

THE SEMINOLE STANDARD



Volume 5 | July, 2026

THE COMMANDER'S COUNCIL OAK

Shining Bright Across the Horn of Africa



As we push through another demanding month of this deployment, the sheer magnitude of what our infantry task force is accomplishing across the Horn of Africa remains a powerful testament to your dedication. Operating across this vast and complex Area of Responsibility (AOR) requires immense discipline, and our formations continue to prove that they are the right team for the job.

A true mark of a lethal and ready force is the relentless drive to seek out challenges well beyond standard mission requirements. Our Soldiers have done exactly that, showcasing exceptional physical grit and tactical proficiency on an international stage. I am incredibly proud to highlight that over 110 of our personnel have earned the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge, and more than 50 have successfully conquered the grueling Norwegian Foot March. These

foreign badges are incredibly demanding to attain, and the fact that so many of our Soldiers have earned them speaks volumes about the physical readiness and determination embedded within our ranks.

We have also celebrated several significant individual and professional development milestones this past month. I want to give a special recognition to CPL Anabelen Cruz for successfully completing the rigorous U.S. Marine Corps Corporal's Course, a fantastic display of joint-force integration and individual commitment to excellence. Additionally, I want to extend a congratulations to MAJ Johnny McDonald on his recent promotion. It is certainly well-deserved and long overdue. MAJ McDonald continues to do an absolutely phenomenal job leading from the front. Also, congratulations to our newest Noncommissioned Officer, SGT Nolan Douglas. The turn-out across the formation for his promotion ceremony was a clear testament to his character and the high ceiling of his future leadership potential.

On the operational front, building deep, functional relationships with our multinational partners remains a cornerstone of our deployment. Hatchet Company executed this flawlessly during their highly successful training with the Ethiopian Army. By traveling forward to Ethiopia to train our partner forces on critical maintenance and logistics operations, Hatchet Company directly enhanced regional capacity and interoperability. Outstanding work to CPT Zach Dodson, 1SG Chad Caudill, and the entire team.

The Soldiers across this Task Force continue to shine brightly under a heavy, constant spotlight. The persistent, high-level praise we receive from AFRICOM leadership touring the HOA AOR is a direct reflection of your daily grind. You continually bring great credit to your companies, Task Force Seminole, and the Florida Army National Guard. Keep setting the standard!

With pride,
LTC Ryan M. Swinford
Seminole 6

NEVER SURRENDER!

THE WARPATH

This Month's Focus: Junior Leader Development and Individual Ownership



In a widely dispersed formation like ours, mission success is not determined by senior leaders alone. It is decided by the daily actions of our junior leaders – the team leaders, squad leaders, and platoon level leadership who serve as the true front line of Task Force Seminole. You are the ones responsible for executing the commander's intent in each of your missions and roles across the Horn of Africa. Your leadership is the critical link that ensures standards are met, Soldiers are ready, and the mission is accomplished.

This is why our focus this month is on Junior Leader Development and Individual Ownership. These two concepts go hand in hand. For our junior leaders, I charge you to take the initiative. Do not wait for someone else to point out a deficiency. If you see a lapse in standards or a sign of complacency, you have a duty to make an on-the-spot

correction. Have the moral courage to lead from the front and make the right decision, especially when no one is looking. Upholding the standard consistently is exactly how we protect our Soldiers and combat the natural burnout of a long deployment.

Individual ownership means taking responsibility for your own readiness and your own future. I recently pushed out a developmental counseling form focused on personal and professional development. The commander and I have messaged this same objective from the beginning. Every Soldier has the opportunity to return from this deployment a stronger, more capable individual and leader than when they arrived. Leaders, you must sit down with your Soldiers and mentor them to set actionable goals across four key domains: Mental (military and civilian education), Physical (fitness and nutrition), Spiritual/Emotional (resiliency and family connections), and Financial (saving and budgeting).

This deployment is not just a mission to endure. It provides an exceptional opportunity for personal and professional growth. To our senior NCOs, mentor your junior leaders and empower them to lead with confidence. To every Soldier, own your development, own your readiness, and own your piece of this mission. Improve your foxhole every single day. When every Soldier commits to getting better, the entire task force becomes a more lethal, capable, and professional team.

CSM Jonathan D. Pletcher
Seminole 7

NEVER SURRENDER!

AROUND THE AREA OF OPERATIONS



APACHE COMPANY



SSG Nathaniel Robinson, a combat medic assigned to Apache Company, Task Force Seminole, participates in a Norwegian Foot March qualifier in the Horn of Africa, July 25, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Jake Anico)

Apache Company kicked off July at a hard-charging pace, maintaining the high operational tempo that has defined its mission throughout the deployment. Soldiers immediately put their training to the test during a comprehensive Base Defense Exercise (BDX) designed to strengthen readiness and improve response times to real-world threats.

Throughout the exercise, Soldiers reacted with speed and precision while testing the company's communication networks, defensive positions and rapid-response capabilities. The demanding scenarios required teams to maintain situational awareness, communicate effectively and execute established procedures under pressure. Their performance demonstrated Apache Company's ability to rapidly transition from routine operations to an active defensive posture.

The BDX also provided leaders with an opportunity to evaluate current procedures and identify areas for continued refinement. Each repetition strengthened coordination across the formation and reinforced the individual responsibilities required to protect personnel and critical assets. The successful exercise confirmed that Apache Company remains prepared to win at a moment's notice.

Following the intensity of the BDX, the company shifted its focus toward celebrating America's historic 250th birthday. Independence Day festivities at the outstation gave Soldiers an opportunity to commemorate the nation's founding while reflecting on the significance of serving overseas during this milestone anniversary.

The Morale, Welfare and Recreation team hosted a celebration featuring cake, prizes and competitive games. The event allowed Soldiers to decompress from the demands of the mission, strengthen relationships and enjoy time together as a team. Opportunities like these remain essential to maintaining morale and building the camaraderie that enables the company to perform effectively.

Apache Company's competitive drive also remained at an all-time high as Soldiers prepared for next month's Norwegian Foot March. The company finalized its roster through a demanding series of qualifying rucks that tested each participant's endurance, discipline and determination.

Those selected are now preparing to complete the 18.6-mile course while carrying a 24-pound rucksack. Their continued training reflects the physical and mental toughness required to earn the coveted foreign military badge. Apache Company is proud of their dedication and looks forward to seeing them represent the unit with honor as they cross the finish line.

BLACKHAWK COMPANY

Throughout July, Blackhawk Company continued to demonstrate its commitment to physical readiness, medical proficiency and professional excellence.

SPC Jacob McCaslin, SPC Nick Kataras and SPC Joshua Perez represented Blackhawk during the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge event. McCaslin and Kataras each earned the Gold German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge, while Perez earned Silver. SGT Hunter Strayer and SPC Ethan Fedkiw, who participated with the previous group, also received Gold awards. Their achievement reflects the preparation and determination required to perform under demanding standards while representing Blackhawk Company and Task Force Seminole.

On Independence Day, Blackhawk held the BMA Olympics. Soldiers from across the task force competed in a series of physically demanding and team-oriented events, including dodgeball, tug-of-war, a Humvee push, and a tire flip competition. The events tested strength and endurance while providing Soldiers an opportunity to build camaraderie and celebrate the holiday together. Nasty Dawg Company (QRF), earned an impressive second-place finish, while 3rd Platoon, Blackhawk Company, secured third place. Their performances demonstrated the teamwork, resilience and competitive spirit that continue to define the formation.

Operationally, Blackhawk remained focused on sustaining critical medical capabilities. Tactical Combat Casualty Care classes were conducted, allowing Soldiers to sharpen their knowledge and practice the lifesaving skills required to respond effectively during an emergency. The training prepared participants for an upcoming TCCC assessment while reinforcing the importance of maintaining medical proficiency across the formation. During each session, Soldiers practiced standardized casualty-care procedures intended to preserve life in an operational environment. Repetition and hands-on instruction allowed participants to build confidence, identify areas for improvement and become more comfortable performing under pressure. The continued emphasis on realistic medical training ensures Blackhawk Company remains prepared to provide immediate care when every second matters.

On July 10, Task Force Seminole hosted a qualifying event for the next Norwegian Foot March. Participants were challenged to complete a demanding 12-mile ruck march, testing their endurance, discipline and ability to maintain their pace despite fatigue and the region's difficult environmental conditions. The qualifier identified Soldiers

prepared to represent the task force during the official Norwegian Foot March. Preparing for the event requires sustained physical conditioning, careful planning and mental toughness. By accepting the challenge, participants demonstrated their willingness to push beyond their comfort zones while pursuing one of the military community's most respected international endurance awards.

As July closes, the accomplishments of Blackhawk Soldiers, both individually and collectively, demonstrates the strength of the team and its continued commitment to excellence in every mission.



From left, U.S. Army SPCs Treyvon Solomon, Nick Kataras, Joshua Perez, Liam Wentworth, Jacob McCaslin and Charlie Ramirez, assigned to Blackhawk Company, Task Force Seminole, participate in the swimming portion of the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, June 24, 2026.

BLACKJACK COMPANY

Throughout July, Blackjack Company continued to demonstrate its commitment to multinational partnerships, physical fitness and mission readiness.

From celebrating Independence Day with allied service members to conducting joint emergency-response exercises, Blackjack Soldiers strengthened the relationships and capabilities essential to accomplishing their mission.

Blackjack Company's spirit of partnership was on full display during Chabelley Airfield's Independence Day celebration. Blackjack Company proudly hosted and celebrated alongside allied service members representing six nations.

Participants competed in a cornhole tournament, sang karaoke and posed for photos with Gary the camel as they marked America's 250th anniversary.

Beyond the festivities, the celebration provided an opportunity to build morale, promote camaraderie and strengthen the international relationships that support the shared mission in the Horn of Africa.

On July 11, Blackjack Soldiers shifted their competitive focus to the gym during a 1,000-Pound Club competition. SPC Letrell Morrison of 1st Platoon delivered the event's top performance, lifting a combined 1,340 pounds to secure the highest overall total. His performance highlighted the strength, discipline and determination Blackjack Soldiers continue to display throughout the deployment.

Beyond physical fitness and allied partnerships, Blackjack Company remained intensely focused on its core mission of tactical readiness. From July 14–16, the company participated in comprehensive, base-wide exercises simulating mass-casualty and unexploded-ordnance incidents. These demanding scenarios tested the company's ability to communicate, coordinate and respond effectively during complex emergencies.



SPC Evan Wills and SPC Garrett Smith, assigned to Blackjack Company, 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole, pose for a photo with Gary the camel at Chabelley Airfield, Djibouti, July 4, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Marshall Verkler)



SPC Hunter Hanners, assigned to Blackjack Company, 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole, deadlifts 500 pounds during a weightlifting competition in the Horn of Africa, July 11, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Marshall Verkler)

The exercises were conducted in close coordination with U.S. Air Force fire and explosive ordnance disposal personnel. Integrating multiple services into the training allowed participants to refine procedures, identify potential challenges and strengthen their ability to operate together during high-stress, real-world situations. The joint training environment reinforced the interoperability and teamwork required to protect personnel and maintain readiness.

Whether moving massive weight in the gym, responding to simulated emergencies or building relationships with allied nations, the Soldiers of Blackjack Company, 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry Regiment, continue to lead the way.

COMANCHE COMPANY



Soldiers assigned to Comanche Company, Task Force Seminole, prepare to depart for a security augmentation exercise at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 17, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Luis Gautier-Martinez)

Throughout July, Comanche Company continued building readiness through leader development, multinational training and partner-force integration across the Horn of Africa.

A major effort during the month involved weapons training with the Djiboutian Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR). Soldiers from 1st Platoon, working alongside the Security Force Assistance Brigade, instructed BIR personnel on the M4 carbine, M240B medium machine gun and M249 squad automatic weapon. The training involved classroom instruction, practical exercises and live-fire qualification, strengthening the partner force's weapons proficiency and operational capabilities.

First Platoon completed a multiweek Troop Leading Procedures program led by 2LT Cole Murray and SSG Chris Baumgartner, culminating in a joint urban raid exercise with U.S. Navy Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron personnel. SPC Karson Gammons provided radio communications instruction, helping junior Soldiers develop the skills to plan and execute tactical operations.

Second Platoon conducted squad-level battle briefs in preparation for CQB training and received instruction in public affairs and customs and border operations. SSG Andrew Foss also led a squad-sized element providing wingtip security during a multibranch joint operation. Platoon competitions, the Army Fitness Test and MWR events further strengthened readiness and unit cohesion.

Third Platoon trained with the French Army's 27th Mountain Brigade, with SPC Pablo Tafur providing live interpretation, while SGT Nils Jux led a CQB knowledge exchange with the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force. The platoon also completed M-ATV driver training with ManTech contractors.

Comanche Company's medical section planned and conducted joint tactical casualty evacuation training with medical sections from across Task Force Seminole and the 791st Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. The training familiarized participants with the aircraft, tactical vehicles and procedures required to respond to a real-world mass-casualty incident. Additionally, Nine Third Platoon Soldiers also earned American Red Cross CPR, AED and First Aid Instructor certifications. Since earning his certification, CPL Riley Walker has already instructed multiple courses, significantly expanding lifesaving capabilities across Camp Lemonnier.

Several Comanche Soldiers earned recognition during July. 1SG Michael Kendall, SFC Shaun Caruso and SFC Marlon Prado earned their Gold Schützenschnur, while SGT Kleber Cevallos earned the Gold GAFFB. COL Roy Sanderson, 2LT Christian Mejica, 2LT Cole Murray, CPL Shaun Blackburn, SPC Jacob Bradley, SPC Boaz Brower, SPC Matthew Bristowe and SPC Matthew Silverio earned the Norwegian Foot March Badge. SGT Sammy Faris, SPC Brima Smart, SPC Jamir Shine and CPL Shaun Blackburn also achieved Army Fitness Test scores of 480 or higher.

In recognition of their contributions, SGT Caimen Rohm, SGT Felix Leon, SGT Dana Rausch, SGT Kleber Cevallos, SGT Brandon Beckman, SPC Pablo Tafur, SPC Karson Gammons and SPC Tydarius Geddis received Comanche Company coins. SGT Damien Servano and SPC Pablo Tafur were also selected as Camp Lemonnier Top Performers for July, reflecting the professionalism and dedication Comanche Soldiers demonstrated throughout the month.

COMBAT COMPANY



CPL Rehan Lewis, assigned to Combat Company, Task Force Seminole, performs the flexed-arm hang during a German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge event at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 16, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Nicholas Roy)

This month, Soldiers from Combat Company demonstrated exceptional determination, resilience, and warrior spirit while participating in qualification events for the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge.

Combat Company Soldiers faced each portion of the qualification with focus and discipline. Participants completed marksmanship, swimming, shuttle sprints, a flexed-arm hang, a 1,000-meter run, and a timed ruck march. Together, these events tested speed, strength, endurance, technical proficiency, and the ability to perform under pressure. Success required more than physical ability, it demanded preparation, attention to detail, and the determination to continue pushing when fatigue set in.

Each event presented a different challenge. The fitness assessments required Soldiers to generate maximum effort while maintaining proper form and composure. The swimming event tested confidence and adaptability in the water, while marksmanship required participants to remain calm, focused, and technically proficient. The culminating ruck march challenged Soldiers to sustain their pace and remain mentally engaged despite fatigue. Regardless of the event, Combat Company Soldiers approached every task with professionalism and a commitment to meeting the standard.

The qualification also highlighted the strength of the team. Soldiers encouraged one another between events, shared lessons learned, and helped their teammates remain focused through each challenge. Whether competing for a qualifying score or supporting another Soldier from the sidelines, participants demonstrated that individual achievement is strengthened by the encouragement and accountability of the formation. Their collective effort reflected the camaraderie and cohesion that remain central to Combat Company's success.

Beyond the opportunity to earn a prestigious foreign military badge, the event provided valuable training that directly supports operational readiness. The GAFPB challenged Soldiers to perform across multiple disciplines, adapt to unfamiliar standards, and maintain their composure in a competitive environment. These experiences build confidence, strengthen mental toughness, and reinforce the physical readiness.

Participation in the qualification also provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships with German partners through shared training and professional military exchange. Competing under Bundeswehr standards allowed Soldiers to experience a different military tradition while reinforcing the common values of discipline, readiness, and service shared among allied forces.

Combat Company is proud of every Soldier who accepted the challenge. Their willingness to step outside their comfort zones, test their abilities, and support their teammates reflects the unit's commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. Regardless of the final badge earned, each participant walked away stronger, more confident, and better prepared to contribute to the mission.

NASTY DAWG COMPANY

Throughout July, Nasty Dawg Company maintained a high operational tempo across the Horn of Africa, balancing force protection requirements with tactical training, emergency response and multinational engagement.

At Manda Bay, 1st Platoon integrated tactical training and professional development with real-world mission support. An on-site visit by VIPs reinforced operational standards and alignment with company and task force priorities. During Independence Day activities, the platoon maintained continuous perimeter security while allowing Soldiers to participate in a beach event, supporting morale without sacrificing vigilance.

The platoon also executed a real-world vehicle recovery mission, rapidly mobilizing and safely extracting a disabled asset. The response validated the unit's rehearsals, technical proficiency and teamwork. SPC Alrik Blanchard was recognized as the Manda Bay Soldier of the Month for his professionalism, mentorship and consistent adherence to standards.

Second Platoon remained focused on force protection through routine patrols and improvements to base fortifications. Quick Reaction Force Soldiers conducted recurring Emergency Action Plan rehearsals and responded to multiple real-world security incidents alongside special operations personnel and military working dog teams.

Training with adjacent units further strengthened the platoon's capabilities. Soldiers learned how military working dogs are integrated into apprehension operations, practiced apprehension techniques under night vision devices and completed live-fire familiarization with the platoon's sniper section. Marksmanship training included an M4 range focused on movement and engaging targets on the move, as well as an M320 grenade launcher range for personnel across the security force. The platoon also employed its unmanned aircraft system to provide aerial reconnaissance in support of force protection and operational planning.

The arrival of a new Italian Army contingent created additional opportunities for multinational engagement. QRF Soldiers established a strong working relationship with their Italian counterparts and began planning future combined training to improve interoperability and exchange tactical knowledge.

At Camp Lemonnier, 3rd and 4th Platoons sustained their QRF readiness through deliberate planning, practical

exercises and platoon-level training. Both platoons planned upcoming live-fire events while emphasizing tactical decision-making, risk management and understanding the broader operational environment. They also continued strengthening relationships with U.S. Air Force personnel while developing future joint training opportunities.

Across every location, Nasty Dawg Company continued proving its ability to train, respond and accomplish the mission. Through disciplined security operations and collaboration with joint and multinational partners, Nasty Dawg Soldiers remain ready to meet any challenge and find a way.



U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to Nasty Dawg Company, Task Force Seminole, pose for a group photo at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, June 11, 2026. (U.S. Army Photo by CPT Dakota Burr)

DISCO COMPANY



Soldiers assigned to 3rd Platoon, Disco Company, Task Force Seminole, conduct entry control point rehearsals at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 24, 2026. Pictured from left are, top row, SGT Christine Cherenfant, SGT Jeremy Hooks, SPC Elijah Gaspar, SPC Mathew Myrick and SPC Patrick Ashmen; bottom row, SPC Pascual Vallejo, SPC Oscar Molina and SPC Daniel Lopez. (U.S. Army photo by 2LT Benjamin Bartlett)

Throughout July, Disco Company faced one of the hottest months of the deployment with a strong work ethic, a positive attitude and an unwavering commitment to improvement. Despite the demanding conditions, Soldiers remained focused.

Several platoons conducted CQB training, sharpening the individual and collective skills required to operate effectively under stressful combat conditions. The training emphasized communication, controlled movement and rapid decision-making in confined environments. Repeated drills allowed Soldiers to refine their techniques, strengthen confidence within their teams and identify areas for continued improvement.

The company also conducted rigorous base defense rehearsals to ensure its Soldiers are prepared to respond swiftly and decisively to any threat. These rehearsals

reinforced individual responsibilities, improved coordination across the formation and helped leaders evaluate the company's ability to react under pressure. By repeatedly practicing critical tasks, Disco Company continues to build a disciplined and capable force prepared to protect the installation and its personnel.

Disco Company further strengthened its medical response capabilities by hosting multiple Combat Lifesaver courses throughout the month. The training expanded the company's readiness and capacity to provide immediate medical care and effectively treat casualties during an emergency.

Disco Soldiers also pushed beyond their physical limits while competing in two demanding international military events. Eleven Soldiers completed the Norwegian Foot March, an 18.6-mile ruck march carrying 25 pounds in temperatures reaching 95 degrees. Another 11 Soldiers earned the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge by demonstrating their abilities in running, swimming, calisthenics, weapons proficiency and other military skills.

Participation in these events required weeks of preparation, personal discipline and the determination to continue despite fatigue and extreme heat. Soldiers encouraged one another throughout each challenge, demonstrating the teamwork and mutual support that define Disco Company. Their accomplishments reflected not only individual fitness but also the mental toughness and resilience required to remain effective throughout the deployment.

That competitive spirit extended to the athletic field. Disco Company's softball team placed first in the latest tournament, defeating three other teams to claim the championship. SGT Jaytee Dolabaillie also represented the company during a friendly rugby tournament alongside French and Japanese partner forces. These competitions provided Soldiers an opportunity to strengthen camaraderie within the company while building relationships with service members from allied and partner nations.

SSG Alexander Godard, SGT Jaytee Dolabaillie, SGT Fred Hosey, SGT David Heuman and SPC Tramun Gaines were recognized during the Navy's Top Performer ceremony in July. Their professionalism and contributions played an important role in the Disco's success at Camp Lemonnier, and they continue to set the standard across the formation.

From tactical and medical training to international competitions and athletic victories, Disco Company made July a month of measurable progress. Soldiers continued to demonstrate that readiness is built through repetition, teamwork and a willingness to embrace difficult challenges. Their efforts strengthened the formation and ensured Disco Company remains prepared to accomplish its mission throughout the Horn of Africa.

HATCHET COMPANY



SPC Noah Barbour, assigned to Hatchet Company, Task Force Seminole, explains procedures for identifying and diagnosing faults on a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle to members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force at the Hurso Contingency Training Center in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, June 22, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Zach Dodson)

Throughout July, Hatchet Company continued to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to mission readiness, professional development, and unit cohesion.

The period began with a significant milestone as SPC Nixon Jean reaffirmed his commitment to the Army by reenlisting for an additional three years. His decision reflects the confidence Soldiers have in the unit's leadership, mission, and the opportunities for continued service. This accomplishment also reinforces Hatchet's readiness by retaining experienced personnel dedicated to supporting Task Force Seminole.

As the month progressed, Hatchet Soldiers remained actively engaged

in events that strengthened both military partnerships and relationships with the local community. During the Camp Lemonnier Bazaar, Soldiers supported local vendors, demonstrating appreciation for the host nation and reinforcing positive community engagement. These interactions continue to foster goodwill while enhancing morale across the Task Force.

Hatchet Company conducted a 3-day LMTV maintenance focused engagement with the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) at the Hurso Contingency Training Center (HCTC) in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia. The engagement focused heavily on hands-on practical instruction, transitioning from the initial assessment and organization of repair parts, to intensive motor pool preventative maintenance diagnostics and troubleshooting.

Hatchet Company focused on enhancing operational capabilities by conducting driver's training for Task Force Seminole personnel. These sessions improved driver proficiency, reinforced safe operating procedures, and increased the Task Force's overall transportation readiness. By sharing expertise across units, Hatchet continues to demonstrate its role as a reliable sustainment organization committed to supporting mission success beyond its own formation.

Hatchet Soldiers also pursued professional and physical excellence by participating in training events designed to challenge individual endurance and military proficiency. Several Soldiers took part in and successfully completed the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge along with the demanding 18.6-mile Norwegian Foot March. Their participation showcased exceptional physical fitness, resilience, and determination while reinforcing the company's culture of continuous self-improvement and readiness.

CPL Anabelen Cruz-Lopez successfully graduated from the U.S. Marine Corps Corporal Course, further expanding leadership knowledge and strengthening the company's noncommissioned officer development. This achievement highlights Hatchet's investment in cultivating future leaders capable of contributing to mission success.

As the deployment progresses, the Soldiers of Hatchet Company continue to embody professionalism, adaptability, and selfless service in every mission they undertake and stand ready to continue building upon their accomplishments.

TOMAHAWK COMPANY

As the nation celebrated America's 250th birthday in July, Tomahawk Company also recognized another month of accomplishments supporting Task Force Seminole's mission throughout the Horn of Africa.

The Witch Doctors medical section continued sustaining the fight by integrating electrocardiogram (EKG) diagnostics into prolonged field care (PFC) training. The instruction strengthened medics' ability to identify cardiac abnormalities and care for critically injured casualties in austere, resource-limited environments where medical evacuation may be delayed.

During the EKG portion, medics received foundational and advanced instruction in cardiac electrophysiology and practiced translating complex cardiac data into actionable treatment. The PFC scenarios then challenged them to manage deteriorating patients for extended periods, potentially exceeding 24 to 72 hours, while rationing limited medical supplies and equipment. As near-peer conflict makes immediate evacuation increasingly uncertain, this training prepares medics to move beyond rapid stabilization and provide sustained clinical care that can reduce

preventable battlefield deaths.

Tomahawk's S4 section also continued serving as a logistical backbone for the task force. During July, the team met with LTC Jeremy Coates and CW2 Brandon Philips, the officer in charge and property book officer supporting the 79th Theater Sustainment Command. The teams discussed force modernization and sustainment support for Soldiers operating throughout the theater, strengthening the logistical coordination required to maintain readiness across the formation.

The Unit Ministry Team remained equally focused on the spiritual and mental readiness of the force. Chaplain Jason Fletcher and SGT Yalimar Mercedes earned their Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training certifications, equipping them to



SPC Noland Douglass, a Battle NCO assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Seminole, is promoted to the rank of Sergeant during a ceremony at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 31, 2026. The promotion recognized Douglass' demonstrated leadership, professionalism and commitment to continued service in support of the mission in the Horn of Africa. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)

assist Soldiers experiencing crises. Chaplain Fletcher also preached at Freedom Chapel on Camp Lemonnier, where attendance continued to grow throughout the month. The team led Transformational Morale Leadership classes to develop resilient, ethically grounded leaders and facilitated weekly Bible studies that provided Soldiers with continued spiritual support and fellowship. Whether counseling, teaching or preaching, the team remains committed to keeping Soldiers' heads in the fight.

Finally, Tomahawk Soldiers continued pursuing distinguished foreign military awards. SFC Christopher Close, assigned to the S6 Communication section, represented Task Force Seminole during the marksmanship events for the German Armed Forces Badge for Weapons Proficiency, commonly known as the Schützenschnur. His competitive drive and dedication to the profession reflect the qualities that make Task Force Seminole uniquely qualified to accomplish its mission in the Horn of Africa.

Together, these efforts demonstrate Tomahawk Company's essential role in sustaining the task force. From advanced medical training and theater-level logistics coordination to spiritual readiness and individual professional development, Tomahawk Soldiers continue providing the specialized support that enables units across the formation to remain ready, resilient and focused on the mission. Their work may span different sections and specialties, but

SOLDIER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Specialist Morgan Goin



Hometown: Pell City, AL

MOS: 11B Infantryman

Favorite MRE: Beef Goulash

Favorite Movie: The Avengers

Hobby: Physical Fitness

For SPC Morgan Goin, serving in the Army has always been about something bigger than himself.

Growing up in Pell City, Alabama, Goin felt a calling to serve while also seeking an opportunity to challenge himself physically and mentally. Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, he joined the Alabama Army National Guard three years ago, believing military service would allow him to give back while pushing himself beyond his comfort zone.

"I've always felt called to serve," Goin said. "I believe most men should. I've always been competitive and wanted to push myself physically, so the National Guard gave me the opportunity to do both."

Today, Goin serves as an 11B infantryman with Blackjack Company, 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole. Outside of the Army, he works as a physical therapist assistant, applying many of the same principles of discipline, resilience and helping others that have guided his military career.

Although still early in his Army career, Goin has already established himself as a dependable Soldier. After graduating as the top Soldier in his One Station Unit Training class, he says the accomplishment he values most isn't an award or certificate, it's the confidence and trust he has earned from his leaders.

"The respect and trust from my leadership is what I'm most proud of," Goin said.

One of Goin's favorite experiences in the Army has been training with small unmanned aircraft systems, gaining experience with emerging technology that continues to shape today's battlefield.

Throughout his career, Goin says his faith has remained his greatest source of guidance.

"God comes first," he said. "I lean on His guidance in every decision through thoughtful prayer and obedience."

As the deployment continues, Goin is looking forward to returning home with a renewed perspective on life.

Outside of military service, Goin enjoys anything involving fitness and competition. He regularly competes in CrossFit competitions and obstacle course races and enjoys spending time with his fiancée, friends and family on the lake.

As Task Force Seminole continues its mission across the Horn of Africa, Soldiers like Goin demonstrate that service is about more than completing the mission. Through his commitment to personal growth, faith and continual self-improvement, he strives to become a better Soldier, leader and person each day.

SOLDIER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Sergeant Nils Jux



Hometown: Sarasota, FL

MOS: 11B Infantryman

Favorite MRE: Chili Mac

Favorite Band: Caamp

Hobby: Skateboarding

For SGT Nils Jux, a decade of Army service has taken him from the airborne community in Europe to leading Soldiers with the East Africa Response Force in the Horn of Africa.

Growing up in Sarasota, Florida, Jux followed in his father's footsteps by joining the Army, beginning a career that has now spanned 10 years. Along the way, he has built a reputation as an experienced infantryman, serving in multiple units and training alongside allied partners around the world.

Today, Jux serves as an 11B Infantryman and squad leader with Comanche Company, Task Force Seminole. As part of the East Africa Response Force (EARF), he leads Soldiers prepared to rapidly respond to crises throughout the Horn of Africa, maintaining a high level of readiness to support the task force's mission.

Throughout his career, Jux has experienced a variety of assignments, but none stand out more than his six years assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vicenza, Italy. Serving in the brigade's scout platoon, Jux trained extensively alongside allied and partner nation forces while participating in airborne operations across Europe. The assignment provided opportunities to refine his infantry skills and gain experience in one of the Army's most sought-after airborne units.

Among his proudest accomplishments are the foreign jump wings he earned. Jux has earned Polish, Italian and Serbian parachutist wings, recognizing his participation in multinational airborne operations.

Throughout his career, Jux credits one leader above all others for shaping his development.

"SFC Sylvester Gomes was hands down the best platoon sergeant I've ever had," Jux said. "His dedication to developing Soldiers and genuinely caring about their well-being set the standard for what leadership should look like."

One of the aspects of the deployment Jux enjoys most is the opportunity to train alongside international partners.

"We've had the chance to conduct a lot of close-quarters battle knowledge exchanges with our partner forces," Jux said. "Working together and learning from each other has been one of the best parts of the deployment."

Outside of the Army, Jux enjoys skateboarding and camping. One thing many of his fellow Soldiers may not know is that he also plays guitar and has a strong passion for music.

As Task Force Seminole continues its mission across the Horn of Africa, leaders like Jux help ensure the force remains prepared to respond whenever called upon. Through years of experience, a commitment to developing Soldiers and a passion for working alongside allied partners, he continues to exemplify the professionalism and readiness expected of today's infantry leaders.

Self-Defense Course Builds Confidence & Readiness Across the Combined Joint Force

Task Force Seminole recently hosted a personal protection and self-defense course for service members assigned to Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa. The course introduced participants to Brazilian jiu-jitsu fundamentals and other practical techniques designed to improve situational awareness, confidence and the ability to respond during a physical confrontation.

Through hands-on instruction, participants practiced defensive positioning, escapes, control techniques and methods for creating distance from an aggressor. The training emphasized leverage, proper movement and sound decision-making rather than relying solely on strength.

The course provided participants with practical skills they can apply both on and off duty while reinforcing Task Force Seminole's commitment to the safety and readiness of the combined joint force.



U.S. Army CSM Jonathan Pletcher, SGT Elioenai Campos, and SPC Devin Shumate, assigned to Task Force Seminole, Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, instruct blocks of self-defense training at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 18, 2026. The course provided participants with practical techniques to improve personal safety, confidence and readiness. (U.S. Army photos by SPC Adila Hamdan)

SEMINOLE STRENGTH

Building strength, endurance and readiness — Never Surrender!

★ WORKOUT OF THE MONTH ★

THE LONG HAUL

★

LOAD UP. MOVE OUT. STAY READY.

★ 4-MILE RUCK ★

	35-POUND DRY WEIGHT
	GOAL PACE: 15-18 MINUTES PER MILE

AT EACH MILE MARKER

	10 RUCK SQUATS
	10 HAND-RELEASE PUSH-UPS
	30-SECOND PLANK

★ CHALLENGE ★

FINISH ALL 4 MILES WHILE MAINTAINING A CONSISTENT PACE AND PROPER FORM.

★

HYDRATE BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER. ADJUST PACE FOR HEAT CONDITIONS.

★

EVERY MILE COUNTS. TOGETHER, WE CIRCLE AFRICA.

★★ TASK FORCE SEMINOLE ★★



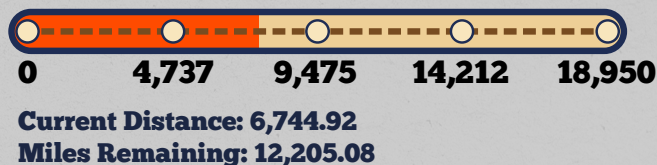
Ruck Around Africa

The Task Force Seminole Around Africa Ruck Challenge continued to gain ground during July, with Soldiers logging an additional 2,555 miles across the formation. Combined with previous months, the task force has now accumulated 6,744.92 miles toward the 18,950-mile journey around Africa's coastline.

With more than one-fifth of the route now complete, Task Force Seminole has completed 35.59% of the challenge, leaving 12,205.08 miles remaining. The steady pace reflects the formation's continued commitment to physical readiness and individual initiative.

A significant portion of July's mileage came from Soldiers participating in the Norwegian Foot March and the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge, both of which included challenging ruck march requirements. These events not only allowed participants to pursue prestigious foreign military badges but also contributed hundreds of miles to the overall challenge while building endurance, resilience and esprit de corps across the task force.

Although there is still ground to cover, the challenge remains well within reach. At the current pace, each Soldier in only needs to average approximately 2.5 rucking miles per month to complete the journey



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Live Ready

Chaplain Jason Fletcher



If someone broke into your home, you couldn't ask them to wait while you did a few push-ups to get stronger. You would have no more time to prepare. What you have in that moment is what you have. That is why you don't get ready when the moment comes—you live ready before it comes.

In the same way, God doesn't call us to begin preparing when an opportunity arrives. We prepare today for what we will face tomorrow.

The Apostle Paul gave Timothy this same challenge: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2). The Greek word translated "be ready" is *ephistými*. It carries the idea of standing ready, prepared to act whenever called upon. Whether the opportunity is expected or unexpected, favorable or unfavorable, we are to live ready. The next question is: How?

Many Christians understand grace as God's gift of salvation and the forgiveness of our sins. That is one hundred percent accurate. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. But grace is not only God's gift for salvation; it is also His empowerment for daily living.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9 (my paraphrase), the Lord told Paul: "My empowerment (grace) is optimized in situations beyond your natural ability." God's grace gives us strength when the assignment is greater than our natural ability, wisdom when we do not know what to do, and endurance when the mission becomes difficult. God does not call us to live ready through our own strength. He empowers us with His.

Here on mission, every day brings responsibilities, pressures, and unexpected challenges. Even though we have our training, experience, and natural ability, these alone will never be enough. His grace must empower us.

It is also true for our families back home. Their mission carries added responsibilities: the need to adapt to unexpected challenges, care for children, support one another, and keep the home strong while their service member is away. Their mission may look different, but they need the same empowering grace.

Whether serving forward or holding the home front, God never designed us to carry the mission alone. God's grace empowers us to conquer, remain faithful, and bring the sacred into the secular, whatever mission He has given us.

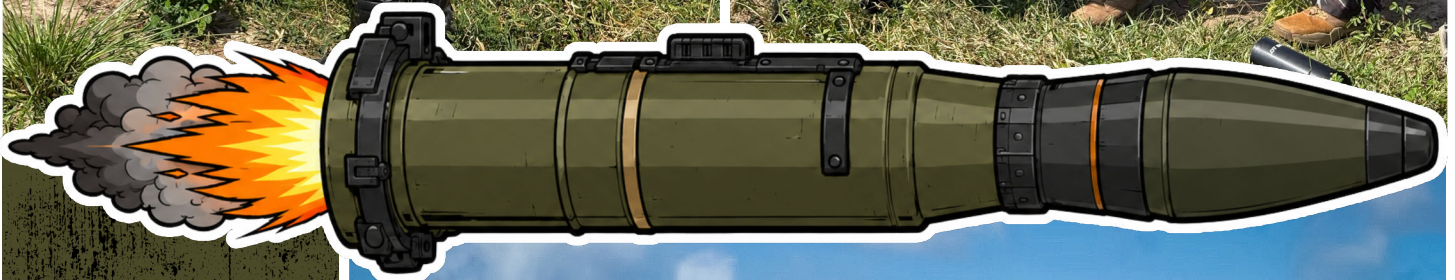
So, whatever today or the future brings, rely on His grace. Stay connected to Jesus and allow His strength to be optimized in situations beyond your natural ability. When it feels like the responsibility is too heavy or the mission is stretching you beyond your natural ability, remember: His grace is your empowerment.

His empowerment is how you live ready.

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



THE GOOSE IS LOOSE



Carl-Gustaf 84 mm
Recoilless Rifle

**LIVE
FIRE
TRAINING**





U.S. Army 1LT Gloria Bocyck, an Executive Officer assigned to Comanche Company, Task Force Seminole, prepares the East African Response Force (EARF) for a security augmentation exercise at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 17, 2026. The EARF serves as part of U.S. Africa Command's crisis response capability in the Horn of Africa. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Luis Gautier-Martinez)



MG Shane Morgan, the Commanding General of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, presents a challenge coin to SFC Eric Hendrix, assigned to Blackjack Company, 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Seminole, in the Horn of Africa, 4 July 2026. Hendrix received the coin in recognition of his outstanding performance and excellence while supporting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa's mission. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Marshall Verkler)



Task Force Seminole competing for the German Armed Forces Badge of Marksmanship "Schutzenschnur", Chabelly Airfield, Djibouti, July 13, 2026. U.S. Soldiers who successfully complete the competition are awarded the Schutzenschnur at bronze, silver or gold level based on a Soldier's accuracy. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Marshall Verkler)



Soldiers assigned to Comanche Company, Task Force Seminole, East African Response Force (EARF), prepare to depart for a security augmentation exercise at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 17, 2026. The EARF serves as part of U.S. Africa Command's crisis response capability in the Horn of Africa. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Luis Gautier-Martinez)



A U.S. Marine Corps KC-130J Super Hercules and MV-22B Ospreys fly over the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa Independence Day parade at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 4, 2026. The parade commemorated the 250th anniversary of the United States' founding and brought together U.S. service members, coalition partners and host-nation personnel to celebrate Independence Day. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)



U.S. Army soldiers assigned to Task Force Seminole, 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Florida Army National Guard, participate in the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa Independence Day parade at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 4, 2026. The parade commemorated the 250th anniversary of the United States' founding and brought together U.S. service members, coalition partners and host-nation personnel to celebrate Independence Day. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Dakota Burr)



Task Force Seminole Soldiers participate in the weapons qualification event during German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge testing, Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 13, 2026. The GAFPB tested participants on a ruck march, swim, physical fitness assessment, and weapons qualification, with Soldiers earning awards in bronze, silver or gold based on their performance. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by SPC Adila Hamdan)



Task Force Seminole Soldiers stand in formation while receiving their German Armed Forces Badge (GAFPB), Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, July 20, 2026. The GAFPB tested participants on a ruck march, swim, physical fitness assessment, and weapons qualification, with Soldiers earning awards in bronze, silver or gold based on their performance. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by SPC Adila Hamdan)

MASTHEAD

The Seminole Standard

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Disclaimer:

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