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AVIATION TASK FORCE CONDUCTS PRE-COMMAND COURSE FOR OFFICERS IN COMBAT ZONE

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CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- Any young officer who has taken his first command will probably tell you it can be a little intimidating, even without the added pressures of a combat zone. To help ease the transition, Task Force XII conducted a forward-deployed Pre-Command Course here May 31-June 1.



SGT 1ST CLASS CHRIS SEATON

Capt. Karin Meindl, commander of Troop R, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and Capt. Brian Schapker, who is scheduled to assume command of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation, discuss company operations during a pre-command course offered by Task Force XII at Camp Taji, Iraq, May 31-June 1.

give them information about the types of things they'll deal with when they take command."

The course gave captains who have recently taken command, or will take command in the near future, training in areas that ranged from taking care of Soldiers and their Families to managing unit property.

"When you switch company commanders in a deployed environment, the officers who are taking charge don't get to attend a pre-command course," said Lt. Col. Charles Bowery, the Task Force XII executive officer. "We designed a model of that course to

The course, taught by subject matter experts from across the task force staff, took several weeks to put together, said Bowery.

“None of the folks I’ve talked to here have ever seen this done before, so we’re kind of proud of that, and we made the decision to take people’s time away from the mission because this was something we knew was important,” he said.

Although this is the first class TF XII has conducted at Camp Taji, it’s actually the second one the unit has offered in Iraq.

“There was a (pre-command course) given in November when we were in Balad, and all of the participants in that class have already become company commanders,” said Bowery. “They’ve all signed their property books; they’re accountable for their equipment, and their Soldiers continue to function with no degradation in capabilities. I think that speaks for the quality of the course.”

A portion of the course was dedicated to teaching the new leaders about the roles that warrant officers and noncommissioned officers play in a command.

Flight warrant officers definitely play a large role in aviation operation, and it was beneficial to learn about the different things they do, said Capt. Karin Meindl, commander of Troop R, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

“I’m a multi-function logistician, but I was commissioned as a transportation officer,” said Meindl. “It was an eye-opening experience for someone (like me) who never worked with aviation before. I didn’t really understand aviation as far as capabilities and support requirements.”

“The training was very informative,” said Capt. Brian Schapker, assistant operations officer for TF XII's Task Force Storm, who is scheduled to assume command of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation. “It gave a broad-stroke view of the challenges we’ll face when we take command.”

“My biggest challenge is that the company I’m taking over has a great commander, so I’ve got some big shoes to fill,” said Schapker. “(Like any new commander), I’ll be the most inexperienced person at my job when I take over, so this course got me thinking about what I want to do and how I want to do it.”

TF XII, the aviation task force supporting Multi-National Division – Baghdad, is led by the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, a U.S. Army Europe unit based in Ansbach, Germany.

