

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



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U.S. ARMY EUROPE PILOT JOINS WITH AIR FORCE DOCTOR TO CHEER ASPIRING YOUNG IRAQI AVIATOR

By Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

12th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs Office

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Balad, Iraq -- Thanksgiving 2007 was a holiday to remember for Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Langewisch, aviation maintenance officer and pilot for U.S. Army Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade.



SGT 1ST CLASS CHRIS SEATON

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Langewisch, a pilot with U.S. Army Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, lifts an Iraqi boy from the seat of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter after a tour of the cockpit, on Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq Nov. 22. Langewisch and fellow Missourian Air Force Dr. (Maj.) Connie Johnmeyer of the 332nd Medical Group arranged the rare tour for the boy, a patient of Johnmeyer's who hopes to be a pilot one day.

Langewisch is one of 32 graduates of the New Franklin, Mo. high school class of 1980. He joined the Army six years later to become a helicopter pilot. More than 20 years later, he found himself here, preparing for yet another Thanksgiving away from his home and his family. But this Thanksgiving turned out special, thanks to a chance connection with a neighbor in another service.

In early November Langewisch picked up a Stars and Stripes newspaper and read about Dr. (Maj.) Connie Johnmeyer, an Air Force psychologist with the 332nd Medical Group who is helping to treat traumatic brain injuries at a hospital here. The article said Johnmeyer was from Fayette, Mo. -- just a few miles from his own hometown.

"The school district line runs through the middle of my parents' farm," he said. "I'm actually from New Franklin, but I got to know the Fayette folks through 4-H and things like that.

"I thought it was neat that she was from my area, so I contacted her just to see if she knew any of the same people I know," said Langewisch. "I even clipped the story out to send to my parents to see if

they knew her.”

Johnmeyer, a 1970 graduate of Fayette High School, works on a ward that sees Americans and Iraqis with head trauma. She primarily does evaluations for traumatic brain injury. Among the people recovering on the ward was a young Iraqi boy who told nurses he wants to be a pilot.

“I called her first, but when she found out I was a pilot she thought I could help out,” said Langewisch.

On Thanksgiving Day Johnmeyer and other members of the hospital staff brought the boy to meet Langewisch and tour three of his unit’s helicopters -- an AH-64 Apache, a UH-60 Black Hawk and a CH-47 Chinook.

“Over the course of a rotation here there are different kinds of notable moments,” said Johnmeyer. “I bet this will be a very special memory for the staff and for him.”

As the group watched the boy climbed over, under and through the aircraft, his expression -- which had been more solemn than any young face should be -- came alive with wonder.

“It was very cool to see him do this,” said Johnmeyer. “He was very excited. He’d been pretty lethargic up till now. This is the most animated I’ve seen him get.”

The visit turned a Thanksgiving Day for two neighbors thousands of miles from home into a chance to make a small difference here by bringing some joy into one boy's life.

“I just think it’s neat to put a smile on somebody’s face,” said Langewisch. “We don’t get the opportunity to do this kind of stuff very often. It’s a great thing for all of us.”



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