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Air assets keep troops moving, supplied
By Spc. Dijon Rolle, 17th Public Affairs Det.



Photo(s) by Spc. Dijon Rolle
Soldiers from Co. A, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., rush away from an aircraft during a combat air assault.

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Moving troops and equipment to the battlefield quickly and effectively is an important part of any successful combat operation.

Aviators from Task Force Diamondhead are helping to ensure the success of the coalition by providing air support for various missions throughout the southern region of Afghanistan.

This support often comes in the form of air assault missions, during which aviation assets are used to rapidly insert ground troops and equipment into remote locations. The air support can also be in the form of resupply.

Regardless of the specific task, each mission is a carefully orchestrated operation between Task Force Diamondhead and the requesting unit. Air support has proven itself to be faster and more effective than ground convoys for deployed troops serving across Afghanistan.

"Here in Afghanistan, the majority of the movement that we do is by aircraft," said Maj. Robert Ault,

Task Force Diamondhead Operations officer. "The distances here are pretty great and Afghanistan doesn't always have the highway infrastructure system or roads to be able to move around.

"If you want to move large concentrations of Soldiers, troops or supplies, or evacuate personnel, we rely on aircraft to do that -- and that's where Task Force Diamondhead comes in."

A major benefit of using air assets to move troops and supplies is the added safety. The aircraft lands just long enough to drop off personnel and equipment, before leaving the area.

"We can move them in quickly and move them out a lot quicker than you can on a ground convoy," said Staff Sgt. Deddra French, Task Force Diamondhead operations noncommissioned officer. "It's a lot easier to move a larger amount with the aircraft than with the convoy, and we can use the element of surprise with the air assault."

Soldiers said they are also pleased with the benefits of the air assault.

"With the air assault, we can position troops better and there's less (of a risk)," said Spc. Tambouzi Green, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, team leader. "It positions me with my team and helps me to maneuver better with them on the battlefield. Once we land, we have a better idea of what needs to be done and where we need to go."

Air assault missions not only insert ground troops directly into a desired location, but supplies and equipment as well.

"As infantry, we're already carrying a lot of gear," said Staff Sgt. Kenrick Rampersad, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, squad leader. "This makes it a little easier for us to move our Soldiers and all of our equipment from one point to another. We can fit a whole platoon in one Chinook."

After the initial air assault mission is complete, the aircraft often makes a second trip to the area to drop off supplies like food, water and fuel that ground troops will need to successfully accomplish their mission.

"It aids the commander and his decision making process, and allows him to move personnel and equipment around the battlefield more effectively," said Staff Sgt. Bruce Bryant, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., support platoon sergeant. "This helps us accomplish our mission and meet the commander's intent."