

# All American Week 2011



## 82nd focuses on getting back to basics, living legacy during All American Week



photo by Sgt. Michael MacLeod

Maj. Gen. Jim Huggins, 82nd Airborne Division commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Bryant Lambert, division command sergeant major, kick off All American Week with the annual four-mile Division Run May 16, 2011, at Fort Bragg, N.C. It was the first time since 2006 all of the division's brigades were at home for the week of celebration and remembrance, and over 20,000 paratroopers participated in the run.

by 3BCT PAO

It's no secret that the 82nd Airborne Division separates itself from fighting forces around the globe by way of its proud history and unmatched competency.

It is the combination of the Division's ability to look back and learn from its standard-setting pioneer Paratroopers in concert with the modern flexibility, physical toughness, and mental acuity that define today's Paratrooper keeping the 82nd Airborne Division legacy alive.

"Getting back to basics is getting back to the fundamentals of being a Paratrooper," said Maj. Gen. Jim Huggins, commanding general of the 82nd Airborne Division. "We are constantly concentrating on honing our skills that have defined our legacy, so it is fit that All American Week this year honors that legacy."

The week of competition and festivities started with a Division four-mile run.

With the whole Division back at home station for the first time since

2006, more than 20,000 Paratroopers flooded Longstreet running to cadences and the sounds of the All American Rock Band.

"It is a great way to start the week. We train hard all the time to be mentally and physically tough so a good four-mile run works for me," said Pfc. Matt Nixon, topographic analyst, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.

Veterans, service members and their Families came from all over the country to participate in the events and get the "All American" experience.

"It is always great to get out here and support our Paratroopers," said Leo Hobson, a former division Paratrooper. "It is truly amazing what you all do."

During this year's division review Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Steven England, former command sergeant major of the division, was the guest of honor.

To the Veterans, England had \_\_\_\_\_ see AAW page 3

# Saturday Night at the Crawl-In

## Airborne platoons train for Global Response Force

by Sgt. Michael MacLeod

1st BCT PAO

It's Saturday night, the height of the weekend, and Fayetteville-area cowpokes are line-dancing down at the Cadillac Ranch on Bragg Boulevard. Two and a Half Men is on the tube and Thor in 3D has audiences at the mall cinema cross-eyed happy.

Google-earth yourself high above the city lights, those arteries of bustle fanning out from the city to the Army's Fort Bragg, where the lights narrow to vessels servicing the staff buildings, motor pools and barracks, petering to mere capillaries as they reach out toward the training ranges, to the heavily-timbered northern training area with its ticks and mosquitoes and cottonmouths, where there are no lights at all.

There we find a young lieutenant dressed not much like a soldier, more like an insurgent in fact, hunting the woods, checking all those likely places used by the first eight platoons as patrol bases before attacking his mortar bunker.

At last he finds fresh boot tracks cutting a sandy road, and he tracks them to Hell's Half Acre, a thick, miserable cove of woods that only an infantryman could love. There he discovers the patrol base of the ninth and last platoon of 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment to enter his training "lane." He is impressed by their initiative and suspects they may be worthy adversaries. Satisfied, he returns to his men, an insurgency of six, and prepares to light up his attackers with a thousand rounds of dummy ammunition.

"Deliberate raid on a reinforced enemy compound with mined-wire obstacles, multiple enemies with bunkers, and indirect fire capabilities" is how the attacking platoon leader, 1st Lt. Daniel Loeffler, describes the night's mission. Saturday night for a paratrooper, good times.



photo by Sgt. Michael MacLeod

A paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team prepares to lead other soldiers into another room of a farmhouse they are clearing of insurgent players April 27, 2011 during a two-week platoon training and evaluation exercise at Fort Bragg, N.C. The unit has stepped up its training to augment another brigade of paratroopers currently on global response force status.

The former enlisted soldier and his 38 paratroopers comprised the final platoon to be evaluated in a complex four-day training and testing exercise short-handed as "platoon ex-eval." The exercise is designed to ready the battalion's platoons for a short-notice mission: by June 1, they will add combat strength to the brigade currently serving as the nation's "911 troops" of the Global Response Force.

According to Col. Mark L. Stock who commands the battalion's parent organization, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, the unit was already on a back-to-the-basics training plan when it was called up.

"We are building from a unit that is re-deployed and regaining our proficiency in a number of areas, but primarily in the combined-

arms maneuver – combined-arms tasks we have not been executing for quite a while," said Stock, who once commanded the battalion's twin, 2-504.

To meet the June 1 goal, the training schedule for 1-504 was accelerated. In the short term, for line soldiers like Pfc. Nicholas Farrell, Loeffler's radioman, that means a weekend in the woods testing and truing basic soldiering skills.

"Everybody knew coming into this, we were going to suffer a little bit," said the Gadsden, Ala., native. "Whereas it may not be the ideal thing to be doing right now on a Saturday night, deep down, we love it."

In fact, to take part in the platoon evaluations,

see GRF page 4



# Falcon Brigade deploys to Iraq

by 2BCT PAO

“Living the Legacy Back to Basics.” The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, the “Falcon Brigade” is living up to this year’s theme for All American Week with a deployment to Iraq and starting the next chapter of the storied history of the division.

There are few things more basic to being a Paratrooper than deploying to accomplish a difficult and complex mission.

Col. Timothy McAteer, the commander of 2BCT, said “We were the first brigade from the division into Iraq in 2003 and the first unit into Iraq

for the surge. Now, we will be one of the last brigades in Iraq.” Units from the Brigade, currently deploying to advise and assist Iraqi Security Forces in support of Operation New Dawn, have deployed to the region seven times since the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

This week, former Paratroopers from the Brigade met with the deploying Paratroopers. They were happy they had the opportunity to see them before the deployment. Howard Rennhack, a veteran who served with 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment during

the Korean War said, “With the unit leaving for Iraq, I’m glad we could all get together.”

When speaking with the Paratroopers preparing to deploy, Rennhack offered some advice; “Don’t back off. Get the job done.”

The 2BCT plans to heed the veteran’s advice and continue to build on the great history celebrated during All American Week during this deployment. While meeting with the former Paratroopers, McAteer said, “This is an honorable and historic unit, and we will do great things in Iraq.”

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this to say: “You still have that steely-eyed look of confidence.”

England went on to praise today’s Paratroopers, giving the most important acknowledgements to their families.

“Most importantly, to the families of the Paratroopers on the field: I appreciate your unfailing commitment and support to these great Soldiers in our Army” said England.

After the review, the emotional highlight of the week came during the memorial ceremony at the 82nd Airborne Division museum.

Here past and present Paratroopers honored fallen paratroopers and their families during the ceremony.

“It is a visible reminder of our words that we speak that we’ll never forget, from the 82nd Airborne Division for those of us that are here wearing the patch today, I can promise you that we will live up to those words,” said Huggins.

from GRF page 2

Farrell had returned early from Alabama where he was visiting his hospitalized mother. She had been injured in the same tornado-spawning storm system that ripped across the southern border of Fort Bragg in mid-April.

“For me, the mission against the mortar site was hectic,” said Farrell. “I wasn’t sure what to do at first, but I just stuck with the platoon leader and just did what I was taught and it worked out.

“Overall, the training has been doing me a lot of good, and I think it’s definitely been doing a lot for the team leaders, the squad leaders and their ‘Joes.’”

His platoon leader, Loeffler, agreed.

“The ex-evals in general have been fantastic,” said the four-time-deployed paratrooper. “The last few days have replicated a lot of stuff that I have personally experienced in-country in both Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Particularly at the platoon level, units must be able to fight organically, as that’s what recent battlefields have demanded, he said.

The battalion’s hands-on commander, Lt. Col. Rob Salome, a former Ranger instructor, was intimately involved with the design of the ex-evals.

“All of the objectives are real houses with opposing forces,” explained Salome. “ platoons won’t know their next target unless they do good sensitive-site exploitation on an objective and do tactical questioning of the insurgents.”

Information from a farmhouse captured in the morning will lead to another farmhouse that night, which will lead to a meeting with the mayor of a village the following morning. As it turns out, the mayor will say that his village has been plagued by continual attack by a mortar...

There is more after the mortar raid, including a day of complex live-



photo by Sgt. Michael MacLeod

Using information gathered, a platoon of 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers assaults an enemy mortar site during a wargaming exercise May 7, 2011, at Fort Bragg, N.C.

fire exercises that include sweeping a marketplace, chasing a fleeing insurgent, and clearing a large building while searching for a weapons cache; a simulated four-mile casualty evacuation on foot; and the final event, a timed marksmanship challenge, he said.

“It is a stress shoot after three days of minimal rest. What does accurate fire look like after three days of combat operations?”

There are lighter moments: a platoon leader bedding down for the night with a cottonmouth water moccasin already coiled in his hooch; a medic removing a tick from a paratrooper’s nether regions with a multi-tool pliers; the village mayor insisting on holding hands as he strolls through his village with a red-faced platoon leader. It’s a cultural thing.

The beauty of the training is that each lane has its unique challenges, so that, while platoons see general improvements on basic solder tasks and command-and-control, one lane doesn’t necessarily prepare them to meet the challenges of the next, according to 1-504 operations officer, Maj. Bradley Boyd, who observed much of the training.

Back at the mortar bunker, the officer in charge said that, over the course of the training event, he watched platoons realize that they really needed to focus on the basics.

“It all comes back to the fundamentals,” said 1st Lt. Paul Park, executive officer of Company B.

“You’re not necessarily going to be breaching a mined-wire obstacle going into a trench clearing in the current fight we’re in right now,” said the Ranger-tabbed paratrooper from Riverside, Calif. “However, this exercise does stress the importance of how the fundamentals are important to the more advanced tactics on deployments. It sharpens the basic soldiering skills and makes platoons realize the importance of going to the field to practice the little things that platoons often overlook to facilitate its success.”

Even on a Saturday night?

“Well, yeah.”

Engineers attached to Lieutenant Loeffler’s 3rd Platoon breached the concertina wire in the southwest and stormed the trench, losing 15 soldiers in the process to enemy fire, buried mines, booby traps and a suicide bomber. The attack morphed into a mass-casualty evacuation. An earlier platoon had lost 25, but still, his paratroopers were displeased.

“We’ve been riding it pretty high over the past two days – pretty successful so far – but hey, we are going to re-cock,” said Loeffler.

“Bottom line: we knew this was going to be pretty rough going in. There’s no doubt in my mind that, by the end of tomorrow, we’ll all be smiling again.”

Third Platoon finished the platoon evaluation exercise on a Monday morning and then continued on with the workweek as usual. It was a long weekend of training, but well worth it.

Who needs Two and a Half Men when you have 39 hard-charging paratroopers? Besides, they were pretty sure they were the best platoon in the battalion, if not the entire Army.



# Paratroopers Remember Fallen Heroes during All-American Memorial Ceremony



photo by Sgt. Monique Tindal

Soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division and a distinguished guest represents fallen paratroopers during a memorial ceremony May 19. The All- American Week memorial ceremony was held at 82nd Airborne Museum.

by Sgt. Monique Tindal

22nd MPAD

Past and present paratroopers, with the 82nd Airborne Division, honored fallen paratroopers and their families during a memorial ceremony, Thursday, outside of the 82nd Airborne Division Museum, Fort Bragg, N.C.

The names of more than 200 fallen paratroopers filled the silence in the air as family members and friends rose to their feet in honor of their fallen Soldier. Each family member placed a single yellow rose at the base of the Global War

on Terrorism monument, in remembrance.

“For me the message is clear it is not within the deaths of these brave fallen that we find their greatest measure of nobility rather it is within their living days, days marked by sacrifice, duty, service, and faithfulness to their families, friends and comrades in arms,” said retired Gen. Dan Mc Neill, former commander of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Distinguished guest’s, fellow Soldiers, Families and friends of the fallen Soldiers filled the seats, honoring a legacy of the fallen.

“Their fine mortal acts stood not only as dem-

onstrations to the last full measure of devotion but within those deaths there was personification of duty, selflessness, dedication, sacrifice, and love from once a man,” said Maj. Gen. James Huggins Jr., 82nd Airborne Division commander.

The memorial is an annual ceremony that is held as a part of the All-American Week in honor of the fallen.

“It is a visible reminder of our words that we speak that we’ll never forget, from the 82nd Airborne Division for those of us that are here wearing the patch today, I can promise you that we will live up to those words,” said Huggins.

# Paratroopers demonstrate capabilities to public



photo by Sgt. Luke Rollins

Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division execute a combat jump over Sicily Drop Zone during the Joint Operational Access Demonstration May 20, 2011 at Fort Bragg, N.C. The JOAD was the final event capping the week-long celebration of the 82nd Airborne Division's storied legacy.

by Sgt. Luke Rollins

22nd MPAD

Greg Stefanski may be a Vietnam War Veteran, but at first sight of the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter, he became as giddy as a school boy. Handing his camera to the pilot at the display, he hopped into the pilot's seat and grinned broadly as his picture was taken. In front of him, pressed between the dashboard and the windshield, glinted the golden sabers of the 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, upon a dark blue Stetson.

"A lot of times I get a little emotional," said Stefanski.

Stefanski was one of hundreds of veterans, Soldiers, friends and family members to come out May 20, 2011, to Sicily Drop Zone at Fort Bragg, N.C., and participate in the capstone event of All-American Week, the Joint Operational Access Demonstration.

It's our chance to show the public what we're capable of, said Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Green, the operations sergeant major for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.

The operational capacity of the 82nd Airborne Division was on parade. Static displays turned the Sicily Drop Zone into a mobile Airborne Museum, giving the public a chance to see the latest technologies deployed in the division's global engagements. Vehicles, weap-

ons, reconnaissance equipment – even a nine-man airborne infantry squad – were available for the public to learn about and interact with.

At noon, paratroopers put on an aerial performance, executing a "heavy drop" of parachuting vehicles followed by a simulated combat jump. Spectators in bleachers and lawnchairs lined the perimeter of Sicily Drop Zone, cameras skyward, clicking away at a line of shrooming green parachutes carrying the All-American paratroopers to the ground.

Green, who has been participating in and coordinating JOADs for more than ten years, said that the event lets the 82nd Airborne Division connect with the local community by sharing their knowledge, skills and capabilities.

"Standards and discipline, lock step methods – these are key to what we do. Move away from the tried and true, you start making mistakes," said Green.

He said the JOAD also shows veterans what's new and relevant while situating current paratroopers within the All-American legacy.

Stefanski is a torchbearer of that legacy. This is the third All-American Week he's attended.

"My heart is with this military," Stefanski said. "These are the people that are keeping us straight and safe. I just like to come out here and pass on what I feel."

# All-American Jumpmaster named for 2011

by Sgt. Christopher Harper

3BCT PAO

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Hercik, originally from Wadsworth, Ohio, is the 2011 82nd Airborne Division All-American jumpmaster of the year. Hercik is a weapons squad leader for Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, and represented the 2nd Brigade Combat Team at the division competition.

Hercik competed at the 82nd Airborne Division jumpmaster of the year competition held April 18-21 at the Advanced Airborne School (AAS).

Jumpmasters began the competition with a nomenclature examination. "I'm sure everyone aced this part, you just have to know your equipment," said Wakefield. A performance-while-in-aircraft (PWAC) exam followed the nomenclature exam and was the consensus favorite among the jumpmasters. "This is the culmination of being a jumpmaster, being able to hang out of the aircraft and feel the wind beat against your neck is the best," said Randall.

The rigging examination proved to be one of the most difficult. There are four stations at which each jumpmaster has 15 minutes to properly rig a particular item for an airborne operation.

"The rig-ex was the most difficult exam, due to the fact that we don't see those items on a day-to-day basis in our airborne operations," said Statler.

The JMPI, or jumpmaster personnel inspection, followed the

rigging exercise. Each jumpmaster had five minutes to properly inspect three jumpers. Each jumper had both major and minor deficiencies that the jumpmaster was to properly identify.

The final day of the competition consisted of a pre-jump examination and a written exam. The pre-jump exam was an oral exam, where the jumpmasters were challenged to recall instructions, timelines, and airborne jump commands. The written exam consisted of multiple choice, true and false, and essay questions.

Buffaloe summed up the competitors as, "the best of each brigade's best jumpmasters.

Throughout the competition there were 900 total points available.

According to Buffaloe, "Hercik finished nearly 100 points ahead" of his competition.

"Everybody stayed neck and neck right up until the rigging exercise," said Buffaloe.

Hercik separated himself from his competition during the rigging exercise.

"I think the impact event for me was the rigging of special items of equipment," said Hercik.

Buffaloe agreed.

"No tricks in this competition. Everything they had to rig was in the ASOP (Airborne standard operating procedure)," said Buffaloe.

Hercik credits Sgt. 1st Class Ashley Page, the 2nd Brigade Air operations noncommissioned officer, "The reason I won was the brigade competition he put together mirrored the division contest and



photo by Sgt. Christopher Harper

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Hercik, a weapons squad leader for Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, leads Paratroopers from the passenger terminal to an aircraft during the jumpmaster of the year competition April 18-21, at Fort Bragg, N.C. Hercik went on to win the competition.

was a real challenge."

Hercik has already seen how his participation in both the brigade and division jumpmaster competitions has had an effect on his soldiers.

"I have two sergeants who are now highly motivated to be jumpmasters," said Hercik. "They see what I've done, especially now that I won the division competition, and it makes them even hungrier."

It was that sort of hunger that motivated Hercik to become a jumpmaster.

"That's why I'm a jumpmaster. All leaders should be jumpmasters," said Hercik. "I like that soldiers have confidence in my ability to safely exit them from an aircraft."

Hercik accepts his new role as division jumpmaster of the year. As jumpmaster of the year Hercik

will have a visible role in the All-American Week activities. In addition to carrying the division colors in the division run, Hercik will participate in the division memorial ceremony, and division review.

"I expect that there will be other things along the way where I'll be called to participate," said Hercik. "It's all really an honor."

Hercik said that he always wanted to be part of the 82nd Airborne Division.

When Hercik joined the Army in June of 2002 he, "got Airborne School and 82nd in my contract," said Hercik of his longstanding desire to be part of the 82nd Airborne Division legacy.

As the 2011 82nd Airborne Division jumpmaster of the year, he is now living the legacy.





# Competitors just happy to jump



photo by Sgt. Kissta Feldner

A Paratrooper assigned to 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, pushes off the edge of a UH-60 Blackhawk while the jumpmaster readies the next jumper during a static line jump on May 16. These soldiers are part of the 1/504th PIR's team for the annual All American Week jump competition. Each trooper must attempt to land on a 20-meter-wide target after jumping from the aircraft.

by Sgt. Kissta Feldner

2BCT PAO

Eight Paratroopers ran to the helicopter, their heads bowed against the whipping wind from the propellers. The jumpmaster hooked each jumper to the floor of the UH-60 Blackhawk and signaled to the pilot that his men were ready to go. The aircraft ascended to approximately 1,200 feet. As it neared its destination, the jumpers were given their commands, checked their equipment, and anxiously awaited the command of "Go!"

These jumpers were just one of 21 teams who participated in this year's jump competition for the 82nd Airborne Division's All American week, a five day celebration that

builds unit cohesion and commemorates the historic unit. The competition included teams from each battalion in the division. Each eight-man team conducted a static line jump from a Blackhawk, with the intention to land on a 20-meter-wide target on the drop zone. If a trooper landed on his target, he received a zero as his time. If not, his time started once he hit the ground and stop after his parachute was properly packed and he ran to the target. The team with the shortest time wins, and that battalion claims a trophy and victory until next year.

While some of the competitors volunteered for the opportunity, others were recommended by their chain of command.

Sgt. 1st Class Ernest Williams, the air non-commissioned officer for 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, used this as a chance to treat some of his soldiers who stood out from the others.

"I chose a few of my jumpmasters who have worked hard throughout the year. I wanted to give them a fun jump," Williams said.

The competition is also a chance for friends and family members to come out to the drop zone and watch an airborne operation. Williams' wife, Heather, and their children, Kara and Kameron, came out to watch him take part in the competition.

"I've seen him jump out of planes before, but never a helicopter," Heather said. "We look forward to All American week every year."

Although it is a competition, the competitive spirit is quite relaxed at this event. Several Paratroopers considered it simply a great opportunity to get in an enjoyable jump.

"I'm not concerned about the competition, I just want a Blackhawk jump," said Sgt. Dustin Walker, fire support NCO for B Co., 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team. "I've been waiting five years for this."

The biggest competition may actually be vying for a spot on the team, according to Cpt. Joey Driskell, operations officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1/504 PIR. "A lot of people want to get on this," Driskell said. "This is one of the most fun events of the week."

The winning team was with 1st Battalion, 321st Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 18th Fires Brigade. A team representative accepted a trophy for the victory and was recognized by the division commander, Maj. Gen. James Huggins, during the Division Review rehearsal.



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