

115th Fires Brigade



Cowboy Thunder

Post Mobilization Training, Fort Hood, Texas

April - June 2009



TRAINING AT NORTH FORT HOOD, Texas, 115th Fires Brigade spent a little over two months conducting Post Mobilization training in preparation for their non-standard mission when they deploy this summer. See more training stories and photographs inside.

Commanders' Comments

Howdy from COWBOY 6

We are winding up training at North Fort Hood and your soldiers are performing very well. Our training has consisted of everything from individual marksmanship to collective training involving brigade, battalion, company command posts and all troops maneuvering convoys on the ground over an area of about 300 square miles.

The soldiers' morale is high and they are ready to go. Pass will come up very soon and the soldiers are anxious to see friends and family.

There have been many people making many sacrifices for this unit to be well manned, equipped and trained. We all recognize the great sacrifices made by soldiers, families, employers and communities.

It constantly amazes me the devotion to duty that soldiers from all walks of life make in the service of their country. The willingness to give a year away from family, friends and jobs to serve their country is no small sacrifice and is a good reminder of what makes this country great.

There were many soldiers that

willingly made the commitment to go and deployed to Ft. Hood but were returned home for various reasons. These soldiers should also hold their heads high and remember they can serve this nation in other aspects back at home supporting the missions of the states and this nation as the rest of us move forward into the theatre of operations.

I want to thank you all for the great support you give us and your soldiers and remind you to stay engaged with your soldiers and your community as we move forward with this deployment.

Happy trails,
COWBOY 6

Command Sgt. Maj. Comments

From CSM Kenton Franklins' Blog June 5, 2009

Greetings from Ft. Hood,

I realize that I haven't written for a while, but we have gotten real busy here in the past three weeks.

The Soldiers continue to train, although most of the Collective Training for the Soldiers has started to come to completion. Last week, all the Camp Command Cells



participated in a Command Post Exercise (CPX). After sitting through five After Action Reviews, I know that we have come a long way in our Command and Control Processes in the Camp Command Cells.

Even though the boss and I had to endure five briefings, which lasted most of the day, we found it refreshing to see how well the Camp Command Cells did on the CPX. It seems like every time I sit down to type up a message, Sergeant Morales or Specialist Theide sticks their head in my office and reminds me that I have something to go do, either training or

another meeting.

Last week we went to the leader's training for the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicle. Man what a vehicle. I remember getting in the gunner's turret while on

the leaders recon and thinking how high in the turret a Soldier sits, but after going through the class, what a wonderfully engineered vehicle that will help keep our Soldiers safe.

Last Saturday we sent about 400 Soldiers to Main Post to go to the LT. Dan Band. Gary Sinise of CSI New York has put together a band and has toured for several years doing USO Shows around the world.

All the Soldiers who attended the concert enjoyed it immensely and a lot of the Brigade Soldiers got to get up on Stage. Some of our Soldiers came back with no patches, but they did the right thing I think sharing a little bit of our 115th spirit with Gary and the Band.

Another cool thing was Capt. Rogers of the 960th gave his combat patch to Kimo Williams, one of the

guitar players in the band who wore the same patch in Vietnam. By the way, the band sounded incredible and played an almost a three hour concert. Wal Mart donated 6,000 hot dogs and drinks for the event, so we could all go on the cheap for the event.

This week we hosted the Wyoming Boss Lift. I remember when I escorted a Boss Lift around in Wyoming what a big deal I made it. But, because the Army keeps us so busy, I didn't have time to really get overly stressed about having 66 bosses on the ground here. Between Lt. Col. Larson and the 120th Training Brigade, we put together a good plan so the bosses could see firsthand all the good training the Soldiers receive here at Fort Hood. Again, seeing the Soldiers with their employers really drove home how great of employers we have supporting the National Guard.

Along with the Boss lift we had 6 members of the Wyoming Media. Wow, I think they talked to any Soldier who would stand still long enough to talk to them. I personally had four interviews Monday. Hopefully everyone is seeing and hearing the reports they did from Fort Hood.

Continued on next page

CSM Comments continued

Several members of the State Staff escorted the Boss Lift and we all appreciated them coming down to check on us and giving us some good words of encouragement.

We started the second CPX that will train and test the Brigade Headquarters, the two Convoy Security Battalion Headquarters and the Al Ramdi missioned headquarters.

We have the good fortune to have two great senior mentors with us who give a lot of information that causes us to think about stuff we may have forgotten. Both Major General Wojdakowski, who was the JTF-7 Commander in Iraq, and

Command Sgt. Maj. (CSM) Teddy Harman, the former 5th US Army CSM really have given us a lot of great information.

I enjoyed seeing CSM Harman as he and I go back a long way, he was our guest speaker a couple of times in Wyoming. I love both of their honesty and experience. They get Colonel Knowlton and I thinking and push the trainers and us to accomplish the most we can with the limited time we have here at Fort Hood.

As I go around doing the daily discussions and start getting frustrated, the Soldiers always refresh me and remind me what it means to be their Brigade Command Sergeant Major.

If I have a bad day, the Soldiers always pick me up and always keep things positive. I just walked through the Brigade Area this afternoon and the Soldiers excite me by their enthusiasm. They really want to get things wrapped-up here and get into Theater to do the mission.

It amazes me how strong our Soldiers stay through any adversity. It humbles me to represent them.

That's probably enough rattling for right now. I noticed the Primary Staff and the Commander just got back from dinner, so I better go see what's going on. Take care and take care of the home front.

Cowboy 7 - out

What are you going to do during your pass?



Master Sgt. Russell Tennant, "Go home and take my wife and 10-year-old son that I'm going to miss over the next year, to my wife's favorite restaurant, Red Lobster."



Spc. Carlton Wright Jr. "I'm going to go home and relax after all this training. I'll have four days to go play ball, lift weights and watch baseball before going over and doing the mission."



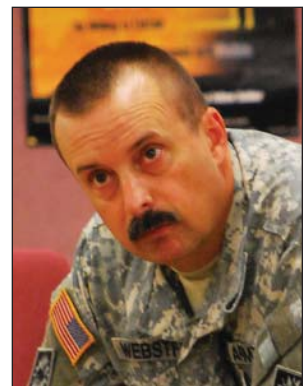
Pfc. Tyla Cassedy, "I'm going to Sea World in San Antonio with my mom who is also here deploying."



Staff Sgt. Heather Saul, "I'm going home to see my three little girls. I don't want to plan anything so we can just live in the moment and make memories."



Pfc. Chad Baker, "I'm going to stay here in 'The Great Place' and see the sights with my girlfriend who is coming down."



1st Sgt. Paul Webster, "I'm going to go home and see my wife, kids, grandkids and parents. Family is the most important thing to me and I want to take those few days and spend time with them."

More Post Mobilization Training at Fort Hood, Texas



PATRIOTISM: It's not hearing the call It's answering the call

Story and photos by Master Sgt. David Largent, HHB, 115th Fires Brigade Public Affairs.

Throughout the existence of this great country there have been those who have heard the call to serve.

But only a small portion of those who hear the call actually step up and answer that call.

What makes that leap from hearing to action? For many it's Patriotism!

What's Patriotism?

Patriotism is seeing what happened on September 11, 2001 and leaving a comfortable job as a school teacher in a desirable school to join the Army. Patriotism is heading off to basic training, Officer Candidate School (OCS), Signal School and finally to Ft. Huachuca, Ariz. to finish a three year enlistment.

Patriotism is finishing that initial enlistment and being available for the next five years as an Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) member.

Patriotism is hearing that call again, once more putting your job on hold and this time preparing your spouse of less than a year and a half, to take care of things at home and joining



"You throw yourself into it, you give a hundred percent and then you enjoy it; you have to be fully committed," said Capt. Richard King, as he checks out a computer with fellow communications team member Staff Sgt. Aaron Faass.

a mobilizing National Guard unit heading off on a yearlong deployment.

Patriotism is knowing it's hard and doing it anyway. It's giving a hundred percent to ensure the citizens of this country are protected and the Soldiers you serve with are prepared to conduct their mission in as safe a manner as possible.

PATRIOTISM IS KNOWING IT'S HARD AND DOING IT ANYWAY.

Patriotism is Capt. Richard King, communications officer, HHB, 115th Fires Brigade, an IRR soldier activated and assigned to the brigade.

After finishing his original enlistment he didn't think he would hear from the Army again, but sometimes surprises come in small packages.

"I got a Fed X package with a set of orders in it that read, 'You are ordered to return to active duty,'" said King.

"When I told my wife she felt like this was the worst thing ever. We had just moved to Virginia from Washington State five months earlier, I had just started a new job and we were planning to start our family," he added.

King told his wife Jennifer, there is a reason for everything. He said he didn't know what that purpose was, but that they needed to stay positive and make the best of it. Regardless of the length of time there was a reason he was meant to be back in the Army for another year.

How do you move ahead when all your plans are suddenly and dramatically changed?

"You throw yourself into it, you give a hundred percent and then you enjoy it; you have to be fully committed," King said.

"Staying positive is the key, you get engaged as much as you can. I try to build my team, learn my job and maintain a positive mental attitude," he added.

According to King we have the easier job.

"It's easier for us because we're here and busy, I know it's harder for Jennifer. I contact her as much as possible by phone or e-mail whenever I get a chance," he said.

"She has a lot to take care of with the new house, her work, two kittens and me being gone. It's a lot and she feels overwhelmed," King said.

So who's a Patriot?

If you ask King he'll tell you it's his wife Jennifer. He'll tell you she's the one taking care of things at home while he answers the call.

Patriotism is knowing it's going to be hard and doing it anyway.



Capt. Richard King, a mobilized Individual Ready Reserve Officer is the communications officer for HHB, 115th Fires Brigade.



Deployment Advice from Lt. Gen. Lynch

Surviving a deployment requires staying physically, emotionally and spiritually fit according to III Corp and Ft. Hood Commander Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch who spoke to the NCO's and officers from the 115th Fires Brigade the afternoon of June 14, 2009.

After asking a show of hands from those who have already been deployed one or more times, Lynch said, I worry multiple deployments may lead you to complacency. Don't let it happen. I guarantee things have

changed." After encouraging the leaders to take care of themselves and each other, he charged them to watch over, train and take care of their Soldiers.

"You have incredible credibility with your hometown," said Lynch. "Reach back to your hometown and keep your family, friends, coworkers and employers informed about what you are doing," he added.

Lynch encouraged each of the leaders from the 115th Fires Brigade to be flexible and to stay safe.

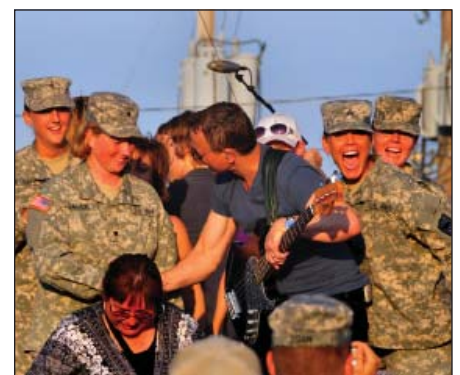
(Left) Leadership from 115th Fires Brigade await the arrival of Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch. (Above) Col. Richard Knowlton speaks with Lt. Gen. Lynch after he spoke to the Brigade Leadership June 14, 2009 at North Fort Hood, TX. (Top) NCO's and Officers raise their hands in response to Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch's question.



Maj. Gen. Graham, commander, 1st Army (West) visits with Col. Richard Knowlton, commander, 115th Fires Brigade and Command Sgt. Major Kenton Franklin, about the training the brigade has been through during their Post Mobilization training over the past two months at North Ft. Hood.

USO Show Entertains Soldiers at Fort Hood

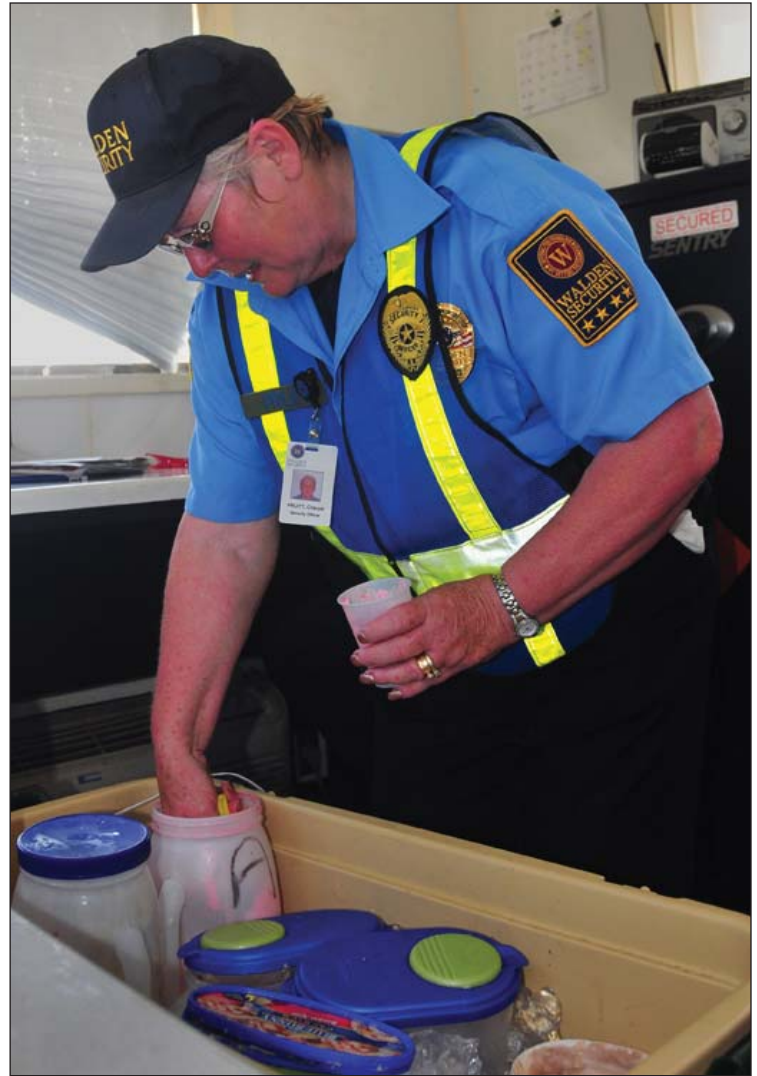
Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band performed a USO show at Fort Hood June 30, 2009. Sinise and the band thanked the Soldiers for their service to this country and rewarded them with a three hour concert.





Thanking Soldiers One Scoop at a Time

(Right) Showing her appreciation one scoop at a time, Security guard Cheryl Pruitt, hands out ice cream as well as compliments to the Soldiers training at North Fort Hood June 17, 2009. "I just love doing it. I love our Soldiers, we're grateful to be able to do something for them. The job y'all do for us, we can't pay it back," said Pruitt. She spends a couple days, three or four hours each day preparing her home made ice cream. She made seven flavors, a gallon and a half of each flavor. (Above) Maj. Michael Ballow, operations officer, 151 CBRNE, receives a cup of ice cream and a hearty thank you from Pruitt. "Big Red Strawberry, it's delicious," said Ballow.



115th Fires Brigade HHB Zone 6 Presents: The Denver Bronco Cheerleaders!

Friday June 19, 2009

1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Short Horn Airfield

**The bus loop shuttle starts at 1:00 p.m. in front of the
North Fort Hood Chapel**

**The Cheerleaders will sign autographs and be available for
photographs. There will be a live band at 2:00 p.m.**

**Hot Dogs & Hamburgers available
courtesy of the Dinning Facility**



A Charlie Battery Soldier prepares to Qualify on the M-4 assault rifle range at Fort Hood, TX. Photo by Sgt. James Reinhardt.

Charlie Battery 1-147; Git 'er Done

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Brooks Schild, C Battery, 1st Battalion 147th Infantry, 115th Fires Brigade.

The Soldiers of Charlie Battery, 1 -147th Field Artillery based in Yankton, S. D. spent over two months at Fort Hood, Texas preparing for a mid-summer deployment to Kuwait with the 115th Fires Brigade in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The deploying unit consists of about 130 Soldiers from Mitchell, Salem, Sioux Falls, Watertown and Yankton. Notification for deployment came in December 2007. Charlie Battery had returned from a 16 month tour of duty to Baghdad the previous year. The unit mobilized last April.

Since completing all the individual tasks necessary for deployment Charlie Battery Soldiers are focusing on certifying at the platoon and company level.

"I just rode with Charlie Battery through a live fire range. It's incredible to see the amount of teamwork, and how well trained these Soldiers are," said Lt. Col. Dave Chase, commander, 1-147 Field Artillery, "They continue to set new standards wherever they go."

"Being two months into the deployment, these Soldiers have such high motivation and morale and just

standout in our Brigade," said Chase. "They're a credit to their good South Dakota up-bringing."

Charlie Battery Soldiers, along with Soldiers from its sister unit, Alpha Battery from Aberdeen and its Headquarters Battery out of Watertown have nearly completed all training necessary for certification and deployment. The unit is currently completing a Mission Readiness Exercise which replicates what each battery will be doing in Kuwait.

Acting Battery Commander Captain Scott Green, who took over the helm of Charlie Battery after a pre-activation injury to Capt. Kerry Nilson, commented on Charlie Battery's progress. "The Charlie Battery Soldiers have taken the standard of 'No one is more professional than I' to a whole new level. As we continue to train, proficiency increases, confidence grows and Soldier readiness is at an all time high. The training we have received is second to none for this mission and we are ready to deploy."

Charlie Battery Soldiers have been training on base security skills that will be needed for their year-long mission to Kuwait. They have received training on tasks such as close quarters combat, hand to hand combat, searching vehicles and individuals, combat life savers certification, multiple weapon certifications, convoy movements, base security operations and Quick Reaction Force teams, just to name a few.

The training over the past two months all comes together with an exercise involving all of the 115th Fires Brigade, which is based out of Cheyenne, WY. All of the batteries under each battalion conduct practical training exercises relevant to their mission over an eight day period. "You name the scenario and we put them through it," stated one Observer-Controller-Trainer (OCT). "We do everything in our power to recreate operations and events that the units will experience while in country."



1st Sergeant Matt LaCroix helps Sgt. Troy Schmig "bore sight zero" his M-4 preparing for a qualifying range at Fort Hood, TX. Photo by Sgt. James Reinhardt.

After all their training is completed Charlie Battery Soldiers will receive a four day pass before they deploy to the Middle East. Some family members plan on coming to Fort Hood, TX to visit their Soldier and plan on spending time with their loved one while touring parts of central and southern Texas. Most of the Soldiers however, plan on traveling back to South Dakota to spend a few days with their families and friends. They are counting down the days and a 'wake-up.'

The Soldiers look forward to coming home, seeing the faces of their loved ones and friends and receiving the support that they always get from their South Dakota Communities.



Spc. Joseph Giegling (top) and Pfc. Chad McNeely (bottom) are practicing hand to hand combat (combat-ives) at Ft. Hood, Texas. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brooks Schild.