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## Famed 'Screaming Eagles' Prepare for Afghanistan Deployment

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Cold drizzle and hot metal rained upon the ground here yesterday as a group of 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) soldiers honed their mortar- and howitzer-targeting skills in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan in April.



*Forward observer Army Spc. Daniel L. Howes watches 81 mm and 120 mm mortar shells and 105 mm howitzer rounds explode down range during a training exercise at Fort Campbell, Ky., Jan. 31, 2008. Howes is among about 3,800 4th Brigade Combat Team soldiers with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) that will deploy to Afghanistan in April. Photo by Gerry J. Gilmore*  
(Click photo for screen-resolution image); [high-resolution image](#) available.

Forward observer Army Spc. Daniel L. Howes wiped raindrops from his eyes from the second-story window of a wooden training structure as he watched 81 mm and 120 mm mortar shells and 105 mm howitzer rounds explode hundreds of yards away. The St. Paul, Minn., native quickly radioed adjusting-fire instructions to colleagues manning the mortars.

Howes is among about 3,800 4th Brigade Combat Team soldiers from Fort Campbell that are preparing to deploy to eastern Afghanistan this spring.

"I'm here to protect my country and that is what I will do," said Howes, a Headquarters and Headquarters Company soldier who sports a combat patch from a previous duty tour in Iraq.

The 4th Brigade Combat Team, part of the 506th Infantry Regiment, can trace its lineage to the World War II unit that helped raise the German siege of Bastogne, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge, said Army Maj. Patrick R. Seiber, public affairs officer for 4th BCT.

An HBO miniseries, titled "Band of Brothers," highlights the World War II exploits of several members of the 101st Division, from the landings at Normandy to the capture of Adolph Hitler's Berchtesgaden vacation home.

The 101st Division is nicknamed the "Screaming Eagles." Its headquarters also will deploy to Afghanistan to relieve the 82nd Airborne Division's command element, Seiber said.

The division's 1st, 2nd and 3rd brigade combat teams currently are deployed in Iraq.

"We look forward to ... doing a good job" in Afghanistan, Army Sgt. 1st Class Troy D. Albert, an automated fire-support specialist with 4th Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, said as he deftly channeled range-related message traffic.

"I'm basically the AT&T of field artillery," Albert said. The Baton Rouge, La., native said his military job is "exciting, different, and never the same."

Army Lt. Col. Tom W. O'Steen, commander of 1st Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, was on hand to watch the training exercise. The two-day exercise involved fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and mortar and artillery fire-support assets, O'Steen explained.

"It integrates all of those assets that they're going to use in Afghanistan," he said. "This is the capstone exercise for our preparations for deployment."

Deployments are always difficult and involve competing interests, O'Steen said. "You're trying to focus on the mission you're getting ready to do, but you also have to keep your mind on getting your family ready for an extended separation," he said. "I think we've done a good job on giving the soldiers and the leaders time off to get their families ready."

It is also important to communicate with soldiers and their families prior to deployments, he said. O'Steen's wife, Carolyn, is the leader of his unit's family readiness group.

The families "are as interested in where we're going as we are," O'Steen said. He said he recently provided a briefing for his soldiers' families in which he showed them where the unit will be in Afghanistan and how families can obtain support and communicate with their deployed loved ones.

Back in the exercise's command center, Army Sgt. 1st Class John F. Kohne, a Headquarters and Headquarters Company fire support noncommissioned officer, said he was pleased by the way his soldiers had performed.

“It’s going pretty good,” Kohne, a two-year Iraq veteran and San Diego native, said. “The rounds are accurate; the men are maintaining good morale; and we’re getting a lot of steel down range.”

Army Pvt. Trevor A. Lauritson, a supply clerk with the 4-320th Field Artillery, has been in the Army just eight months. He provided his thoughts about going to Afghanistan. “I’m pretty excited. I’ve never been deployed, yet,” said Lauritson, who hails from Sacramento, Calif.

Fighting terrorists overseas prevents battling them at home, Lauritson said. “I think that if there wasn’t a war overseas, then there’d be a war here,” he said.