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'Black Jack' embraces new training concept

Sgt. Quentin Johnson
 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas – For almost a decade, the Army's concept of a combined multifaceted training exercise is now being tested for the first time here.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team "Black Jack," 1st Cavalry Division, is first to be given the opportunity to utilize a new training concept called Live, Virtual and Constructive – Integrated Architecture, during a training exercise titled "Operation Black Jack Saddle Up."

Through the month of September, Black Jack will conduct, in stages, a First Use Assessment to determine the strength, capabilities and changes needed of the LVC-IA.

The LVC-IA is a training system designed to integrate multiple separate training concepts Army units utilize to prepare them for combat operations, into one larger exercise, said Lt. Col. Shane Cipolla, director of TRADOC project office integrated architecture, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

"In the past units would use 'Blended Training' – exercises using simulators, virtual trainers and live-fire exercises but at different times and stages, and with added costs," Cipolla explained. "The LVC-IA will allow units, such as a brigade, to incorporate all those training concepts into one exercise simultaneously with less costs."

With most training in the Army utilizing a lot of time and materials on multiple events, cost and personnel support can be a

difficulty.

"As units use the LVC-IA and train at a true multi-level echelon, you save on additional costs, materials and time," Cipolla added.

Black Jack Commander, Col. Robert Whittle Jr., said in addition to cost effectiveness, he was thankful his brigade has first opportunity to use the system and assess its effectiveness.

"We are very fortunate for this incredible training opportunity. We will have a chance to combine training events with mission command operations," Whittle said.

As with blended training, brigades won't normally get to enhance their command operations and Soldiers their individual skills testing until later exercises, said Maj. Mark Huhtanen, Black Jack's Operation Officer

"LVC-IA will allow the brigade to train on things it normally wouldn't train on during the same exercise, such as planning, and command and control," he added. "It will afford Soldiers throughout eight of the brigade's companies to train simultaneously for high intensity conflicts."

"LVC-IA does offer more Soldier involvement. All units can be involved with linking data from other training environments, which offers better training and communication," Cipolla explained.

Cipolla said thus far, Black Jack has offered good feedback on the strengths and limitations of LVC-IA,

in what he calls a "true user assessment."

Whittle agreed by adding that he has full confidence in his staff to objectively and accurately assess the system. "I am fully confident in (staff) to ensure the basic components work and areas of improvement will be identified thoroughly."

Exercises are scheduled for completion the first week in October with other versions of LVC-IA to be added in the future, Cipolla said.



Photo by Sgt. Quentin Johnson 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas – Capt. Duncan Walker, a battle captain for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's "Black Jack," 1st Cavalry Division, training exercise, Operation Black Jack Saddle Up, communicates with the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd BCT, about daily reports during the training exercise here, Sept. 24.

"Rail Gunners" return from Afghanistan



Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez 41st Fires Bde, PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas - Mariaya Santiago accepted Spc. Alberto Sdelamora's, a motor transport operator in 575th Field Support Company, 1-21st Field Artillery Battalion, 41st Fires Brigade, marriage proposal after he returned from deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Sept. 1.

Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
 41st Fires Bde PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas - Soldiers from 1st battalion, 21st Field Artillery, 41st Fires Brigade, returned to Fort Hood safely from their deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Sep. 1.

The Rail Gunners were responsible for the transportation and security of members in support of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan, in and around the Afghan capital city of Kabul.

The Soldiers received a round of applause when they marched into the 1-21st Field Artillery Battalion headquarters area where families and friends gathered to greet the troops.

The night became even more extraordinary when the crowd was witness to Spc. Alberto Sdelamora's, a motor transport operator in 575th Field Support Company, 1-21st Field Artillery Battalion, 41st Fires Brigade, marriage proposal to his girlfriend, Mariaya Santiago.

Sdelamora made the proposal over the loud speaker system after informing the

crowd that he had an announcement that he would like to make.

"I couldn't feel my legs because I was so nervous," Sdelamora said.

There was a collective "ahh" from the crowd of families and then the moment was celebrated with another ovation after Santiago accepted Sdelamora's ring.

"I nodded [yes] because I couldn't speak, I was crying," said the future bride, Santiago.



Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez 41st Fires Bde, PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas - Soldiers of 1-21st Field Artillery Battalion, 41st Fires Brigade "Rail Gunners", march into the 1-21st Field Artillery Battalion headquarters area, to a round of applause from the gathering of families and friends, Sept. 1.

“Black Knight” captain helps Vietnam widow claim missing award

Sgt. Quentin Johnson

2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

AUGUSTA, Ga.— For 44 years Shelby Harding has held onto a case with her late-husband’s Army and foreign medals, but with one exception; a blank space where a missing award should be.

During that time Shelby had always felt her late-husband, Steve Harding, should have received the Army’s Combat Infantrymen Badge for his actions during the Vietnam War.

“I always knew in my heart that Steve was deserving of the award but I never received the orders for it,” Shelby said.

Steve died April 26, 1968 in the Quang Tri Province of Vietnam. Shelby received his awards and decorations during two separate ceremonies in 1968 and 1969 and at the time inquired to the whereabouts of the missing medal.

“During the presentation of the awards in 1969, I asked about the CIB and the response I received was ‘what, you want more lady?’” Shelby added.

It wasn’t until 2011 that someone offered to help Shelby. Her niece’s husband searched months to find information on Steve’s CIB but to no avail.

The following year Capt. Kyle Hatzinger, commander of D Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, made contact with Shelby after learning about Steve while sponsoring a reunion for Company D. in Branson, Mo., April 2012.

“I sent Shelby a letter to simply introduce myself and let her know she is part of the Company D family,” Hatzinger said. “At the time, I had no idea Shelby had been looking for her husband’s missing award.”

A month later, Shelby asked Hatzinger for help.

“I was pleased to help her



Courtesy Photo

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Shelby Harding and Capt. Kyle Hatzinger, commander for D Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hold a display case of Steve Harding’s, late-husband of Shelby, awards during an award-memorial ceremony for Steve in Augusta, Ga., Sept. 1.

but had no idea where to start,” he added. “I turned to a colleague in administration and she pointed me to two different military records agencies.”

For more than a month Hatzinger worked with the U.S. Army Human Resources Command and the National Personnel Records Center-Military Records finding information on Steve and his assignments in Vietnam.

“After about a month of research I received a call from an HRC employee who’d been working on Steve’s records,” Hatzinger said. “He conveyed to me that once a file on Steve was found he opened it up to find CIB orders dated 1968.”

Hatzinger said he was excited and relieved to receive the information, despite no explanation why orders existed without the award ever being presented.

“I was fortunate for the help I received from personnel at HRC and the NPRC,” added Hatzinger. “At the same time, I was excited and relieved that we could help Shelby and allow her some closure.”

“I was pleased and excited that after all these years, I was able to receive Steve’s award, one I knew he deserved for service to the country,” Shelby said. “I needed that closure.”

Hatzinger said once the award was collected, he wanted to ensure Shelby received it in a customary fashion.

“I know she would have

been happy receiving the award with a handshake and kind words, but I wanted to make sure it was presented in a meaningful and traditional way,” Hatzinger added.

Hatzinger arranged to have a grave-side, award ceremony in Augusta, Ga., Sept. 1, which he and his wife attended along with four veterans who served with Steve, some of their spouses and 10 of Shelby’s family members.

The hour-long ceremony included the CIB presentation, a speech from three of Steve’s brothers-in-arms, a final roll call and a commemorative plaque given by Ralph Dahl from Cailf. — one of Steve’s former platoon members, said Hatzinger. Additionally, Dahl’s wife presented Shelby with a hand-made guidon, a D Co. Flag.

“It was a somber but wonderful time, not a dry eye in the crowd,” Shelby said of the ceremony. She was inspired by the speeches, and amazed that Hatzinger and the men who fought by her husband’s side would travel from around the U.S. to pay their last respects to Steve.

“There was a lot of sadness during the reading of the eulogies but Shelby cherishes her memories and deserved time to reflect on her husband’s achievements ... I was impressed by her strength,” Hatzinger said.

With the CIB properly resting in Shelby’s case she commented, “We have done what needs to be done. I will always have my memories and at 75-years-old, my life is complete.”



Courtesy Photo

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Shelby Harding of Augusta, Ga., holds a photograph of her late-husband, Steve Harding, at an award-memorial ceremony for Steve in Augusta, Ga., Sept. 1.

Cav hails senior leaders, cuts birthday cake



Photo by Sgt. Kim Browne HQ, 1st Cav. Div., PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas - Maj. Gen. Anthony Ierardi (center), commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, along with Brig. Gen. Thomas James (left), deputy commanding general for maneuvers, 1st Cav., and Command Sgt. Maj. James Norman, command sergeant major of the division, cuts the First Team’s 91st birthday cake traditional cavalry style, with a saber, at the division headquarters, Sept. 13. The cake cutting came after a Patch Ceremony that welcomed James and Norman to the division.



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"Werewolves" spearhead assault training

Sgt. Richard Wrigley

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas -- For the first time in a long time, aircrews of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, began training for the repel air assault, here Sept., 14.

Pilots and crews of A Company "Werewolves," 3rd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, flew out in support of Fort Hood's Air Assault School in order to certify pilots and crews and to also support the school's training of their students.

Despite poor weather, the day's training went along as planned, mainly due to the professionalism of the 1st ACB, said Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Gomez, of San Antonio, the repel master in charge of the class.

Gomez said he was happy with the results, and that thorough planning, direct communication, and superb coordination allowed for the operation to run as smoothly as it did.

Spc. Christopher Remakis, a native of Sicklerville, N.J., a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter crew chief

for the Werewolves, was a "first-time-go" being certified for the repel assault and showed enthusiasm toward the new training.

"It was pretty neat seeing [the students] go through their training and to see how proficient the repel masters were, as I was working on my proficiency at the task at hand," Remakis said, who recently returned from a year-long deploy-

ment to Afghanistan.

Remakis said that the mission set was different for him, as was the pace of the training since he was so used to the speed and efficiency of the real-time mission as opposed to the slower pace of first-time training.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shawn Rodgers, of Charleston, S.C., and an instructor pilot for the Werewolves, was one of the pilots

who qualified and helped support the air assault school. Rodgers talked about what made the repel different to him and what it meant to the unit's mission.

"I've never done a repel assault before," Rodgers said.

"I've always landed, and the fact that there is someone hanging onto a rope outside your aircraft makes it a very different mission," Rodgers added. "There's more danger, these guys could get hurt, and that's what makes the repel different to me."

Rodgers went on to make clear how important this was to the 3-227th AHB's mission set and what it could mean for the future.

"A repel operation is always riskier. The first option will always be to land and to let people on and off the aircraft; what this does though is allow us to be able to provide more options to the ground trooper, the war-fighters, those who we call the customer," Rodgers said.

"In the end it's all about the war-fighters and supporting them the best we can," Rodgers concluded.



Photo by Sgt. Richard Wrigley, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO
FORT HOOD, Texas -- A UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopter from A Co. "Werewolves", flies high during the Fort Hood Air Assault School's repel training, here Sept. 14.

Fire support crews prep for gunnery

Sgt. Quentin Johnson

2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas – As gunnery approaches, tankers and infantrymen are not the only Soldiers that will have the opportunity to hone their skills in the field.

Fire support specialists throughout the 2nd Brigade Combat Team "Black Jack," 1st Cavalry Division, are conducting Fire Support Team Certification at various sites here Aug. 20 to Sept. 07.

Certification is conducted twice a year to assess the FSS's proficiency and competency while ensuring their training is validated for gunnery – a series of ranges for armor personnel to become proficient in their skills, according to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Louis Campos, Black Jack's targeting officer.

Months of planning went

into the set up for the certification testing with each Black Jack battalion trained to hold their own certification testing sites, which helps alleviate time issues with all the testing needed, Campos added.

For almost three weeks, 2nd Brigade FIST Soldiers are tested on multiple aspects of their job at the individual and four-man crew levels.

Soldiers are tested for certification in the following: an Army Physical Fitness Test, land navigation, range finder operations, communications, observation point set up, GPS training, almost 24 call-for-fire exercises, a 50-question written test, computer and software training, Campos explained.

"My Soldiers trained for these events for months," said Sgt. 1st Class Carlos Felix, fire support

operations noncommissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd BCT. "We conducted hands-on training in the motor pool and field exercises to ensure the crews were prepared for certification."

"(1-5 Soldiers) are exceeding my expectations," Felix said. "My experienced FSS NCOs have pushed and mentored the new Soldiers so they will receive a first-time go on the tests."

Success has not come without struggles as most FSSs found certain events challenging.

"Most of the Soldiers have seen challenges with the written test covering aspects of an FSS's job," Felix added. "Newer Soldiers did well despite their lack of experience."

Spc. Nathan Zielinski, a FSS with 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd BCT, said

although he has not taken the written test yet, he is not worried.

"We have been prepping for these certifications for months," he said. "Everything is great thus far and all our people have passed the call for fire exercises."

Zielinski stated he is very excited about certifying before gunnery. He has high expectations about the tested events and knows the certification is essential for the FSSs to move forward in their training.

"I have learned so much about fire support tasks, crew relations, the essentials of my job and preparations for future deployments – the knowledge is endless," he said.

As the end of the certification process grows near, Soldiers continue to remain competent, train to standard and make positive strides towards being prepared for gunnery, Campos said.

YouTube



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Live The Legend!

Rail Gunner volunteers help disabled Vet

Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade PAO

MORGANS POINT RESORT, Texas – Despite the cloud cover and the threat of rain, 22 Soldiers from the 41st Fires Brigade, “Rail Gunners,” met at lot 14 on Key Wish Drive in Morgan’s Point Resort, Texas, to help a fellow brother-in-arms by adding the finishing touches to his new home, Sept. 15.

In all, approximately 55 Soldiers across Fort Hood gave their time to assist a fellow service member. Soldiers of all ranks – privates, sergeants, and officers alike, gave up their Saturday morning to help former Marine Staff Sgt. Jack Pierce.

The Soldiers lay patches of sod, planted trees, bushes and flowers in front of the newly constructed home provided to Pierce, who was paralyzed from the chest down after his vehicle drove over a 300 pound



Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Bde PAO
MORGANS POINT RESORT, Texas – Sergeant 1st Class Elbert Powell (front), HHB, 41st Fires Bde, helps prepare the yard of the Pierce family, Sept. 15

bomb in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on Jan. 9, 2010, through the Homes for Our Troops program. The house was built to allow Pierce the freedom of movement allowing him to live more independently.

Homes for Our Troops is a national non-profit organization founded in 2004. The organization provides houses to disabled veterans.

The building of the house

began June 15 and the yard was the last step to complete the new home. The homes that are provided by Homes for Our Troops are given at no cost to the disabled veterans.

“It’s a warm feeling, knowing that Soldiers from my unit would come out here to donate their time to help someone else,” said 1st Lt. Annemarie McCreight, an executive officer for the 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Bde. “To come out and lend a hand to help him live a better life outside of the uniform is easy motivation to come out here,” said McCreight.

As the Rail Gunners gathered to lend a helping hand, the physical labor that helped finish the new home also helped to polish the Rail Gunners’ team and boost the esprit de corps.

“Doing something outside of your normal duty will help bring a team together,” said 1st Sgt. Jeremy Hall, the first sergeant for A Battery, 26th Field Artillery Regi-

ment (Target Acquisition Battery), 41st Fires Bde.

In the spirit of volunteering and the good-natured gesture, the Soldiers from the 41st Fires Bde. received an equal sized payout by knowing their time was used to help someone in need.

“It makes me feel good, helping others out,” said Spc. Steven Degonia, a heavy wheel mechanic, 589th Brigade Support Battalion, 41st Fires Bde.

The leaders within the brigade made a point to lend a helping hand. With all the volunteers on hand, the yard was completed quickly.

“I can’t ask these Soldiers to give up some of their time to be out here if I’m not willing to give up some of my time,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Antonio Dunston, command sergeant major for the 41st Fires Bde. “It’s one of the most rewarding things I could ask for, seeing these Soldiers volunteer their time on a weekend,” Dunston said.

‘Charger’ Soldiers gear up for APFR

By 1st Lt. John Heath
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

FORT HOOD, Texas – The “Chargers” of the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division geared up for a heavy training cycle by conducting Medical Evacuation training Sept. 16, here.

One particular training exercise will be the Advanced Pegasus First Responder which is designed to better prepare Soldiers to treat injuries both on and off the battlefield.

APFR training helps give Soldiers the critical tools necessary to provide immediate aid until they can be taken to a facility that can provide a higher level of care.

“It is necessary to provide Soldiers with medical training so that they may care for themselves and others,” said Sgt. Travis Green, a medic with B Company, 1/12 Cav., and a native of Atlanta. “The great thing about this training is that it can help Soldiers both on and off the battlefield. Soldiers can also benefit from this training in the civilian sector as well,” he added.

Whenever an incident occurs, it is beneficial to have Soldiers prepared to respond to a given medical situation so that minimal suffering to the victim is sustained.

“Leaders at every level take

appropriate measures to mitigate these risks of an accident. However, from time to time an accident does occur, even within the best organizations,” said Spc. Tyson Nettles, a medic assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company and a native of Gainesville, Fla. “It is the initial care that Soldiers provide immediately following any incident that will help minimize loss of life, limb, or eyesight and help get these Soldiers back in the game.”

With the training cycle kicking off, it is appropriate that Soldiers get back to their core competencies. As long as Soldiers are training to deploy in support of our nation, advanced medical training will always have a necessity in each unit’s training cycle.



Photo by Spc. Joe Nettles, 3BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
FORT HOOD, Texas - Medics from 1-12 Regt., 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., evaluate Charger Soldiers conducting a Medical Evacuation training exercise, here, Sept. 16.

ACB celebrates freedom with adopted school

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Armas, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO



Students from Trimmier Elementary School wave American flags as a choir sings patriotic songs during a celebration of freedom Sept. 11 in Killeen. Soldiers from the 4th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. also took part in the event. During the event, the Soldiers properly displayed how to fold an American flag and marched with the students around the school’s perimeter. The Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Hank Perry, was the guest speaker for the event. “Today was a day to honor and cherish the freedoms that we have and to honor those who died on this day 11 years ago,” Perry said. Many Americans serve their country in many different capacities, and the Soldiers who are present today are a shining example of that service, Perry added.





PELAGUS

Soldiers of America's First Team:

Thursday, the Army took a tactical pause to address the issue of suicide, which continues to significantly challenge our force. I want to take this opportunity to communicate with you directly. One suicide in our formation is one too many and each loss deeply affects our units, our families, and our friends. Recently the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, General Lloyd Austin, commented that suicide is one of the toughest enemies the Army faces.

What I want you to know is that as Soldiers of this division, you are the most precious resource and most important capability that we have. I know that there are different factors that generate stress in our lives: relationships, work, deployments, financial challenges and other issues that might lead you to despair. I want you to know this: your loved ones, your friends, and of course your fellow Soldiers need you. As such, I want you to know that you are NOT alone. Admitting you need help, whether it's on the battlefield or in your life's challenges, is not a sign of weakness – it's a sign of true strength and courage. If you are troubled and are not sure what to do, please talk to someone. Reach out to your chain of command, your unit's chaplain -- or talk to a battle buddy, a friend or a loved one. But do talk to someone. You can get help and you will not be judged for reaching out and asking for assistance in dealing with the unique challenge you might be facing.

*We need all Soldiers of the Division to know that they can help by being there for their team mates. Down to the lowest level, we all must be in tune with the stresses that impact our Soldiers. If you see someone acting differently or something doesn't look or feel right to you, take the time to talk to that person and ask if they are in distress and if they are thinking of hurting themselves. It takes moral courage to intervene, but is a critical component to really help someone in need. If you see a warning sign or a friend confides in you, remember "ACE": **A**sk your buddy, **C**are for your Buddy, and **E**scort your Buddy.*

Thank you for all you do every day to help this Division accomplish its many missions and for your service in our great Army. The strength of our Division, like the strength of our Army, comes from our Soldiers. As we stand Shoulder to Shoulder, let us not allow any of our brothers and sisters to face this battle alone.

MG Anthony R. Ierardi

Pegasus 6

Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division

