

May 2021  
Magazine Vol. 7  
36th Inf. Div.  
TF Spartan

# The Arrowhead TASK FORCE SPARTAN



**People of  
Task Force  
Spartan**

**PARTNERSHIP | DETERRENCE | READINESS**

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF TASK FORCE SPARTAN AND THE 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION



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## Contribute to The Arrowhead

Send us your great photos, articles, or ideas to the Arrowhead

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# From the Top

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## The Arrowhead TASK FORCE SPARTAN

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## Leadership and Providing Purpose

Over the last five or so years, I have read a lot of articles on purpose-driven leadership. Even the basic U.S. Army definition of a leader says, "One that can provide task, purpose, and motivation." A Harvard Business Review article stated that purpose is the key to navigating the complex, volatile, ambiguous world today. Whatever the case, purpose can and should be the motivation you use to lead your Soldiers. Purpose creates exceptional performance and will give your team a sense of loyalty to their leader. This is why in Army-speak we use commander's intent and end-state.

In an environment like ours where strategy continues to change, initial decisions rarely make it past first contact, purpose will drive the true definition of mission command and allow leaders and subordinates to be adaptive and flexible in their decision making. Giving Soldiers a strong purpose is how you empower them to make a difference, not just putting it in your command philosophy. Finally, to be an effective leader, you must identify your own purpose, then put it to work. Let's take this next month to identify your team's purpose, and how your purpose can drive them to be successful.



# This Month...

## Army Authorizes Female Soldiers to have Ponytails



The Army's decision to update the grooming policy and allow female Soldiers in all uniforms to wear ponytails has invited applause and controversy this month. So, why did the Army make this decision? Here's why:

The Army regularly evaluates regulatory guidance, to include AR 670-1. The recent changes came after evaluating ways the Army could be more inclusive and allow female Soldiers to have healthier, more-natural hairstyles.

"This new modification is more practical for our female Soldiers. It allows them flexibility in a tactical environment, while maintaining a professional appearance in garrison," said Sgt. Maj. Brian C. Sanders, Army G-1 Uniform Policy Branch sergeant major. "This change also helps to alleviate hair loss and damage to the scalp."

## Celebrating Asian Pacific Heritage Month



Today there are more than 300,000 living Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander American veterans, and even more serving within our ranks. Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is a time where we recognize the contributions and influence of these individuals to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States Army.

"The Asian Pacific Islander month in the Army reminds me of how we are a family-oriented group. No matter where you are from we all come as one," said Sgt. 1st Class Normanson Rudimch Mobel, who is from the Island of Palau. "Growing up on an island was amazing. Spending time with families Bar-B-Qing on the beach, swimming, fishing, and playing sports. We shared ancient knowledge on shelter, canoe building, language, and culture."

See more on pages 11-12.

## Mental Health Awareness Month

In May we celebrate National Mental Health Awareness Month, which provides an opportunity to educate and increase awareness about mental health and Army programs available to help improve yours.

The Army is helping to decrease the stigma Soldiers may feel that prevents them from seeking help. Programs such as Embedded Behavioral Health (EBH), Primary Care Behavioral Health and School Behavioral Health focus on reaching Soldiers and their Families outside the military treatment facility (MTF) to improve access and reduce stigma. Learn more at <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness>.



A new "People First" slogan and it is up to you to spread it. This month, don't forget your number one priority is looking after your battle buddy.



**Get Vaccinated | #DefeatCOVID**



# Armed Forces Day



(Above) Soldiers from the United States' Task Force Spartan and the United Arab Emirates Land Forces gathered from Jan. 24 to Feb. 6, 2021, at Al Hamra Training Center in the United Arab Emirates.

## Why do we observe May 15?

You may also be wondering, what is Armed Forces Day? Armed Forces Day, celebrated on the third Saturday in May, is a day where we pay tribute to the men and women of the Armed Forces. President Truman led the effort to establish the holiday in order for citizens to unite and honor our military heroes for their patriotic service in support of the United States of America.

In addition to observing our U.S. forces this year, Task Force Spartan took this opportunity to recognize and celebrate our partner forces across the Middle East.

Take a look at a few of the highlights from working alongside our partners:





Kuwait



Jordan



Qatar

(Top) Kuwait Land Forces tanks, from 6th Mechanized Brigade, fire rounds down range during the live-fire exercise portion of Al Tahreer, simulating responding to enemy contact. U.S. forces were invited by the Kuwait Land Forces to participate in the event that coincides with a national day of celebration, Tahreer, or liberation. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford)

(Middle) Sgt. 1st Class Michael Chapa runs beside the Jordanian Soldier in charge of firing a Rocket Propelled Grenade down range during Desert Warrior 21. Soldiers from Division Tactical-Jordan advised and assisted the Jordanian Armed Forces Border Guard Platoon's tactical and technical execution of platoon live-fire exercises (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Suzanne Ringle)

(Bottom) U.S. Army Spc. Britany Stewart, 318th Chemical Company, 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Task Force Spartan, teaches a class on how to properly decontaminate the M50 Gas Mask in preparation for exercise Invincible Centry with Qatari soldiers. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford)



# Phantom Steadfast

*Photos by Spc. Carlos Izquierdo, U.S. Army Central Public Affairs*

During the month of May, Task Force Spartan Soldiers took part in helping stage and prep equipment for forces in Syria taking part in Operation Phantom Steadfast.

The objective of the staging exercise was to make sure their weapons were properly lined up with their sights, and overall, ready for the upcoming exercise.

The 1st Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, was one of the units that helped stage equipment, to include Bradley Fighting Vehicles which were test fired at Udairi Range Complex, May 2, 2021.

The main gun on the Bradley Fighting vehicle is a 25mm Bushmaster Cannon, which was being prepped to support the operation.

M1 Abrams tanks were also staged and test fired during the lead-up, using 120mm rounds at the zero range on Udairi Range Complex.

All in all, the operation was a success, and our units were moved forward with the required equipment to ensure mission success in combat.

The operation was to support Operation Inherent Resolve, which is the U.S. military's operational name for the International military intervention against ISIL. OIR spans overseas campaigns both in Iraq and in Syria, with a closely-related campaign in Libya.







U.S. Army Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, load ammo into their tank, May 3, 2021, at Udairi Range Complex, Kuwait. The main gun of the M1 Abrams Tank shot a 120mm round before firing on the zero range to ensure their weapons were ready.

The 1st Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, test fire their Bradley Fighting Vehicles, May 2, 2021, at Udairi Range Complex, Kuwait. The main gun on the Bradley Fighting vehicle was a 25mm Bushmaster Cannon.



U.S. Army Capt. Michael Bogda, team leader, 1st Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, leads a M1 Abrams Tank to the ammo point before firing at Udairi Range Complex in Kuwait, May 3, 2021.



# Kung Fu

## Translation: A skill achieved through hard work

Story by 1st Lt. Basil Wang, 36th Inf. Div., Task Force Spartan

The Chinese words for “Kung Fu” translate literally to “skill achieved through hard work”, or simply, “hard work”. Though the term is often applied to martial arts, it does not refer to one’s ability to fight, rather, it is a measure of one’s discipline, and the mastery of their trade as a result of hard work.

My family’s story of Kung Fu is unique, but the experience is one that is common amongst thousands of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders serving in the United States Army.

My parents met as college students in China while studying together for an English class. They often met after school to practice speaking English together and discussed dreams of immigrating to the United States and raising a family. They graduated from college and were married in 1983 and began their journey towards achieving their American dream. They came to the United States in 1985 with only \$600 in their pockets and a pair of student visas.

During this time, the United States and China were political adversaries and only a handful of graduate students were able to earn the opportunity to study in the United States. Because of this, my parents made every second count. They went to school at the University of Pittsburgh, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to pursue their mas-

ter’s and PhDs in engineering.

Knowing that their student visas would expire upon graduation, and that they would return to China where the single-child policy was in effect, they decided to have two children, my brother in 1987, and myself in 1988, while they were full time students.

My mother supported our family by working as a live-in nanny, cooking at a Chinese restaurant, and sewing fabrics in a textile factory while my father worked as a handyman, painted houses, tutored math and science, and worked as a consultant in a computer center. Both of my parents worked as teaching assistants at the university, teaching classes and grading papers for undergraduate students. They scraped by until 1991, when they both earned their PhDs in engineering.





While completing his PhD, my father went to work in the nascent field of medical imaging, developing software for the 3D rendering of cancer cells and bone diseases. Because he was the only person in the country with his skill set, he earned an H1 work visa, and my parents were able to stay. This brought my family one step closer to achieving the American dream.

During the next few years, my family moved several times living in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland before settling in California, where they became naturalized citizens in 1995. My mother worked as an industrial engineer for IBM, then for two semi-conductor companies, while my father worked in the medical imaging industry as an early pioneer in the technology of digital ultrasounds. They eventually moved to Florida where they owned a successful software company and several rental properties.

Throughout their careers my parents saved every penny that they earned to provide a better life for my brother and me. There was never a day that they clocked out from their office and were done for the day. Instead, they would finish their day job, then come home and burn the midnight oil so that their futures would hold more success than their past; so that their sons would never know the struggles that they knew. Their hard work and mastery of their trades taught me the value of “Kung Fu”.

While everyone’s story is different, many Asian American and Pacific Islander families share similar experiences of hard work, uncertainty, the pioneering spirit and courage in the face of adversity. For our families, our success as leaders our ability to carry on these ethics to provide a better life for our future generations is the American Dream come true.





# IG TEAM

36TH Infantry Division  
Inspector General Team



Col. Eric Martinson  
Command Inspector General



Capt. Seulata Rodriguez  
Deputy Inspector General



Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Sipes  
IG Office NCOIC

YOU ARE  
**NOT**  
ALONE



MENTAL HEALTH  
AWARENESS MONTH



# WARRIOR OF THE MONTH



## Staff Sgt. Lizette Mendoza

Staff Sgt. Lizette Mendoza's performance as the Headquarters Support Company Operations non-commissioned officer and Higher Headquarters Battalion liaison officer for the 36th Infantry Division Tactical Command Post and Task Force Spartan-Jordan was exceptional. She coordinated the movement, reception, staging, onward-movement, and integration, and support of over 350 Soldiers in and out of Jordan, ensuring each Soldier had the full support and resources of the main headquarters despite having no other battalion staff present in country.

Mendoza was selected for her key role due to her unique abilities and skills in managing operations, logistics, and administration, producing consistent success and results at a high level. Her extraordinary efforts ensured that numerous pay issues were fixed, all theater provided equipment and modification table of organization and equipment was signed and accounted for, and that the waves of personnel rotating through Jordan were managed and cared for with a high degree of professionalism.

Mendoza's superior performance of additional duty as the Defense Travel System voucher approver ensured the timely and correct payment of over 250 vouchers worth over \$413,000.

For these reasons, among many others, Staff Sgt. Lizette Mendoza is being recognized as the TF Spartan Warrior of the Month for May 2021.

# Thoughts from Military Equal Opportunity Hoplites

It remains the greatest honor to be serving as the Task Force Spartan Military Equal Opportunity Program Manager. We are just around the corner from being relieved and beginning the major movements for going home. This last month we will have celebrated Memorial Day to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our great nation. We have also celebrated other unique days in our own little way (Star Wars, Mother's Day). And of course, May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month which is very near and dear to my heart as a Soldier whose family came from the Philippines to pursue a better life. Let me share a thought or two about my background:

I came from a family who emigrated from the Philippines to pursue a better life for themselves and their own families. My father, the second oldest of eight children, left the Philippines in 1968 to join the US Coast Guard where he became a cook on the ship. My father helped bring my grandmother, aunts, and uncles to the US to begin a new life where many would join the military themselves. My mother graduated nursing school in the Philippines and came to the US on a working visa in 1974, settling in southern Texas. My parents married in front of a Justice of the Peace in southern Texas with what little money they had, raised four children, travelled across the country, worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs for 20+ years, paid for our college education with dad's retirement pay, watched my siblings and I get married and raise families of our own, and continue to be a great influence after 45 years of marriage. My family has over 100+ years of government service combined between the Army, Army Reserves, National Guard, the Coast Guard, and Veterans' Affairs.

I have so many lessons learned from my parents, my family heritage, and many life experiences

that have shaped who I am today as a Soldier. One of the things my family taught me was to always treat people with dignity and respect. My parents would teach us to treat everyone like family as either your "tita" (aunt), "tito" (uncle), "kuya" (brother), or "atay" (sister) as a sign of respect to even strangers. Many of the people who my parents taught me to treat as family have been there in so many different ways and in so many different places. My parents, through their own experiences, also taught us to have faith, in order to get through many struggles and trials. Without faith, I am confident that I would not have survived many difficult deployments (six total, four since 2016), nor learned some valuable life lessons about being a husband and father, or even made it through some difficult military assignments.

I was also taught at an early age the importance of an education. I earned a Masters Degree in Management and Leadership, a Bachelor of Arts in Political Communication, and received a bunch of military institutional training. Both of my parents pushed for my siblings and I to not only learn in the classrooms, but also to learn outside. It was to help understand how other people live in order to understand the world as well as others' own cultures and their languages. Keeping an open mind and a willingness to learn about others has actually been very beneficial that it prevented personal prejudice, discrimination, or even inaccurate assumptions while growing up. I had used what cultural knowledge I learned to get out of some tough situations or even build rapport with strangers in other lands. When someone comes to our Office, I would show "melmastya" (hospitality) and "nenawate" (sanctuary), two important things from the Afghan Code of "Pashtunwali". I might walk around Camp Arifjan and say hello to one person, "hola" (hello in Spanish) to another, "kamusta na" (how are you in Tagalog) to

another, "kamsa hap nee da" (thank you in Korea) to one of our Allied Soldiers, and "do sved-onyia" (Goodbye in Russian) to one of the contractors. Education, training, and an open mind has made impacts in my life and to those around me. They taught me to appreciate art, learn how to dance, play an instrument, and enjoy life.

One other important lesson that I learned from my parents is to remember where we all came from. On April 30, 1989, a warehouse fire destroyed 98% of our household goods for my father's last PCS move leaving just 15 boxes, one filled with mostly photos. My father would send me a photo in October 2001, reminding me of my youth and how close we lived to the World Trade Center. Throughout the years, I would get in the habit of printing photographs and keeping them close by to show others where I have been and with who I was there with. As much as I used to dislike my photo being taken, I am glad my parents encouraged us to keep photos so we could all look back at where we came from and how that shaped who we are today. I would look back and see my family's struggles and victories as well as those moments that no one can ever replace.

I have truly enjoyed the experience being the Task Force Spartan Military Equal Opportunity Program Manager. The experience of being with a great group of Soldiers in a forward area has made this tour great. If we continue to treat everyone with dignity and respect, in the words of the great philosophers Sonny Curtis and Joan Marie Larkin (aka Joan Jett), "You're gonna make it after all!"

Islander Heritage Month was introduced in the House of Representatives in June 1978. A joint resolution was passed and was later signed by The President on Oct. 5, 1978. This law directed The President to declare a seven-day period, beginning May 4, 1979, as 'Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week.' It wasn't until 1992 that Congress designated May as 'Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. As mentioned before, observance months such as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month isn't just a

celebration of one group of people, but a celebration of all people. It is a celebration of how we have evolved to become the Army and a nation over the years. It is a celebration of the inclusion of all races, religions, sex, colors, sexual orientation, and national origins compared to where we were 100 years ago. It is a celebration of things to come. So as we remember May as Asian American and Pacific Islander Month, let us also remember the future ahead and what we can do together.

On behalf of the Task Force Spartan Military Equal Opportunity Office, we are honored to continue serving with you and look forward to what the future holds for us all. We would also like to thank the Spartan and Army Central Command Chaplain's Office for their support in formulating these "thoughts". Thank you and "In Spite of Hell".

*Task Force Spartan MEO Office "Hoplites"*  
*Lt. Col. Pedro Agapay, Master Sgt. Stanford Autry,*  
*Sgt. 1st Class Scotty Scruggs.*

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# 130th FIELD ARTILLERY

## Task Force Spartan participates in missile defense exercise

By Maj. Jessica Jackson

QATAR, – The 130th Field Artillery Brigade of Task Force Spartan participated in an Air and Missile Defense Exercise (AMDEX 21), a U.S.-led event that develops tactics against simulated air and missile threats, April 12 - 23, 2021.

Approximately 1,700 U.S. military personnel at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., and multiple locations throughout Southwest Asia participated in the semi-annual exercise – which also reassures coalition and regional partners of the U.S.'s commitment to stability and security in the region. The 130th FAB demonstrated refined and sustained integrated air and missile defense capabilities using existing and emerging theater air, surface, space, cyber and missile defense systems.

Maj. Chris Koochel, the Fires Effects Coordination Cell officer in charge, and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Carol Sprawka, the brigade targeting officer, conducted multiple academic sessions to ensure there was a shared understanding of the 130th FAB's operations and procedures.

"We spent a great deal of time preparing for the exercise including: Attending the AMDEX 21 academics, section cell meetings, and preparing battle drills for HIMARS fire missions," said Sprawka. "We wanted to make sure our team was set up for success."

A key point of the exercise for the 130th FAB was to integrate HIMARS as a force multiplier.

"The integration of HIMARS capabilities into

AMDEX demonstrated the system's ability to rapidly respond to emerging threats within the AOR," said Koochel. "By coordinating with the Combined Air Operations Center Dynamic Targeting Cell, HIMARS units were able to share critical tactics, techniques and procedures with Air Force counterparts in order to provide timely and accurate fires throughout the exercise."

However, this integration came with its own set of challenges.

"One hurdle was syncing Air Force terminology to Army verbiage," said Sprawka. "While this was a challenge, we were able seamlessly integrate, thanks to preplanning and the many rehearsals alongside the airmen."

Sgt. Evan Andrews, 130th FAB's fire detection non-commissioned officer, also played a vital role in the exercise.

While supporting the exercise, he built the deployment of HIMARS into his tracking system and linked it to the Fire Control Panel Trainer — a system that allows the HIMARS to fire a rocket once a mission is received.

"Once I was provided a mission, I would manually input into my Artillery Tactical Data System and then send it to the FCPT," said Andrews. "At the same time I recorded information from the fire mission to send back to Shaw Air Force Base, where I would await for the air to clear in order to fire. This was an excellent way to test our capabilities and to train accurately and efficiently."

This event shows the 130th FAB's ability to process fire support and airspace coordination measures in an integrated, combined and joint scenario. The integration of U.S. Army, U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force personnel helped to ensure interoperability between the various air and missile systems.

# ERY BRIGADE

“These lessons will continue to help shape and refine standard operating procedures and help provide a shared understanding of capabilities for future operations across the joint force,” said Koochel

AMDEX 21 contributes to the increased lethality and readiness within the Task Force Spartan area of responsibility. Task Force Spartan is committed to establishing strong partnerships and maintaining a ready and responsive force.





# 111th THEATER ENGINEER

## Halfway around the globe, National Guard continues to lead the fight against COVID

By 1st Lt. James Mason

CAMP BUEHRING, KUWAIT - From testing fellow service members to local citizens, West Virginia Guardsmen have been instrumental in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus. Now, they continue to play a role in testing for COVID-19, but this time, nearly 7,000 miles from home.

Soldiers from the 111th Theater Engineer Brigade medical section, currently deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Spartan Shield, have been tapped to assume authority of the re-deployed COVID-19 testing process for Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Although this duty was not originally assigned to the 111th TEB, when Task Force Spartan identified a gap in support the 111th TEB leadership knew that they had the right resources and knowledge to accomplish the mission.

"The 111th Engineer Brigade Surgeon Cell has significant experience dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic stateside," said Sgt. 1st Class Taylor Hender, the 111th TEB medical operations non-commissioned officer in charge. "West Virginia has one of the best records for managing the crisis, and we as the West Virginia National Guard helped immensely with the efforts."

Building on the experiences from the past year,

it seemed as if it were second nature for the team when it came time to execute.

"During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, all members of the Surgeon Cell were involved— at high levels. With that, we bring relevant and ready operational and institutional knowledge" said Hender. "We are able to leverage that knowledge to fill capability gaps in our Title 10 partners for whom this type of mission is not standard."

The responsibilities of the 111th TEB are simple, yet crucial: ensure every service member redeploying back to the United States is tested for COVID-19 prior to leaving Kuwait.

This is only possible though because of the 3654th Support Maintenance Company and their willingness to provide a significant portion of the Redeployment Testing Team in the form of noncommissioned officers oversight. As electronics maintainers, these junior NCOs are operating outside of their standard skillset and provide an invaluable asset of continuity.

"I really want to give a huge shout out to the Soldiers and leaders from the 3654th," said Capt. Brittany Watson, the officer in charge of the 111th TEB medical operations and of the Camp Buehring redeployment testing program. "The only reason this results in mission success is because of the help and support provided from those Soldiers."

To administer a COVID-19 test, on average, takes less than 60 seconds to complete. But in order for a service member to show up and get tested that quickly, there are hours of planning and staffing considerations that happen behind the curtain.

According to Watson, the planning and efforts are all worth it when they see Soldiers complete the test and are able to head back home to their families.

"It's not about the receiving accolades for the 111th,

# ENGINEER BRIGADE



it's all about caring for others," said Watson. "We are happy to have the privilege to facilitate those greater goods."

Since assuming this role, Watson and Hender have exponentially increased the amount of Soldiers they can test in an hour-long period, resulting in less time spent at the testing location for the Soldier and more time given back to the unit to prepare for the demobilization process.

Much of this success though is because West Virginia Guardsmen are used to working outside of their tasked roles.

"I'm a medic who has spent considerable time, both deployed and stateside, with engineer units. Something I've noticed is that engineer units are often tasked for roles beyond the norm and they tend to get results," said Hender. "Engineers, and their medical staffs, have a reputation for making things happen. In this case, it's testing homebound service members. Through this mission, the 111th TEB is living up to the legacy of engineers across the Army: we get results."

The impact that ensuring all redeploying Soldiers

are COVID-19 negative spans beyond certifying that they are healthy at the end of their tour. This guarantees that the health and safety of all personnel and facilities stateside will also remain intact.

"Besides taking care of our brothers and sisters in uniform, we're taking care of our families and friends back home," said Hender.



While deployed, medics assigned to the 111th Theater Engineer Brigade have helped administer the vaccinations in Kuwait, continuing to do their part in helping our nation #BeatTheVirus from nearly 7,000 miles from home. In the past five days alone, the combined medical staff on Camp Buehring have vaccinated over 2,600 Service Members, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Civilians, and local contractors.



# 1/35 ARMOR BATTALION

## 1ST ARMORED





# ON, ED DIVISION

1

THE IRON BRIGADE

OLD IRONSIDES



Ironside Soldiers with the 1-35 AR BN, 2-1 Armored Battalion, 1st Armored Division, released another element to their families this past month. 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 40th Brigade Engineer Battalion, Iron Thunder, 4-27 FA and 47th Brigade Support Battalion returned from Kuwait.

Welcome home Iron Soldiers!





# 28TH EXPEDITIONARY

## 28th ECAB released, completes Mideast mission

By Capt. Travis Mueller, 28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait – The 28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade formally transferred authority of its mission in the Middle East to the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade.

The ceremony included the casing of the 28th ECAB's colors, a rallying flag, symbolizing that the mission is complete and members are to return home. Members of the 40th CAB uncased their colors as they began their service in Kuwait.

The 28th ECAB - 1,400 Soldiers from nine states - arrived in the Middle East in late summer to increase regional security and peace in the region while serving U.S. interests. Members supported the fight against Daesh, maintained a military posture in Southwest Asia and enhanced partnerships with allies.

The primary role of the 28th was aviation operations using UH-60 Black Hawk, CH-47 Chinook and AH-64 Apache helicopters, as well as some fixed-wing and unmanned aerial assets.

Soldiers with the 28th ECAB served in 13 locations across five countries, flew over 30,000 hours, 19,000 passengers and 2.5 million pounds of cargo and performed 220 medevac missions. They drove over 190,000 miles, handled over \$10 million in fuel and \$13 million in ammunition, completed 28 aircraft phases with 125,000 maintenance man-hours and over 1,200 groundwork orders.

They also played a key role in enhancing interop-

erability between the U.S. and militaries from allied nations, working closely with aviators from the Italian army's Airmobile Task Group Griffon and the Spanish army's Task Force Toro.

Sgt. Dominic Caccese held the 28th ECAB's colors during the ceremony and watched that final task completed.

"It felt great to see the colors cased because it's one of the last tasks to complete for us to go home," said Caccese. "I'm looking forward to seeing my family and friends again. I'm also looking forward to finishing my senior year of college."

One of the biggest challenges the brigade faced during the deployment was protecting Soldiers from COVID-19 and helping prevent the spread of the virus. According to the brigade medical operations officer, Capt. Catherine Green, it went beyond mask mandates.

"There were constant changes to Army, CDC, DOD and theater guidance as well as restrictions of movement, quarantine and COVID-19 testing in response to outbreaks," said Green. "COVID-19 impacted all areas of the Army and we had to assist command teams in more ways than we usually do."

Col. Howard Lloyd, commander of the 28th ECAB, said the brigade would not have been so successful were it not for the support and sacrifices of families, friends and employers back home.

"28th ECAB Soldiers demonstrated the passion, desire and motivation required in a multifunctional task force to meet this complex, pandemic operating environment head-on," said Lloyd. "I was blessed to be a part of this combined team and I look forward to a successful redeployment."

# COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE





# Best Warrior Co

Sgt. Bradley Creamer, 111th Theater Engineer Brigade, tests his knowledge of how to search a detainee during the Army Warrior Tasks portion of the TF Spartan Best Warrior Competition, May 28, 2021, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The other warrior tasks consisted of radio assembly and usage, first aid under fire and movement to medivac point, interacting with the media, and responding to and decontamination after a chemical attack. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, TF Spartan Public Affairs)



U.S. Army Spc. Grace Tsen, from the 130th Field Artillery Brigade, participates in the Sprint-Drag-Carry portion of the new Army Combat Fitness Test during the Task Force Spartan Best Warrior Competition, May 27, 2021, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Tsen is just one of the 21 participants of the TF Spartan event, competing for a change to move on to the U.S. Army Central Command BWC. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, TF Spartan Public Affairs)

U.S. Army Soldiers from 36th Infantry Division Higher Headquarters Battalion, 111th Theater Engineer Brigade, 130th Field Artillery Brigade, Task Force Hellhound, Task Force Avalanche, and Task Force Bastards participate in the Land Navigation portion of the TF Spartan Best Warrior Competition, May 28, 2021, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The participants were judged based on the time it took them to finish the course as well as how many out of the five grid points they successfully located. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, TF Spartan Public Affairs)



# Competition 2021

Spc. Omar Dacosta, TF Avalanche, moves through the obstacle course portion of the TF Spartan Best Warrior Competition, May 28, 2021, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The course consisted of seven obstacles, to include the Tough One, the Weaver, Inclined Wall, Belly Crawl, Six Vaults, Low Belly Over, and High Knees, that the participants had to complete under a certain time in hopes of gaining enough points to pull ahead of the other competitors. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, TF Spartan Public Affairs)



U.S. Army Spc. Giovanni Charlot, 36th Infantry Division Higher Headquarters Battalion, Task Force Spartan, finishes the 12-Mile Ruck March portion of the TF Spartan BWC, May 29, 2021, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Giovanni was the first of the 20 competitors to complete the twelve miles and was accompanied by TF Spartan Division Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Horn, and 36th Inf. Div. HHBN Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Castro, as he crossed the finish line. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, TF Spartan Public Affairs)

The winners and runner-ups of the Task Force Spartan Best Warrior Competition 2021, (from right to left) Spc. Peter Frey, Task Force Hellhound, Sgt. Brent Roberts, TF Avalanche, Spc. Omar Dacosta (junior enlisted winner), TF Avalanche, and Sgt. Chad Phillips (non-commissioned officer winner), TF Bastards, stand with Division Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Horn, after accepting their awards, May 29, 2021, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The winners, Dacosta and Phillips, will move onto compete in the U.S. Army Central Command's BWC in June 2021 as representatives of TF Spartan. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, TF Spartan Public Affairs)





# Chaplains Corner

By Chaplain Harold Bender, 36th Infantry Division



## Right Place, Right Time: Is It Luck or Something More Strategic?

My coach used to tell us that luck was nothing more than preparation meeting opportunity. Once we have thoroughly prepared ourselves, the next step is to put ourselves in places where opportunities abound.

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kenneth O'Brien is a classic example of that as told in the article's title, "Right Place, Right Time: Is It Luck or Something More Strategic?"

There is no shortage of people today who would like to be used to do something important, something meaningful. But most of us aren't really sure where to start. Maybe a few words of wisdom from someone who has become known for heroism can help us find a starting point.

He pulled a person from a flaming vehicle in South Korea. He served on President Trump's security detail during the historic summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. He also played a pivotal role in the rescue of junior, Thai-soccer players trapped in a cave, during which he saved the life of a Thai Navy SEAL. In recognition of those acts, O'Brien was named one of a dozen outstanding Airmen of the year. But the Japan-based Airman's impressive résumé didn't end there.

On a flight back to the United States to receive the award, O'Brien noticed a 1-year-old choking. He immediately sprang into action, clearing the

child's breathing passage and performing CPR. He said, "I'm thankful that the child is okay and that I was able to help when the family needed support. I happened to be in the right place at the right time."

But O'Brien seems to be at the right place at the right time a lot lately. But maybe the uncanny number of heroic opportunities has nothing to do with luck. In an interview, O'Brien had this to say:

"If someone needs to go do something dangerous, I volunteer. If someone needs a leader, I volunteer. I happened to be in the right place at the right time, and that's what helped me stand out because I sought out key positions or responsibilities."

He happens to be in the right place at the right time because he put himself in situations where he could be used. He volunteered and found himself being used.

Sometimes it's not even a matter of prior preparation, it's simply a matter of putting ourselves in a place for change to occur. The New Testament relates a story of a blind man named Bartimaeus who heard Jesus was traveling by. Upon hearing this exciting news, hope immediately welled up within him. For though he was powerless to restore his own sight, he knew he could put himself in a position to be treated by someone who could.

Recognizing this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for change he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" When the crowd tried to silence him, he cried out all the louder. He would not be denied. He seized his day. And on that day, I can't imagine anyone viewed the beauty and splendor of its sunset with more appreciation than he.

Unhappy with your life or your world? Want change? Put yourself in a place for change to occur, prepare yourself thoroughly, volunteer, and I bet you too will.

Source: Maj. Dalton, "Right Place, Right Time: Is It Luck or Something More Strategic? Contextive.com (10-1-19)

Do your part  
**#DefeatCOVID**  
and get vaccinated



# AJ-Maste:

## Tips for a Healthy Deployment

*Story by Staff Sgt. Daisy Broker, Task Force Spartan Public Affairs*

Yoga comes in many forms and fashions. From Ashtanga to Yin, there is a practice that fits almost everyone. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, regular yoga practice improves strength, balance, flexibility, and back pain. Regular yoga practice can lessen pain from arthritis, may reduce levels of stress and inflammation, and can even help a person get better sleep.

Maj. Toni Savely, Secretary of General Staff, Task Force Spartan, 36th Infantry Division, has been practicing yoga for approximately 10 years, and needed a solution to continue her yoga journey during a deployment to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Savely decided that if Camp Arifjan did not offer classes, she would start a class of her own to maintain her practice and benefit others.

"I knew that I needed to continue my practice in order to maintain and improve all the benefits that yoga has consistently provided me," said Savely.

The stresses of a deployment can be taxing to the body and mind, whether turning wrenches in a combat zone maintenance shop or sitting at a desk 8 - 16 hours a day as a division staff member.

"I believe most people underestimate the importance of yoga and how it can reduce risks for injury, along with many other benefits, said Savely. "A strong core allows the body to function better. So many people sit at a desk or ride in a car for long periods. Doing this can result in weakened muscles that are prone to pain and injury.

Sgt. 1st Class Wendy Lopez, non-commissioned

officer in charge of cyber electromagnetic activities, Task Force Spartan, 36th Infantry Division, highly recommends yoga to everyone, even people who have not tried it before as a way to reduce stress.

"I highly recommend that everyone give yoga a try, especially here in this kind of environment," said Lopez. "Kuwait is a different kind of stress. Not as stressful as a combat zone but stressful nonetheless."

Savely's class has quickly become the highlight of many, including mine. The popularity of her class continues to grow, and after class, service members who observed the class approach those of us attending to ask how they can also join the class.

"I have been surprised by all the participants," said Savely. "There are Soldiers from many different units that attend the classes. There is no advertising for the classes — it is all by word of mouth.



Some of the students attend once a week, while others attend three classes per week. There is even some fun competition among the students. For example, Lt. Col. William Wilcox and Sgt. 1st Class Wendy Lopez always strive to be the best Yogi in attendance and practice."

For the students that regularly attend, Savely re-names a pose in their honor. Lt. Col. William Wilcox, Knowledge Management Officer, Task Force Spartan, 36th Infantry Division, is a regular yogi touting a pose Savely named "Wild Bill". Only the most devoted Yogis receive this kind of coveted distinction, which adds an additional element of fun to each class.

"After attending Maj. Savely's class, I am a believer that yoga is important regardless of the environment," said Wilcox. "As a more experienced officer trying to lead by example, yoga is essential when maintaining physical fitness. Yoga builds flexibility and resilience."

According to an article from the International Journal of Yoga, published May 2020, "Results from this study show that yogic practices enhance muscular strength and body flexibility, promote and improve respiratory and cardiovascular function, promote recovery from and treatment of addiction, reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, improve sleep patterns, and enhance overall well-being and quality of life."

"The older you get, the less flexible you become, making you more prone to injury. Yoga is uncomfortable for me, but I always feel better afterward. I am also quite certain that yoga has more than helped me avoid injury," said Wilcox.

As teachers know, it is an honor to make a difference for students and see them learn and grow. The yoga that Savely teaches consists of the same movements for each class. The repetition helps the students learn and gain flexibility through the repetition.

Some participants are still of course more flexible than others. Sgt. 1st Class Wendy Lopez is known as "Wacky Wendy," named for being able to bend and contort into positions that most students find difficult.



Then there is Wilcox, he says, "In an attempt to grab the ankle of one leg while balancing the other, I would bounce around flail, gyrate, and fail. Although I am not the best at it now, I am not the worst and can often stay in the pose for the entire time and improve week by week."

Wilcox reflected on a favorite moment from his class where Brig. Gen. Win Burkett, assistant division commander - operations for Task Force Spartan attended. "He was surprised that I had only started yoga during the deployment, and commented that it looked like I had been doing yoga for years."

Savely strives to make everyone feel comfortable at her classes. She talks the class through each pose and shares useful tips to help each Yogi achieve their pose.

"Maj. Savely made our yoga sessions unique," said Lopez. "I appreciate her coaching us through our moves and not making the first timers to yoga feel out of place. We could not have had a better instructor, an instructor who is willing to wake up so early during the week and spend an hour or more of her time on her only day off each week."

Yoga can be intimidating for many, and others find it through research or by necessity. I personally found it while rehabilitating from a car accident and hip flexor tear more than seven years ago.

"It is never too early or late in life to begin yoga," said Savely. "I know that the AJ-maste class has positively changed people's lives, including mine, and has helped me stay happy, healthy and stress-free during my nine-month deployment in Kuwait."



# Around the Force

Spc. Norma Garcia-Jimenez, a G-1 human resources specialist, 36th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan, places a rose she was given for Mother's Day behind her ear, May 9, 2021, at a breakfast held to celebrate mothers at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait. The breakfast was held by the Higher Headquarters Battalion, 36th Inf. Div., TF Spartan, to celebrate the mothers in the division who cannot be with their children on this holiday. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brandi Cantu, Task Force Spartan G1 HR Specialist)



U.S. Army Signal Soldiers, 36th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan, receive The Bronze Order of Mercury in front of honored guests, May 8, 2021, at the Zone 1 Chapel on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. A nominee's grade and length of service must be considered as well as to the degree contribution to the Signal Regiment, length of association membership, and participation in the Signal Corps Regimental Association. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, Task Force Spartan Public Affairs)



U.S. Army Soldiers from Task Force Spartan celebrate the National Day of Prayer by gathering for an early morning prayer in Jordan. Soldiers, led by a Chaplain, prayed for the nation, their fellow service members and other topics that were prayed for by other Soldiers across the CENTCOM AOR on the same day. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. First Class Suzanne Ringle)



Task Force Spartan Soldiers with the 36th Infantry Division, Texas Army National Guard, gather to celebrate the achievements of Soldiers returning home for the 29th ID's Culminating Training Event. Soldiers were presented their end of term awards by Maj. Gen. Patrick Hamilton, and the rest of the 36th Inf. Div. command team.

(U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford Public Affairs)



36th Infantry Division Soldiers, 28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade, and elements of the 1-35 Field Artillery Brigade return to their home states this month for follow on duties. In this photo, the 36th Inf. Div. Band greets Soldiers with the 36th Infantry Division at Fort Hood as they return home.

The 1st Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, help stage equipment, to include Bradley Fighting Vehicles and HIMARS which were test fired at Udairi Range Complex, May 2, 2021. The objective of the staging exercise was to make sure their weapons were properly lined up with their sights, and overall, ready for for the upcoming exercise, Phantom Steadfast.





# Around the Force

The 130th Target Acquisition Platoon has been doing phenomenal work in various locations in the middle east. These small but skilled teams maintain and operate radar systems to provide immediate counter fire intelligence. They detect and analyze any enemy activity from small arms to artillery fire. Their systems also detect explosions, Unmanned Arial Systems, and any other suspicious activity within the area. These critical capabilities inform the ground force commanders and patrols to conduct successful operations and missions.



U.S. Army Master Sgt. Lisa Stanley, non-commissioned officer in charge of personnel and administration with the 111th Theater Engineer Brigade drops a barbell after performing a deadlift during a powerlifting competition at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, May 16, 2021. The two-day competition was held to determine the strongest male/female on Camp Buehring and to help raise awareness on mental health. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. True Thao)

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Lark (left), a Human Resources non-commissioned officer in charge with the 28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade (ECAB) points out common errors on awards to Spc. Victoria Arellano and Spc. Dulce Garcia, both Human Resources Specialists with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.



Join us in congratulating seven deserving Soldiers from Alpha Battery, 1-181st Field Artillery, Task Force Iron Valor on their promotions. Their commitment, diligence, and professionalism drive the mission forward. Hit 'em first!



We would like to give a BIG thank you to MyPillow And Tori Dallman for sending our Soldiers awesome American Flag Pillows! To the Girl Scouts of Troop 17390 from Coon Rapids for all the cookies that boosted troop morale! To 3M for all the command strips! And lastly, to the biggest troop supporters Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Network, Hugo, MN, for always taking care of Minnesota Soldiers during deployment.



Maj. Gen. Patrick Hamilton, commanding general of Task Force Spartan, receives a detailed model, golden boat from Col. Essaa Al Mansouri, head of Kuwait Army legal affairs branch, and Brig. Gen. Mohammed Aled, the Kuwait Deputy Chief of Naval Forces, at a gift exchange, May 18, 2021, on the Kuwait Naval Forces Base. The gift exchange took place after the 6th Annual Legal Symposium, which began to build partnerships and share knowledge between the Task Force Spartan Office of the Staff Judge Advocate and the Kuwait Ministry of Defense Legal Affairs Directorate Military Justice Authority. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Daryl Bradford, Task Force Spartan Public Affairs)





# Goodbye for now!

## 36th Infantry Division says goodbye to Soldiers

This month, the leadership from 36th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan, said goodbye to their first group of Soldiers as they departed theater and headed to Fort Hood, Texas. These returning Soldier left theater early to assist in training the incoming 29th Infantry Division from Virginia.

The small group of Soldiers will spend the next month training the 29th Inf. Div. and preparing them for command of Task Force Spartan when they arrive in theater later this year.

The 36th Infantry Division, in a show of appreciation, held an award ceremony for the outgoing Soldiers. The ceremony, attended by many, hosted guest speaker, TF Spartan Commanding General Maj. Gen. Patrick Hamilton.

To all the departing Soldiers, Hamilton thanked them, wishing them best of luck during the training and in the next chapter of their careers.



Lt. Col. William Wilcox salutes Brig. Gen. Charles K. Aris, the 36th Inf. Div. rear commander, as he and the rest of the 36th Inf. Div. are greeted when arriving stateside, Friday, May 21, 2021. The 36th Inf. Div. Soldiers were the first to arrive at Fort Hood to support the 29th Infantry Division's Culminating Training Event, an exercise to help prepare and ready the incoming command for theater.



Soldiers with 36th Inf. Div. returning to Fort Hood will represent their staff sections, link with their 29th counterparts and train them in everything they learned this past nine months while they were deployed. Departing theater early, these Soldiers were the first wave of 36th Inf. Div. Soldiers to return back to Texas.

The 36th Inf. Div. Army Band greets the returning Soldiers of the 36th Infantry Division with the playing of "Deep in the Heart of Texas." The 36th Inf. Div. Soldiers were the first to arrive at Fort Hood to support the incoming units Culminating Training Event, an exercise to help prepare and ready the incoming command for theater.







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Master Sgt.  
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# The Arrowhead | TASK FORCE SPARTAN

