

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

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RELEASE #2007-10-19-01

Oct. 19, 2007

### U.S. ARMY, EUROPE AVIATORS FLY FLAG IN IRAQ IN HONOR OF THEIR HOMETOWN'S NEWEST EAGLE SCOUT

By **Sgt. Brandon Little**

12th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs Office

**LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Balad, Iraq --** There are always two U.S. flags inside the cockpit of every AH-64D Apache that takes off or lands here.

A few Soldiers from U.S. Army, Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade recently decided to make room for one more.

In addition to the flag on each of the two Apache pilots' uniforms, a flag would also be flown to salute a new Eagle Scout from their home station in Katterbach, Germany -- 17-year-old John Willis-Morris.

"I used to be a Boy Scout myself," said pilot Chief Warrant

Officer 2 Kevin Oaks of the brigade's 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation, who helped fly the flag in honor of Morris's achievement.



SGT BRANDON LITTLE

Soldiers from Task Force XII, led by U.S. Army Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, pose for a picture on Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq with an American flag that was flown on missions in Iraq in one of the task force's AH-64D Apache attack helicopters. The flag will be sent to the 12th's home base at Katterbach, Germany for John Willis-Morris, a 17-year-old Boy Scout who recently earned his Eagle Scout rank.

“I know how difficult it is to become an Eagle Scout. You really have to work for it, and only a small percent of Scouts make it.”

Most Boy Scouts join the organization when they are about 11 years old, and it can take them five to seven years to become an Eagle -- if they make it, said Sgt. 1st Class David Sweitzer, a former Scoutmaster and one of the organizers of the flag mission.

Willis-Morris began even younger. He says he started as a Tiger Cub -- the "ground floor" of the Scouting program for boys about age 7 -- in Okinawa, Japan, and has been a "Scouter" ever since. He spent a year with a Boy Scout Troop in Tennessee, then moved to Germany, where he joined troops in Bad Nauheim and finally Katterbach.

Earning the Eagle rank requires years of working through the Scout ranks, culminated by a comprehensive community service project each Eagle candidate must plan, supervise and complete. For his project, Willis-Morris built picnic tables for the Katterbach chapel with the help of friends and fellow Scouts. He particularly credited Rene Payne, the community's Club Beyond youth group director, for mentoring him during the project and teaching him how to supervise its completion.

Sweitzer, a brigade aviation maintenance officer in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force XII, also has a son who is a member of Troop 97. He said the request for the flag to be flown originally came from Willis-Morris's mother.

"I don't really remember where the idea came from to fly a flag to present to John. I know I mentioned it earlier, and I guess they (the 12th CAB pilots) just took the ball and ran," says Willis-Morris's mother, Doris Willis. Willis is a Department of Defense Dependent Schools teacher in the second grade at Katterbach Elementary who has taught in Germany and Okinawa during her 21-year DODDS career.

"Of course, as a mom, I had visions of (John) achieving his Eagle Scout rank since he started Tiger Cubs! I just couldn't be prouder," she said. "Scouting has taught him a great deal, and I expect him to live by the laws of Scouting."

"I pray that he takes the values of Scouting with him throughout his life and remembers to give all that he has experienced and learned back to others."

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Langewisch decided to place the flag in his pilot compartment during an Oct. 15 flight.

“This is the first flag Task Force XII (the aviation task force in Iraq led by the 12th CAB) has flown for a Scout,” said pilot Langewisch of HHC, Task Force XII. “It’s always nice to do things for those guys.”

Willis-Morris's flag will accompany Langewisch and Oaks as they fly combat service support missions for coalition troops on the ground in Iraq.

"It is a great morale boost to everyone involved -- the Soldiers downrange, Scouting, and the families left behind," Morris said. "This allows the Soldiers to feel that they are truly a part of something so far away."

"I know this will mean a lot to him," said Oaks. "So I'm more than happy to do it."

"I think it was supposed to be a surprise!, But I am very grateful for their thinking of me and also for their dedication to Scouting," Willis-Morris said. "The United States Army can also be very proud of them, as I am. I understand the commitment that they have made, since my father is a retired sergeant major in the Marine Corps.

"The flag will always represent to me their dedication to their jobs, their love for the United States, and their commitment to defend our freedom. I feel very special. The flag will always have a place of honor wherever I am."



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