

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2008-12-15-02

December 15, 2008

Soldiers of 1st Armored Division's 47th Forward Support Battalion learn sling loading techniques

By Pfc. Evan Loyd

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- One way to beat Iraq's traffic, roadside bombs and rough terrain is to strap your vehicle to a helicopter and let the chopper airlift it to your destination.

While it's not used that casually, airlifting equipment by helicopter sling load is an important technique to employ in a combat zone. It's also a fairly exacting process.

That's why Soldiers from the 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, have been honing their sling load skills since deploying to Iraq in April.

The Soldiers of the 47th's sling load team spent the first week in December training at Camp Striker, and their noncommissioned officer-in-charge said he hopes that instruction will lead to a greater number of skilled "sling loaders" for the battalion.



PFC EVAN LOYD

Staff Sgt. Marcus Wilson, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the sling load team for the 47th Forward Support Battalion (second from right), shows students how to set up a helicopter sling load during a training course at Camp Striker, Iraq, Dec. 5. The battalion is part of the Baumholder, Germany-based 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

"Our team started in April, with the team being trained by the unit that the 47th FSB replaced. Before that, we only had three Soldiers trained," said Staff Sgt. Marcus Wilson.

“Now we have 15 fully trained Soldiers and we’re expecting more when this class is completed.”

Sling loads can carry a wide variety of supplies and equipment for ground units, and deliver it to places that might otherwise be inaccessible, explained Sgt. Anthony Davis, an assistant instructor for the sling load class.

“You can carry anything if the weight limit isn’t exceeded,” said Davis. “Water, MREs, gear, ammunition, -- anything you can fit in a (shipping container) or even a vehicle -- we can load it and the helicopter can bring it wherever it can fly.”

“This course prepares us for future missions,” said student Spc. Matthew Crawford. “It’s always good to be prepared.”

One of the most important skills students learn is how to properly inspect rigged loads. During the class, the trainees were tested by checking an improperly rigged container.

Considering that those containers can weigh up to 13 tons, and the sling loaders handle vehicles and other large equipment, safety is top priority, the course's instructors said.

“The number-one thing that we want our sling loaders to know is situational awareness,” said Wilson. “You have to know where the helicopter is, where your equipment is, and why it’s there. Inexperience is a killer in this job.”

The 2nd BCT is a U.S. Army Europe unit based in Baumholder, Germany.



www.hqusareur.army.mil