of the U.S. Marine Corps' Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014.



(Left) Paratroopers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, along with Airmen of the 3rd Air Support Operations Squadron assigned to the Spartan Brigade, participate alongside Marines during the Marine Corps' Combat Fitness Test at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014.



Arctic Warriors participate in Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian 2014

Story and Photos by Sgt. Eric-James Estrada

CAMP COURTNEY, Japan – The U.S. Army's only airborne brigade west of the Mississippi River participated in Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian (UFG) here Aug. 18 - 29.

Home stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, along with Airmen of the 3rd Air Support Operations Squadron who are assigned to the Spartan Brigade, trained with U.S.-South Korea alliance military forces during the annual Korean Peninsula-wide exercise.

Defensive in nature, the joint/combined command post exercise was designed to enhance the Republic of South Korea's defensive capabilities in the face of an aggressor threat on the Korean Peninsula and ensure stability in Northeast Asia. The exercise is named after the famous 7th Century Korean General Eulji Mundeok, who was the commander-in-chief of the army of Goguryeo, which repelled an invasion by China's Sui Dynasty. Along with Exercise Foal Eagle, UFG is the second of two command post exercises held every year in South Korea.

This year, the annual large-scale computer-simulation involved more than 3,000 personnel from all military branches within the U.S. and across the Pacific region to perfect mission readiness and com-

bat effectiveness by simulating real world situations in real time. U.S. and South Korean forces were also joined by United Nations Command forces from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and the U.K.

UFG operates at a four-star command level. On Okinawa, the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) Headquarters serves as one of the combined headquarters of Joint Forces Command and the 3rd Marine Division serves as the ground combat element to III MEF.

These types of exercises help to work through coordination issues that are common when multiple services and coalition partners are involved, such as the employment of airborne and air assault task forces, amphibious operations, and navigating the cultural nuances of each military service.

"It is a joint fight," said U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Jeff O'Neill, G-3 current operations officer for the 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force. "Part of this exercise involves working through the coordination issues that are sometimes challenging when working with other services and other nations."

For Col. Matthew McFarlane, commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, he sees those challenges as a way to build on existing



relationships and grow from new obstacles encountered during these types of exercises.

"It's always the personal relationships you establish with the leaders of these different organizations," said McFarlane. "As you build trust amongst one another, [you] learn about different opportunities to potentially [capitalize on] in the future."

This is not the first time the Spartan Brigade and III MEF have crossed paths during training exercises. Over the past couple of years the Spartan Brigade and III MEF Marines have participated side-by-side during Exercises Talisman Saber in Australia and Cobra Gold in Thailand, with each unit having its own set mission.

"As we've done multiple exercises over the past couple of years, [III MEF has] been in and around those exercises," said McFarlane. "This exercise is a great opportunity for us to build on our relationships that we have established with III MEF – specifically 3rd [Marine Division] on Okinawa – as they operate in the same area we operate."

Participating in UFG '14 also gave the Spartan Brigade a chance to train with the Republic of Korea's Marine Corps.

Lt. Col. Christopher Ward, a native of Caldwell, Idaho, and commander of 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4/25 IBCT (ABN), whose battalion mission was to ensure the synchronization and deconfliction of all fires assets into the overall mission, noted the similarities between South Korean Marine Corps systems and those of 2-377 PFAR.

“They have a lot of artillery systems that are similar to ours,” said Ward. “Being able to better understand their systems and how they employ them will only make us better as a combined team if we ever have to fight along side each other in the future.”

During the exercise Ward highlighted the professionalism of the South Korean Marines and their willingness to learn foreign equipment and systems.

“It’s been fantastic,” said Ward. “They’re a very professional force who are eager to learn, yet we’re able to learn from them as well.”

South Korean Marine Corps 1st Lt. Jooshin Kim, a combat engineer with the Republic of Korea’s Military Logistics Group’s Landing Support Battalion, highlighted the professionalism of the Spartan Brigade, noting what an incredible experience the exercise offered.

“Great experience,” said Kim “This is the first time I’ve come in contact with U.S. Army personnel.”

“During the exercise, very professional,” Kim added. “That’s why the

[South Korean] Marines love to work with all branches of the U.S. military; that high degree of professionalism.”

O’Neill, whose experiences with the Army date back to the Infantry Captains Career Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, was impressed with the Spartan Brigade’s efficiency and motivation during their portion of the exercise.

“4/25 is an extremely professional unit,” said O’Neill. “They were very focused on their portion of this operation plan.”

O’Neill concluded by adding that, “It’s been very enlightening for our staff and it’s a good exchange for our Marines to learn from the Soldiers of 4/25.”

(Left) U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Tyler Cowan (center), a native of Pittsfield, Mass. and a paratrooper with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, reviews key terrain features for an upcoming mission with U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Nathan Poje (right), a native of Spanaway, Wash., of Headquarters Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, and Republic of Korea Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Jae Hwan Kim (left) at Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan Aug. 22, 2014 during Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian 2014. Elements of the Spartan Brigade are in Okinawa participating in Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian 2014, a joint/combined command post exercise designed to enhance the Republic of South Korea’s defensive capabilities in the face of an aggressor threat.

(Below) Key members of the combined ground combat element for Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian 2014 take time to pause for a group photo Aug. 22, 2014 at Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan. They are (left to right) Lt. Commander Bumbue Hur, G-1 for the Republic of Korea Marine Corps, Lt. Commander Seungmin Lee, G-2 for the Republic of Korea Marine Corps, Col. Matthew Rau, G-2 for 3rd Marine Division, Col. Jaeyoung Park, artillery commander for the Republic of Korea Marine Corps, Col. Daniel Wilson, chief of staff for 3rd Marine Division, Col. Mokhee Lee, chief of staff for the Republic of Korea Marine Corps, Col. Matthew McFarlane, commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Lt. Col. Sungmin Cho, G-3 for the Republic of Korea Marine Corps, Lt. Col. Brian Hughes, G-4 for 3rd Marine Division, and Lt. Col. Gangsub Lee, G-4 for the Republic of Korea Marine Corps.



'Aurora Monsoon'

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith

Paratroopers with the 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division were introduced to jungle warfare training as they took part in "Aurora Monsoon," the first-ever platoon-level bilateral exchange between soldiers of the U.S. Army and the Bangladesh army at the Rajendrapur Cantonment Area near Dhaka, Bangladesh, Aug. 24-28, 2014.

Aurora Monsoon featured soldiers from both sides establishing lasting relationships as they taught and learned each other's tactics, techniques, and procedures in platoon attack, counterattack, and ambush. They trained side-by-side as they maneuvered through the thick vegetation, heavy humidity, high heat, and muddy terrain of the jungle environment.

The training was made as comfortable as possible by the Bangladesh soldiers of the 46th Independent Infantry Brigade as they ensured their guests were well fed and housed during the exchange. Three full meals were supplied each day with snacks in between. Classroom instruction preceded the actual events, so that each soldier understood what they were supposed to do during the exercises.

The bilateral exercise was one the Geronimo paratroopers will not soon forget according to Spc. Anthony Davis, an infantryman with the 1/501.

"I'm having a blast. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I'm excited to show my family all of the pictures I've taken over here, and what I've learned," Davis said.

"It's been great for learning for both sides," Davis added. "There hasn't been a lot of pressure from anybody, and no one is getting frustrated. We all understand it's a learning experience and it's process. They're [Bangladesh soldiers] willing to help us out, and we're willing to help them out, so I think that makes it a lot better."

In a larger scope, Lt. Col. Tobin Magsig, the commanding officer of the 1/501st, said the exchange is important because the relationships built by his paratroopers



Paratroopers with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, and soldiers from the Bangladesh Army's 46th Independent Infantry Brigade take a moment for a group photo Aug. 25, 2014, at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training at the Rajendrapur Cantonment Training Area, near Dhaka, Bangladesh. The U.S. Army was in Bangladesh for Aurora Monsoon, a bilateral exchange and training exercise focused on building relationships and enhancing abilities in operating in a jungle environment and unfamiliar terrain.

and the soldiers of the 46th IIB will be a foundation for future bilateral exercises.

"This bilateral exchange is a tangible commitment to a lasting military partnership between our two great nations," said Magsig. "Together, we must continue to work closely to promote peace and deter aggression."

"The training that we did here was absolutely fantastic," added Magsig. "It was a wonderful opportunity for the men of Comanche and Delaware Companies to partner, side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, with soldiers in the Bangladesh army."

"It's been a long time since we've trained in the jungle, and it's been even longer since we've IMT'd (individual movement techniques) through rice patties, but that's



(As seen on the cover) Spc. Kevin Gallardo, an infantryman with Delaware Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, fires his M4 carbine during a tactical training exercise Aug. 26, 2014, at the Rajendrapur Catonement Training Area, near Dhaka, Bangladesh. Gallardo was in Bangladesh for Aurora Monsoon, a bilateral exchange and training exercise focused on building relationships and enhancing abilities in operating in a jungle environment and unfamiliar terrain.

U.S. Army paratroopers with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, along with soldiers of the Bangladesh Army's 46th Independent Infantry Brigade move in a file formation under the concealment of smoke across rice fields during a tactical training exercise Aug. 26, 2014, at the Rajendrapur Catonement Training Area, near Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Geronimos were in Bangladesh for Aurora Monsoon, a bilateral exchange and training exercise focused on building relationships and enhancing abilities in operating in a jungle environment and unfamiliar terrain.



exactly what these men did. They demonstrated shared hardship and true partnership with our Bangladeshi brothers,” Magsig said.

The jungle’s muddy terrain and thick vegetation created unique operational challenges for the U.S. troops according to the command leadership team of Delaware Company, 1/501.

Capt. Bradley Benjamin, Delaware Company commander, said, “One of the biggest pieces we are learning is how to operate in a much different environment; How to control your men and equipment in a jungle environment, and how to communicate effectively with our radios and also visual hand and arm signals.”

“The placement of weapons, and the affects of weapons in a jungle is much different than many environments we train in,” Benjamin added.

Delaware’s first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Matthew Delisle, said, “It’s a huge learning curve when you get down in the prone, and you can’t see anything. If you take a knee, you can’t see anything because it’s all shoulder-high vegetation.”

“You really have to slow down and control your men more,” continued Delisle. “And, the mud is definitely an obstacle.”

The bilateral exchange provided soldiers from both armies insight on procedures in planning, communicating, and maneuvering on the battlefield. The exchange also served as a foundation to continued interoperability between the two nations’ Armed Forces.

A Bangladesh army officer with the 46th IIB, 2nd Lt. MD Julkar Nine, said, “You have taught us how to do your enemy clearing drill, and for our case, we have taught you how to do ambush.

“It was a successful mission for us,” said Nine. “That we could successfully give some idea about our views and our armies to you guys. You also passed down some knowledge to us. It was about information transfer; tactics, techniques transfer.”

Nine said he really enjoyed getting to know the Americans while teaching and learning with them.

“For me, all through my life, I will carry this experience, and obviously I will pass down this experience to all my friends, so they can understand. They can have a better idea about American troops,” Nine said.

Nine said he would welcome continued bilateral training in the future, and would like to learn more about combat in urban environments, along with longer training time in the jungle.

“The American Army is very much efficient and very good in fighting in a built-up area, like house-clearing drills,” said Nine. “It would be great if the American Army could

teach us how to fight in a built-up area.”

“Then, it would be great if we stayed together outside,” Nine continued. “Like for four days or five days in the jungle. We’ll make tent, or take hideout somewhere. We’ll take duration or food, or MRE [meals, ready to eat], so we will get some real-time scenarios and get some real-time experience.”

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Vance Meier, a squad leader with Comanche Company, 1/501, said it’s good to come to Bangladesh to compare doctrine.

“I am very impressed with what they have going on here,” said Meier. “I always like training with foreign militaries. It helps me understand how they work. If we need to work together in the future it will be better for me as a leader, because I will know, and I will understand, and I will be able to explain to my Soldiers what’s going on.”

Soldiers from both sides encouraged future U.S. and Bangladesh bilateral exchange exercises.

Bangladesh army Maj. Mohammed Bahalul Alam, said, “This is a





globalized era, so if you want to operate your army anywhere in the world, you need to have knowledge on different armies.”

“This bilateral exercise helps in many ways,” said Alam, “especially in tactics, techniques, and procedures. The environment, the ground configuration, and other important factors, such as the differences in Alaska and Bangladesh.”

“Armies should go and work in different environments, so definitely this is very good that you [U.S. Army] are here. The initiatives you take help grow our friendship and understanding,” Alam said.

Capt. Benjamin echoed Alam’s thoughts, saying, “The friendship that we’re developing is probably the most important piece to this whole operation. Creating that friendship and that partnership is important, because you never know where the next mission is going to be in the world.”

“I see Aurora Monsoon getting

much bigger in the future,” Benjamin said. “Hopefully next year we can make it a little bit longer with a larger element, so instead of sending a platoon, hopefully we can get a company here and make this bilateral exercise much larger.”

Benjamin said he was proud of his men and what they achieved at Aurora Monsoon.

“It’s really an honor to be here,” Benjamin said. “It’s a great opportunity for our Soldiers, and I think the guys who came out here were the right people. The NCOs [noncommissioned officers] did a fabulous job, and all of the Soldiers who came out here represented the 4/25, USARAK [U.S. Army Alaska], USARPAC [U.S. Army Pacific], and their country very well.”

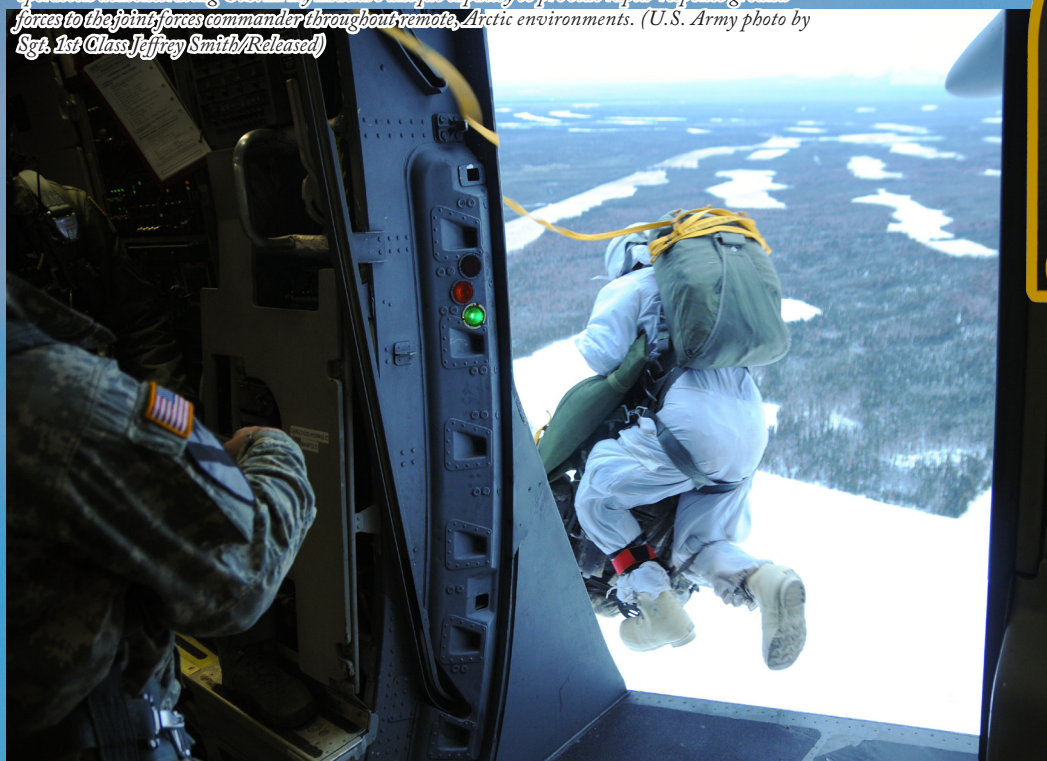
Other events enjoyed by the Geronimo Battalion paratroopers included soccer and ultimate football games with the Bangladesh soldiers, monkey sightings, tactical training in torrential downpours, picture sharing and discussions

of Families back home, weapons cross training, naming a local dog “Geronimo,” and capping the week off with a cultural day, complete with shopping in Dhaka and an evening of dancing and singing in celebration of Aurora Monsoon’s completion.

(Above) U.S. Army paratroopers with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division take a moment for a group photo Aug. 27, 2014, at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training at the Rajendrapur Cantonment Training Area, near Dhaka, Bangladesh.

(Left) U.S. Army paratroopers with the 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, along with soldiers of the Bangladesh Army’s 46th Independent Infantry Brigade move in a file formation across rice fields during a tactical training exercise Aug. 26, 2014, at the Rajendrapur Cantonment Training Area, near Dhaka, Bangladesh. The U.S. Army was in Bangladesh for Aurora Monsoon, a bilateral exchange and training exercise focused on building relationships and enhancing abilities in operating in a jungle environment and unfamiliar terrain.

Staff Sgt. David Arcos, a jumpmaster with the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division leaps from a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft flying over Fort Greely, Alaska to carry-out orders for the Spartan Pegasus airborne operation Oct. 23, 2014. Spartan Pegasus is a cold-weather, rapid-entry operation demonstrating U.S. Army Alaska's unique capacity to provide rapid-response ground forces to the joint forces commander throughout remote, Arctic environments. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith/Released)



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