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- **First Combat Aviation Brigade Leaves Europe**
- **Athens Flying Week, Greece**
- **Exercise Marfibex-92 | On Board Juan Carlos I, Spain**
- **Anatolian Eagle 2019, Turkey**
- **And so much more ...**

FIRST COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE LEAVES EUROPE

REPORT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
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The deployment of the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division was the fourth division deployment in Europe in the context of Operation Atlantic Resolve. The unit withdrew to the United States in October 2019. As part of the European Operation Atlantic Resolve, the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade of the United States Army was active in Europe in 2019. The helicopters and many ground equipment arrived in the port of Zeebrugge in February 2019. The unit left Europe via the port of Rotterdam and was relieved by the 3CAB.

Operation Atlantic Resolve

Operation Atlantic Resolve is a military deployment in Europe. Although it is not a "real" military operation, it is an operation that means that many American units

are stationed in Europe. Operation Atlantic Resolve is an ongoing effort in response to Russia's actions in the Ukraine. It is partly about the war in Donbass in eastern Ukraine around Donetsk. Operation Atlantic Resolve is being developed by the European Deterrence Initiative. In the aftermath of the Russian intervention in the Ukraine in 2014, the United States took several immediate steps to improve deterrence along the eastern flank of NATO borders. One of them is increasing the presence of air, ground and sea forces in the region and improving previously planned international exercises with European partners. The United States is taking measures to improve NATO's military plans and defense capabilities. The country is and remains determined to maintain a permanent presence in Central Europe and Eastern

Europe. The Atlantic Resolve rotations are controlled by a regionally aligned headquarters in Europe. In March 2015, a US Army spokesperson announced in Wiesbaden that a convoy of armored combat vehicles (including Strykers) would move all over the road to their garrison in Vilseck after maneuvers in Poland, Estonia and Lithuania. The air activities are usually planned at Ämari Air Base (Estonia), Graf Ignatievo Air Base (Bulgaria), Mihail Kogălniceanu International Airport (Romania) and Papa Air Base (Hungary). These fields house both units of the American Air Force and the Army.

The deployment of the 1st Infantry Division is already the fourth division deployment of the US Army since the start of Operation Atlantic Resolve in February 2017. From January 2017, there were more than

3,500 troops of the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) of the 4th Infantry division active in Europe. There were in total 87 tanks and 144 Bradley combat vehicles at their disposal. The units first assembled in Poland before they spread to a total of seven countries ranging from Estonia to Bulgaria. The ABCT that operates for Operation Atlantic Resolve has its headquarters in Germany at the United States Army Europe. An ABCT rotates the deployment of different divisions every nine months. The equipment of this unit was permanently established in Żagań in western Poland together with a Polish armored division. Since then, the units have always been relieved by new divisions that are being sent from the United States to Europe. A total of four US Army combat regiments flew through Germany and Eastern Europe. The

HH-60M *Black Hawks* in MEDEVAC configuration assigned to Air Ambulance Company Charlie (C/2-1st AVN (AA)) "Boomer"



first unit was the Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division that served between February 2017 and November 2017. This unit was relieved by the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division between November 2017 and April 2018. Later the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division took it over between April 2018 and February 2019. They were followed by the Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division from February 2019 until October 2019. Mid of October 2019, the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart,

Georgia, arrived at the port facilities of Zeebrugge, Belgium for their nine-month deployment in support of Atlantic Resolve, replacing the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

Deployment in Europe of the 1st Infantry Division

The helicopters of the 1st Infantry Division arrived in February 2019 in the Belgian port of Zeebrugge. A special compound was set up on the quay for the helicopters. The helicopters would fly via Chievres to Germany where Ansbach would become their new

temporary home. The 1CAB was equipped with no less than 50 *Black Hawk* helicopters of the types UH-60L, UH-60M and HH-60M on arrival. The brigade also contained 24 *Apaches* from the 1st Squadron of the 6th Cavalry. Finally, another 14 *Chinooks* were unloaded in Zeebrugge. In addition to the helicopters, more than 1,500 vehicles were unloaded, all of which would be moved to Eastern Europe. The 1CAB would station a total of thirteen helicopters and more than 60 staff in Latvia in the Baltic States. In addition to Latvia, 17 helicopters in Poland would also be stationed at Powidz for nine months. These helicopters were accompanied by approximately 150 soldiers. Finally, part of the helicopters in Romania were stationed at Mikhail Kogălniceanu in the east of the country. 100 soldiers were deployed in Romania to support the helicopters. The helicopters would train in all these countries with the local units of the relevant host countries. The cooperation with NATO partners in Europe ensures that the American units can collaborate much better in the future. People learn from each other by practicing procedures and they learn to deal with each other's equipment. The strengths and weaknesses of all partners become visible so that they can improve.

For the withdrawal of the soldiers and the material from the 1st Infantry Division, the Netherlands acts as host country. This Dutch Defense deployment falls under the so-called Host Nation Support. NATO allies support each other in military movements across each other's territory. It involves the relocation of more than 5,200 soldiers, 85 Abrams battle tanks, 58 helicopters and hundreds of other vehicles and equipment. The Dutch Defense supports the transports with dozens of soldiers, among others. The helicopters that are being relocated consist of more than 55 UH-60 *Black Hawks*, AH-64 *Apaches* and CH-47 *Chinooks*. The helicopters fly a route from Germany where they go via Eindhoven Air Base to the Rotterdam port area. The helicopters then travel by ship to their home base in Fort Riley in Kansas. The mechanized brigade of the 1st Infantry Division will leave the country by ship via the port of Vlissingen. This caravan travels through the Netherlands by road, by train and for the first time also with barge vessels. Dutch personnel from the army and the Defense Surveillance and Security Organization, among other things, secure the port areas in Rotterdam and Vlissingen. In addition, the Ministry of Defense supplies fuel and transports part of the American equipment with trucks. The Marechaussee guides the military columns on the Dutch roads. The Americans also use Defense locations as accommodation and office spaces. The navy provides port protection on and under water, including diving vessels with diving teams, ships, quay and port inspections.

Background 1st Infantry Division

The United States 1st Infantry Division is a combined division of the US Army and is the oldest continuous serving unit in the regular US Army. The 1st Infantry Division is part of the American III Corps. Since the organization in 1917 during the First World War, this unit was continuously active without ever being dissolved. The unit has been in all major conflicts in the world since its inception and has since achieved considerable fame during deployment. The division is based in Fort Riley in the American state of Kansas. This base is located west of the city of Kansas City. The helicopters of this division are generally based on Marshall Army Air Field, not far from Fort Riley. The division was officially nicknamed "The Big Red One" (abbreviated "BRO") and the soldiers can be recognized by the shoulder patch with the big red "1" on it. The 1st Infantry Division has also received the nickname "The Fighting First". The division has also received nicknames such as "The Big Dead One" and "The Bloody First" which are intended as puns on the original nickname due to the many efforts on the battlefield. The 1st Infantry Division is made up of a number of Brigades and Regiments. These units are: the Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion (DHQB), the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team (1st ABCT) "Devil Brigade", the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team (2nd ABCT) "Dagger Brigade", the 1st Infantry Division Artillery "Drum Fire", the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division "Demon Brigade", and the 1st Infantry Division Sustainable Brigade "Durable" Brigade ".

Background 1st Combat Aviation Brigade

The flying branch of the 1st Infantry Division is the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade (1CAB). The 1st Combat Aviation Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division was originally formed from the units of the 501st Aviation Brigade of the 1st Armored Division. The unit was formally established on April 17, 1986. When the unit was established, the Brigade consisted of the 10th and 501st Aviation Battalions, the 220th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter), the 244th Aviation Company (Command Aviation) and the 61st Aviation Company (Maintenance). The new brigade was equipped with 22 Bell AH-1 *Cobra*, 38 Bell OH-58D *Kiowa* and 30 Bell UH-1 *Iroquois* helicopters. On November 16, 1987, the 501st and 10th Aviation Battalions were renumbered to the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Aviation. The unit was then given a regimental indication. Company A, 501st Aviation Battalion became Company Golf and Hotel under the 1st Armored Division and was again assigned to the 3d Infantry Division as the 7th Battalion, 1st Aviation. The 61st Aviation Company (Maintenance) was renamed as Company India, 1st

AH-64E *Apache Guardian* assigned to Attack Reconnaissance Troop Charlie (C/1-6th CAV (AR)) "Crusaders"



CH-47F *Chinook* assigned to Heavy Helicopter Company Bravo (B/2-1st AVN (HH)) "Diesel"



Aviation. In May 1988 the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry made the conversion from a pure ground unit to an air and ground squadron and moved from Schwabach to Katterbach in Germany. At the end of 1989 the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry surrendered its M60A3s and received more than 40 M3 Cavalry Fighting Vehicles (CFV). In July 1989, the 2nd Battalion, 1st Aviation in Germany was deactivated and the unit was reactivated as an AH-64A Apache battalion in Fort Hood, Texas.

The "Strike Eagles" returned to Ansbach Army Heliport on May 24, 1990. The unit became the first division with AH-64A Apache helicopters stationed in Germany. In November 1990, Company India from the 1st Aviation was renamed as the 9th Battalion, 1st Aviation. "Eagle Support". This unit was set up to provide dedicated support to the brigade. The unit later became the 603rd Support Battalion (Aviation) under the 3rd Infantry Division. In December 1990, Colonel Daniel J. Petrosky led the brigade to Southwest Asia along with the 1st Armored Division and conducted combat operations in Iraq and Kuwait. For its performance during Operation Desert Storm in 1991, the brigade was selected as the AAAA unit of the year. Shortly after the unit returned to Europe and in conjunction with the reorganization of USAREUR, the "Iron Eagle" Brigade joined the 3d Infantry Division. The 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry was inactivated and turned in its equipment. The colors were transferred to the cavalry squadron division of the 1st Armored Division. The aviation brigade was eventually deactivated in Fort Riley, Kansas in January 1996 and was reactivated on February 15, 1996, as the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division in Katterbach in Germany. The unit then became an integral part of the Great Red 1. The aviation brigade then supported numerous emergency operations throughout Europe and Southwest Asia. After a reorganization in 2003, the 1CAB welcomed the 6th Squadron of the 6th Cavalry Regiment "Six Shooters" at the brigade. The unit was now complete as it is in its current form within the United States Army.

Background 1st Squadron 6th Cavalry

The 1st Squadron of the 6th Cavalry, is like the other units of the 1CAB, based on Marshall Army Air Field in Kansas. The Cavalry is an ancient part of the American army and dates back to the early years of the United States. At that time, the Cavalry were the units of the American army that moved with horses. The American 6th Cavalry was the only regular cavalry regiment that was established during the civil war. On May 4, 1861, General Order No.16 was published and the organization plan for the regiment was prescribed. This order provided for the new



UH-60M Black Hawk belonging to the 3rd Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (3-1st AVN (ARB)) "Nightmares"

cavalry regiment to consist of three battalions, each battalion of two squadrons and each squadron of two companies. After having been a basic unit for years, this would change in the 1970s. On March 31, 1971, the regiment was based on Fort Meade, Maryland. The 1st Squadron would remain active for almost two years, when it received orders to send its equipment by rail to Fort Bliss. The squadron was inactivated on June 21, 1973. The next day the entire regiment was reorganized and redesigned as the 6th Cavalry as part of the Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS). On January 17, 1985, the 1st Squadron was reactivated as one of the groundbreaking AH-64A Apache units in the US Army. During the early 1980s, the squadron was stationed in Fort Rucker, Alabama. The unit was known as an Armor Attack Helicopter Squadron. The squadron served as a test unit during the development and validation of the AH-64A Apache until its deactivation on December 15, 1995 in Fort Hood, Texas.

Current Organization 1st Combat Aviation Brigade

Just like many other large Brigades, the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) is composed of three large Battalions and a Cavalry squadron. The first unit that comes with this is the 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (1-1st AVN (ARB)) "Gunslingers" of the 1CAB. The unit is equipped with AH-64E Apache Guardian combat helicopters. This version of the Apache is new to the US Army and is now being introduced





everywhere. The 1-1st AVN (ARB) consists of three companies, namely; Attack Reconnaissance Company Alpha (A/1-1st AVN (AR)) "Taz Devils", B/1-1st AVN (AR) "Wolfpack" and C/1-1st AVN (AR) "Ghostriders". The second unit that is assigned to the 1CAB is, like with many brigades, a support battalion. This unit is the 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion (2-1st AVN (GSAB)) "Fighting Eagles". The first company of this unit is the Command Aviation Company Alpha (A/2-1st AVN (CMD)) "Wraiths", which is equipped with the UH-60L *Black Hawk* for connection tasks. The second company is Heavy Helicopter Company Bravo (B/2-1st AVN (HH)) "Diesel" and flies the CH-47F *Chinook*. The third and last company of this battalion is the Air Ambulance Company Charlie (C/2-1st AVN (AA)) "Boomer" which flies with the HH-60M *Black Hawk* in the MEDEVAC role. The third battalion which belongs to the 1CAB is the 3rd Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (3-1st AVN (ARB)) "Nightmares". The three companies of this unit are all equipped with the UH-60M *Black Hawk* in the assault role. The three

companies of this unit, are; the Assault Helicopter Company Alpha (A/3-1st AVN (ASLT)) "Black Cats", the B/3-1st AVN (ASLT) "Black Knights" and the C/3 1st AVN (ASLT) "Black Sheep".

The 1-6 CAV nowadays consists of three troops that all fly the AH-64E *Apache Guardian*. These troops, are; Attack Reconnaissance Troop Alpha (A/1-6th CAV (AR)) "Avenger", Attack Reconnaissance Troop Bravo (B/1-6th CAV (AR)) "Bandits" and Attack Reconnaissance Troop Charlie (C/1-6th CAV (AR)) "Crusaders". The drones of this unit have meanwhile been assigned to the regular units of the 1CAB of which the 1-6 CAV forms part. The combat helicopters of the Troops Alpha, Bravo and Charlie are easy to recognize. The helicopters have stripes on the tail that indicate to which troop the helicopters belong. Helicopters with one stripe belong to Troop Alpha, helicopters with two stripes belong to Troop Bravo and finally the helicopters with three stripes belong to troop Charlie.

Two AH-64E *Apache Guardians* belonging to the Attack Reconnaissance Troop Charlie (C/1-6th CAV (AR)) "Crusaders"



▲ AH-64E *Apache Guardian* assigned to Attack Reconnaissance Troop Bravo (B/1-6th CAV (AR)) "Bandits"
▼ AH-64E *Apache Guardian* assigned to Attack Reconnaissance Troop Charlie (C/1-6th CAV (AR)) "Crusaders"



CH-47F *Chinook* assigned to Heavy Helicopter Company Bravo (B/2-1st AVN (HH)) "Diesel" ▲
UH-60L *Black Hawk* assigned to 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion (2-1st AVN (GSAB)) "Fighting Eagles" ▼

