

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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### Air ambulance company marks its return from 'full-spectrum' deployment in Iraq

By Christine June

U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern

**LANDSTUHL, Germany** -- The right side of the helicopter -- where Sgt. Ian Barlet was keeping his eyes on the ground -- drew most of the fire that early evening in Iraq as a flight crew from Charlie Company (Air Ambulance), 214th Aviation was trying to evacuate three wounded Marines.

"It's not something you feel every day -- you've just got to do what you got to do. You've got to accept the fact that it is there -- be fast and not get shot," said Barlet, the mission's flight crew chief, recalling the emotions that fueled the almost 30-minute landing attempt that evening in January 2007.

For their actions during the mission, Barlet was awarded a Combat Action

Badge and combat flight medic Sgt. Billy Raines earned the Combat Medic Badge. The badges were awarded during the unit's welcome home ceremony Dec. 11 at the company's headquarters on Landstuhl Heliport, located near the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center here.



SGT 1ST CLASS DAVID SEALE

A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Charlie Company (Air Ambulance), 214th Aviation begins a landing during the company's recent deployment in Iraq. The company recently marked its return from that deployment to its headquarters on Landstuhl Heliport, near Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.

“My guys got to see the whole spectrum during our 15-month deployment -- from these two crewmembers who were under fire on the ground, to those who coordinated with three other MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) companies to evacuate the wife of one of the sheiks who led the ‘Anbar awakening,’ across two-thirds of Iraq,” said Maj. Andy Risio, the Charlie Company commander. Started in 2005, the Anbar Awakening is an alliance of Sunni tribes that opposed al-Qaida in Iraq and united to help maintain security.

Raines remembers that it was a seven-to-10-minute flight to the pickup zone during that mission two Januarys ago, and that they tried to make two attempts before coming

in for their first actual landing.

“But where we landed, it was too hot for us to stay on ground, so we had to reposition, hovering for about 20 minutes before we could land about 300 meters north of our initial landing,” said Raines.

While Barlet kept his eyes on the ground to provide security for his medic and aircraft, Raines and ground forces loaded two of the Marines into the UH-60 Black Hawk. The other Marine was killed in action.

Barlet said he later learned that the Marines had been injured by a blast from an improvised explosive device. Raines found out later that one of the two Marines evacuated had died.

Barlet and Raines were paired up throughout the deployment, completing more than 100 missions together.

During their deployment from July 2007 to November 2008, the Soldiers of Charlie Company evacuated more than 1,800 patients and flew 3,995 hours supporting coalition forces. The company’s petroleum, oils and lubricants section pumped more than 400,000 gallons of fuel.

“I had operation crews who received every call for missions any hour of the day or night from four remote sites,” said Risio. “My mechanics maintained a 90 percent operational readiness rate for the entire length of the tour.”

“We weren’t as worried about someone shooting us down as we were about having to land for maintenance or a malfunction out in the middle of the desert, 200 miles from nowhere,” said Risio.

“We did that last mission in October as professional, disciplined and by-the-book as we did the first mission 15 months earlier,” said Risio.

The company, based at the heliport here since 1989, celebrated its 40th anniversary during the deployment. Its Soldiers have served on tours in Vietnam, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.



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