

EXTORTION 17

UNIT, CREW, AND AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE BACKGROUND NARRATIVE

1. (U//NONE) B Company, 7th General Support Aviation Battalion (GSAB), 158th Aviation Regiment (B/7-158) Background

a. (~~S//REL, USA, ISAF, NATO~~) Mission. This unit is a US Army Reserve (USAR) unit based in New Century, KS mobilized to conduct full spectrum combat aviation operations to include air assault and air movement operations in support of CJTF-101 and ISAF to facilitate the defeat of insurgent forces in order to increase the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GIROA) authority/influence, and regional security/stability. Capability requirements included 16 x CH-47, 52 personnel and CH-47 Aviation Unit Maintenance Platoon (AVUM), and 79 personnel. The CH-47 company must deploy with an adequate AVUM package to maintain aircraft. Aircraft must have High Frequency (HF), Tactical Satellite (TACSAT)/Satellite Communications (SATCOM), and Blue Force Tracker (BFT) capability. All aircraft must have a complete Aircraft Survivability (ASE) suit (i.e., CMWS, ALQ-144, APR-39, ATRCMS). Aircraft-specific equipment requirements state all aircraft should have 714C engines or better and have hoist, Fast Rope Insertion-Extraction System (FRIES), and/or Special Purpose Insertion-Extraction System (SPIES) capability. Aircrews should receive high altitude environmental training at the High Altitude Aviation Training Site (HAATS) or equivalent prior to arrival in theater.¹²⁵

b. (U//NONE) Deployment History. This unit along with their parent battalion mobilized on 6 October 2005 for Theater Immersion training at Ft. Hood, TX to support Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). On the second day of mobilization, the unit received a mission change to conduct rescue and relief operations in Pakistan following the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that struck on 8 October 2005 killing 86,000 people, injuring 69,000 and leaving an estimated four million homeless. Arriving in theater nineteen days later, this unit was the first Army aviation unit to deploy to Pakistan for Operation Lifeline following the earthquake, eventually returning to their primary mission supporting combat operations in Afghanistan. During their mobilization, B/7-158 conducted simultaneous 24/7 combat and humanitarian relief operations from four locations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Company B directly supported two major division offensives in Afghanistan (i.e., Operations Mountain Thrust in Tarin Kowt for six weeks and Operations Mountain Fury in Salerno for four weeks). They flew 7,728 accident-free hours while delivering more than 25 million pounds of cargo, rescuing more than 4,000 refugees, evacuating 300 casualties, and conducting 65 combat operations.⁴⁵⁶⁷ As a result of this effort, B/7-158 GSAB earned the Army Aviation Association of America's USAR Aviation Unit of the

¹ Force Tracking Number (FTN) 1110C010899 Data Report

² Force Tracking Number (FTN) 1100C010899 Data Report

(b)(6), (b)(3), (b)(2) (2011, August 22)

(b)(6), (b)(3), (b)(2)

⁷ USAR Unit of the Year Citation. Provided by the Army Aviation Association of America.

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Year Award for 2006.⁸⁹ More recently in 2010, B/7-158 deployed with their parent Battalion to Haiti and conducted rescue and relief operations in support of Operation Unified Response with Joint Task Force Haiti.¹⁰

c. (U//NONE) Mobilization. B/7-158 received Alert Order 1431-08 on 14 February 2008 and Mobilization Order 1709-10 on 26 July 2010.¹¹ As specified, the unit mobilized on 17 March 2011 and reported to Ft. Hood, TX on 20 March 2011 for nearly two months of Theater Immersion training in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). On 20 May 2011, the unit was placed under the Operational Control (OPCON) of TF (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4b, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), Forward Operating Base (FOB) (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4b. By 26 May 2011, all aircrew members completed OEF Rotary Wing (RW) Combat Crew Tactics (CCT) requirements IAW the Afghanistan Aviation Procedures Guide (APG).¹²¹³

d. (~~S//REL, USA, ISAF, NATO~~) Mission OPTEMPO. From 26 May 2011 to 5 August 2011, the USAR Pilot-in-Command (PC) from B/7-158 conducted multiple General Support (GS) missions totaling 91.9 NVG hours and participated in five Team (TM) (b)(3), (b)(6) Direct Support (DS) missions totaling 9.8 NVG hours. The USAR CH-47 Flight Engineer (FE) also conducted multiple GS missions totaling 83.3 NVG hours and multiple TM (b)(3), (b)(6) DS missions totaling 36.3 NVG hours. In addition, the USAR Door Gunner (DG) participated in multiple GS missions totaling 130.5 NVG hours, but had only participated in two TM (b)(3), (b)(6) missions totaling 2.1 NVG hours prior to the crash.¹⁴

2. (U//NONE) B Company, 2nd GSAB, 135th Aviation Regiment (B/2-135) Background

a. (~~S//REL, USA, ISAF, NATO~~) Mission. This unit is an Army National Guard (ARNG) CH-47D unit split-based with the Headquarters and one platoon (B/2-135 AVN [GSAB][-]) in Grand Isle, NE and one platoon (Detachment 1, B/2-135) at Buckley AFB, Aurora, CO. The unit was mobilized on 17 March 2011 to support TF (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4b efforts to defeat enemy networks in support of the Commander International Security Assistance Force (COMISAF) campaign plan and Commander US Central Command (CDRUSCENTCOM) guidance. Capability requirements included one Direct Support rotary wing aviation company consisting of no less than ten CH-47 helicopters (to include headquarters and maintenance support) capable of

⁸ Army Aviation Association of America. National/Functional Awards. InfoFile-March, 11, page 3. USAR Aviation Unit of the Year for 2006. Available: www.quad-a.org/images/pdf/Awards/awards2.i54.pdf

⁹ USAR Unit of the Year Citation. Provided by the Army Aviation Association of America.

¹⁰ Macleod, A. SSG. 99th RSC PAO Team. (2010, January) Task Force Longhorns Answer The Call. Around the 99th RSC [Online]. Available: <http://99thrc.blogspot.com/2010/01/task-force-longhorns-answers-call.html>

¹¹ (b)(6), (b)(3), (b)(2). (2011, August 23) RE: Alert and Mob Order for B/7-138 (USAR) New Century, KS and B/2-138 (CO & NEARNG). Email to Stoops,

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)
(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

(b)(6), (b)(3)
(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3) 2011, August 19) RE: Crew Experience Summary. Email and EXTORTION 17 Crew Background Tracking Sheet.xll file

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)
(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3) 2011, August 19) RE: Crew Experience Summary. Email and EXTORTION 17 Crew Background Tracking Sheet.xll file

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

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operating in four geographically separate locations and lifting one Ranger company (4 x CH-47) plus simultaneous infiltration and exfiltration of three geographically separated strike forces (6 x CH-47) in one period of daylight. Request for Forces (RFF) 1078 (Mod 3) changed the requirement from a specific duration to an enduring requirement.¹⁵

b. (U//~~NONE~~) Deployment History. This unit along with their parent battalion mobilized on 19 March 2006 for five months of Theater Immersion training at Ft. Hood, TX then deployed to Iraq (Balad Air Base) in September 2006 through August 2007 as part of Task Force (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) relieving 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Brigade on 24 September 2006.¹⁶¹⁷ The unit distinguished itself as one of the premier air assault units in the U.S. Army, conducting 111 major, multi-night air assault operations – inserting over 15,500 troops into enemy landing zones across the Iraq theater in the span of only one year.¹⁸ For this effort, 2nd Battalion, 135 GSAB was awarded the Army Aviation Association of America’s top National Guard Aviation Unit of the Year award for 2007.¹⁹

c. (U//~~NONE~~) Mobilization. B/2-135 mobilized on 26 May 2011 and reported to Ft. Hood, TX on 1 June 2011 for two months of Theater Immersion training ISO TF (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c mission. On 28 July 2011, B/2-135 was placed under the Operational Control (OPCON) of TF (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c 10th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), Forward Operating Base (FOB) (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c. By 1 August 2011, all aircrew members completed OEF Rotary Wing (RW) Combat Crew Tactics (CCT) requirements IAW the Afghanistan Aviation Procedures Guide (APG).²⁰²¹

d. (~~S//REL, USA, ISAF, NATO~~) Mission OPTEMPO. From 1 August 2011 to 5 August 2011, the ARNG Pilot (PI) from B/2-135 conducted one GS mission lasting 5.0 NVG hours, planned two TM (b)(3), (b)(6) DS missions, and executed two TM (b)(3), (b)(6) DS missions totaling 3.1 NVG hours. The ARNG CH-47 Crew Chief (CE) completed two GS missions consisting of 7.2 NVG hours, and executed one TM (b)(3), (b)(6) DS mission totaling 1.5 NVG hours. This was the second TM (b)(3), (b)(6) mission for the PI and the first TM (b)(3), (b)(6) mission for the CE.²²

¹⁵ Force Tracking Number (FTN) 1110C058869 Data Report

¹⁶ DA Form 7122 (Crewmember Training Record) of (b)(6), (b)(3)

¹⁷ Wikipedia. (2011, May 21) 2d Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (United States) [Online]. Available: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2d_Battalion,_135th_Aviation_Regiment_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2d_Battalion,_135th_Aviation_Regiment_(United_States))

¹⁸ Wikipedia. (2011, May 21) 2d Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (United States) [Online]. Available: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2d_Battalion,_135th_Aviation_Regiment_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2d_Battalion,_135th_Aviation_Regiment_(United_States))

¹⁹ Army Aviation Association of America. National/Functional Awards. InfoFile-March, 11, page 4. ARNG Aviation Unit of the Year for 2006. Available: www.quad-a.org/images/pdf/Awards/awards2.i54.pdf

²⁰ DA Form 7122 (Crewmember Training Record) of (b)(6), (b)(3)

²¹ (b)(2), (b)(3), (b)(6) (2011, August 23)
RE: Alert and Mob Order for B/7-138 (USAR) New Century, KS and B/2-138 (CO & NEARNG). Email to Stoops,

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

August 19) RE: Crew Experience Summary. Email and EXTORTION 17 Crew Background Tracking Sheet.xll file

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

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3. (U//NONE) Aircrew Training, Proficiency, and Experience

a. (U) A thorough review of the Individual Aircrew Training Folder (IFRF) and Individual Flight Records Folder (IFRF) was conducted for each of the CH-47D and AH-64D aircrew members involved in the Operation Lefty Grove mission that led to the shoot down of EXTORTION 17. The review indicated all flight records were maintained IAW TC 3-04.11 (Commander's Guide to Individual and Collective Aircrew Training) with only minor administrative discrepancies observed.²³²⁴

b. (U//NONE) Each crewmember was properly qualified to perform the aircrew duties which assigned and were in compliance with HQDA, theater specific, and unit qualification and training requirements.²⁵

c. (U//NONE) Of the five aircrew of EXTORTIN 17, the ARNG pilot and USAR flight engineer had previous combat experience in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).²⁶²⁷

d. (~~S//REL USA, ISAF, NATO~~) [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) were the pilots on board the downed CH-47D aircraft. Although not conclusive, the evidence suggests [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) that night. During the Immediate Reaction Force infiltration, [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) was heard making all radio calls and actively engaged in leading and managing the flight, which, under standard operating procedures, indicates that he was not flying the aircraft. Since his assignment to Task Force [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c on 23 May 2011, [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) conducted five Team [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6) direct support missions and accumulated 105.3 hours of flight time under night vision goggles. Although recently appointed as a CH-47D Pilot-in-Command (PC), [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) was an experienced pilot with over 670 hours of total time and nearly 100 hours of combat time in the previous two months, all of which were in support of TF [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c operations. In addition, [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) was paired with a highly experienced CH-47D Standardization Instructor Pilot (SP). [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) was a full-time ARNG Aircraft Qualification Standardization Instructor and High Altitude Mountain Standardization Instructor for the High Altitude Aviation Training Site (HAATS), Eagle, CO. [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) was also a seasoned combat pilot assigned as the unit's Senior Instructor Pilot in 2006/2007 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) where he accumulated 719 hours of combat time. [redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3) was among the Army National Guard's most experienced aviators with over 1,400 hours of total night vision goggle time, and over 4,600 hours of total flight time in various aircraft systems, including the UH-1H/V, AH-1F/S, CH-47F, C-12D, and the C-26E. He was also qualified as an Aviation Safety Officer. Since his assignment to Task Force

²³ TC 3-04.11, Commander's Aircrew Training Program for Individual, Crew, and Collective Training, dated 19 Nov 2009

[redacted] (b)(6), (b)(3)

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(b)(1)1.4a, (b)(1)1.4c on or about 28 July 2011, (b)(6), (b)(3) a Master Army Aviator, conducted two Team (b)(3), (b)(6) direct support missions and accumulated 9.7 hours of flight time under night vision goggles. A thorough review of the Individual Aircrew Training Folder and Individual Flight Records Folder was conducted for each of the CH-47D and AH-64D aircrew members involved in the Operation Lefty Grove mission that led to the CH-47D shoot down. The review indicated all flight records were maintained in accordance with aircrew training regulations with only minor administrative discrepancies observed. Each crewmember was properly qualified to perform the aircrew duties to which assigned and were in compliance with Headquarters, Department of the Army, theater specific, and unit qualification and training requirements.

4. (U//NONE) Aircraft Maintenance History

a. (U//NONE) The EXTORTION 17 helicopter was a CH-47D model, tail number 84-24175. It was originally manufactured as a CH-47C model, tail number 69-17113, and converted from a "C" model to a "D" model on 17 June 1985.²⁸²⁹

b. (U//~~FOUO~~) While still configured as a CH-47C model, 69-17113 was involved in one Class B accident in 1974³⁰ and one Class C accident in 1981.³¹ Following conversion to a CH-47D model in 1985, 84-24175 was involved in one Class D accident in 1986³², one Class D in 1990³³, and one Class D in 2000.³⁴ On 13 January 2003, the aircraft was involved in a Class C accident while assigned to the 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Brigade in Afghanistan when its aft main landing gear was damaged. During ground taxi on a road, the pavement gave-way resulting in damage to the undercarriage.³⁵ More recently, aircraft 84-24174 was involved in another Class D accident on 12 December 2009 while assigned to B Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade in Afghanistan. During ground taxiing the right rear strut assembly failed. The aircraft was returned to service following repairs.³⁶

c. (U//NONE) All Aviation Safety Action Messages (ASAMs) and Modification Work Orders (MWOs) were up to date through 2011.³⁷

d. (U//NONE) A 400-hour phase inspection of the aircraft was conducted in January 2011, and a 200-hour phase inspection was completed on 5 June 2011 by the L-3 Global Security &

28 (b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

(2011, August 22) RE: Tail Number for EXTORTION 17. Email to (b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(2).

²⁹ 1984 USAF Serial Numbers. (2011, August 22) [Online]. Available:

(b)(2), (b)(6), (b)(3) usaf_serials/1984.html

³⁰ Abbreviated Aviation Accident Report (AAAR), Case Number 1974-10-09-012

³¹ Abbreviated Aviation Accident Report (AAAR), Case Number 1981-02-01-006

³² Abbreviated Aviation Accident Report (AAAR), Case Number 1986-07-27-02

³³ Abbreviated Aviation Accident Report (AAAR), Case Number 1990-11-18-006

³⁴ Abbreviated Aviation Accident Report (AAAR), Case Number 2000-04-20-007

³⁵ Abbreviated Aviation Accident Report (AAAR), Case Number 2003-01-13-001

³⁶ Abbreviated Aviation Accident Report (AAAR), Case Number 2012-12-19-005

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

(2011, August 22) RE: Tail Number for EXTORTION 17. Email to (b)(3), (b)(6)

(b)(2)

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Engineering Solutions (GS&ES) Depot Maintenance and Repair Facility at Forward Operating Base (FOB) (b)(7)(1), (b)(7)(4a), (b)(7)(1), (b)(7)(4c) The aircraft was Fully Mission Capable (FMC) on the night of 5/6 August 2011.³⁸

e. (U//NONE) A post-accident photograph shows the aircraft tail number “0-24175” as it was painted on the fuselage.³⁹ The first digit is not shown. The second number clearly shows the number “0” instead of a “4” as indicated in the aircraft maintenance records and historical files. This is believed to be a stenciling error as the aircraft panel was improperly painted. The accident investigation team was not able to determine why this occurred, but information provided by the unit indicates they found a few other aircraft that are Stay Behind Equipment (SBE) with the same discrepancy. The aircraft historical records all indicated the correct year prefix of “84” throughout its history.^{40,41}

5. (U//~~FOUO~~) *Threat Countermeasure Systems/Aircraft Survivability Equipment (ASE)*. Installed on EXTORTION 17 (CH-47D tail number 84-24175) was the AN/ALQ-212(V) Improved Countermeasures Dispenser (ICMD) and APR-39A(V)1 Radar Detecting Set (RDS) systems.

a. (U//NONE) The AN/ALQ-212 is a modular system developed to defeat infrared-guided missiles. It consists of the AN/AAR-57 Common Missile Warning System (CMWS), Improved Countermeasures Dispenser (ICMD), and improved countermeasure munitions (i.e., flares). This system provides automatic, passive detection of incoming IR missiles providing warning to the helicopter’s crew and providing cues to the electronics module to automatically dispense decoy munitions. This system is not effective against direct fire weapons such as small arms and Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs).

b. (U//NONE) The AN/APR-39A(V)1 Radar Detecting Set (RDS) is a lightweight radar receiver for general aircraft application. The system provides warning of radar directed threats to allow appropriate evasive maneuvers and deployment of chaff using a separate AN/ALQ-212 ICMD. The system has the capability of detecting all pulse radar normally associated with hostile surface-to-air missiles, airborne interceptors, and anti-aircraft weapons systems. The system has ten individually housed components consisting of one control module, one cockpit indicator, one comparator module, two receivers, two left spiral antennas, two right spiral antennas, and one blade antenna mounted on the aircraft fuselage. This system is not effective against direct fire weapons such as small arms and RPGs.

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

(b)(6), (b)(3)

(b)(2)

Accident Scene Photo of aircraft panel with Tail Number

(b)(6), (b)(2), (b)(3)

(b)(2)

Aircraft Historical Records