

TAD Aviation tanks up at FARP



Bracing themselves against biting rotor wash, HHT, 1-1 Cav soldiers prepare to hot-fuel an incoming Blackhawk.

Story and photos by
Sheila R. Garrett
414th BSB PAO

HANAU, Germany – “I liked being under the propellers,” said Pfc. John Gittens, refueling technician, 1st Squadron, 1st United States Cavalry Regiment in Büdingen.

“It gave me an adrenaline rush. ... I rate this training as an 11 on a scale of one to ten.” Gittens recalled the excitement he felt while taking part in a training exercise

conducted by Headquarters and Headquarters, and F Troops from 1-1 Cav together with the 1st and 2nd of the 501st Aviation Regiments of

Fliegerhorst Kaserne. The training was conducted during HHT 1-1 Cav’s Commander’s Week, Feb. 12-14, as part of 1st Armored Division Commander’s

*“It gave me an adrenaline rush.
... I rate this training as an 11
on a scale of one to ten.”*

**Pfc. John Gittens,
1-1 Cav**

Week Program.

The training was aimed at cross training HHT, 1-1 Cav’s support platoon soldiers to refuel helicopters in

wartime, which normally is the responsibility of F Troop, 1-1 Cav.

“In the Cav, F Troop sets up the Forward Aiming and Refueling Point,” explained Capt. Dimant-Kass, HHT, 1-1 Cav commander. “... In order to provide flexibility for the squadron we thought it would be a good capability for HHT to have because it is our job to support the entire squadron [both air and ground].”

Refueling is a critical function within the HHT’s wartime mission, Dimant-Kass said, because the Cav’s Kiowa Warrior helicopters

are the eyes of the division commander.

“Once the aircraft leaves the mission to go and get fuel, then that

is one less pair of eyes the division has scouting the battlefield (for enemies),” he said.

Because the Army trains for all contingencies, Dimant-Kass explained the cross training is also important for HHT because in actual conflict the enemy could eliminate the primary refuelers. “If the F Troop FARP is destroyed, our aircraft need a means of getting fuel. ... Because our aircraft are so far forward the closest option for fuel would come from Cav assets.”

HHT, 1-1 Cav support platoon refuels M1-A1 Abrams tanks, M3-A2 Bradley scout vehicles and HMMWVs regularly, but they have never been involved in the quick reaction refueling of helicopters in a wartime setting.

“This is the first time Support Platoon has fueled aircraft with the blades turning,” Dimant-Kass said. “... It adds an element of danger and a level of difficulty.”

The level of danger Dimant-Kass refers to faces the pilot as well as the refueling crew while the helicopter is on the ground.

“The longer the aircraft is on the ground the more vulnerable they are to being destroyed... To do this in battle, we must train soldiers to move quickly and safely... to get the aircraft back to their mission — the division depends on us.”

Dimant-Kass said he and HHT senior non-commissioned officer leaders went to great lengths to ensure the training at Campo Pond was “battle-focused.”

“We could have conducted this



HHT, 1-1 Cav soldiers refuel a Blackhawk as the crew prepares to return to action.

training at the (Büdingen) airfield, but we wanted natural terrain. At Campo Pond scouts had to find a relatively flat area and secure and defend it while Support Platoon set up the FARP and refueled the helicopters.”

It took eight weeks to prepare for the simulated wartime training. “We used the crawl, walk, run theory,” said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Mickle, HHT, 1-1 Cav, Support Platoon sergeant. “First we planned...gathered equipment and worked on cold refuels without the blades running... The run stage was conducted at Campo Pond [in a tactical

setting] with the blades running,” Mickle said.

Arming soldiers with FARP skills in a wartime setting prevents would be mistakes. “There is the potential to refuel incorrectly,” Mickle said. “... The nozzle could be turned the wrong way and the fuel could go up into the intake of the helicopter causing a fire. The outcome would be catastrophic for the pilot and the ground crew,” Mickle said.

The training covered the 90-degree angle approach, proper nozzle position and ground to pilot communications. “Soldiers were taught to make sure the pilots eyes are on them at all times.”

Mickle explained that making one mistake while working in a FARP, especially for soldiers who normally do not refuel helicopters with the blades turning, could cost a life if

the approach to the aircraft is incorrect. Dimant-Kass added, “This training arms the soldier with the knowledge and capabilities so mistakes will not happen.”

Although Gittens said the training provided a rush of excitement, he also stated that the skills he learned were invaluable.

“This training really extended my horizons,” he said. “It gave more of a dimension to my knowledge than just refueling HMMWVs and tanks... Overall from my point of view, I feel the mission was a success and everyone got top notch training.”