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and Heart of Texas News

An ongoing relationship

UAE Apache pilot training missions end this week

By JAMES STEWART
If it weren't for the occasional obvious signs of military attack helicopters flying

overhead, many folks in and around the Heart of Texas might not ever realize that Brady is playing an active role in train-



Standard-Herald photo by James Stewart

TEAMWORK—Brig. Gen. Peter Atkinson (left), Brady City Manager James Minor and Col. Morgan Lamb visit during Tuesday's lunch gathering at Curtis Field.

ing military troops for combat. For the past three weeks, more than 80 military and civilian support personnel have been using Curtis Field as a home base for collective training of a contingent of United Arab Emirates (UAE) AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter pilots. Once their training is completed this week, the pilots will be prepared to deploy in the future in support of the coalition forces.

The UAE is a federation of seven emirates situated in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula in Southwest Asia on the Persian Gulf, bordering Oman and Saudi Arabia. The UAE consists of seven states, termed emirates, which are Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujaira.

On Tuesday, Brig. Gen. Peter Atkinson, Fort Hood's Deputy Commanding Officer, accompanied by Col. Morgan Lamb, the 21st Cavalry Brigade Commander, paid a visit to Curtis Field to visit with the UAE pilots, their commanding officer, and training personnel. With the four-week training mission nearly complete, the visit served as a progress report for the ongoing training efforts that occur in and around Brady.

The training is done by the 21st Cavalry Brigade in coordination with civilian contractors and the mission is to train crews and pilots on

the AH-64D Longbow Apache helicopter. The unit trains active and reserve component attack helicopter units as well as crews and aviators from allied nations and Task Force ODIN, an air-ground integration task force that has proven to be a mission-enhancer and combat multiplier in Iraq and now Afghanistan.

Brady is located within the boundaries of the Western Training Area, an area of land and airspace critical to effective training of aviation units. According to Brig. Gen. Atkinson and Lieutenant Colonel Yousef Al Kaabe, acting Battalion Commander, the training missions have provided the pilots with real-life combat scenarios and the training area in the WTA has allowed the soldiers to remain secluded and focused on the training missions.

For the past three weeks, the pilots, trainers and support teams have performed missions during all hours of the day and night. From opposing force troops on the ground in various locations throughout the region to the mechanics keeping the \$30 million attack helicopters in tip-top shape, the entire group of civilians and military personnel have operated almost unknown to the area communities. Only when pre-planned missions have been carefully and precisely organized do the aircraft depart, letting citizens know that the



Standard-Herald photo by James Stewart

HONORED GUEST—Lt. Col. Yousef Al Kaabe, (left) acting Battalion Commander of the UAE pilots training at Curtis Field, prepares to serve Brig. Gen. Peter Atkinson a traditional barbecued goat meal at the main hangar at Curtis Field. The UAE pilots will wrap up their four-week training on Thursday.

training has begun.

Once a mission begins, as many as three different teams of two aircraft on each team, conduct their missions complete with detailed lists of goals and objectives. As they perform their tasks, they are under constant supervision by an observer/controller aircraft

that monitors their every move. Back at Curtis Field, the entire operation is also monitored via satellite which tracks the entire mission on computer monitors.

After each mission, routine debriefing and evaluation of individual and team performance

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Congressman updates Bradyites on healthcare reform legislation

U.S. Cong. Mike Conaway made good use of the legislative recess last week as he visited several communities within the district to host town hall meetings and provide updates on the current healthcare reform legislation.

Before a group of more than 65 concerned citizens, Cong. Conaway summarized the current status of the healthcare bill that has the nation stirred up the likes that have not been seen in recent history.



2,000 PAGES—Cong. Mike Conaway shows the audience a copy of the original form of the healthcare reform legislation.

"The problem with this bill is that it is going on without adequate input from both sides," said Conaway. "We have the best healthcare delivery system in the world and the issue surrounds the cost and how to pay for it."

Conaway briefed the group on the hard facts of the legislation and the fact that the majority-led Congress does not need any votes from the opposing side to make the legislation pass. But he did state that growing opposition by the general public can be instrumental in killing the bill in its current form.

"This bill is not inevitable—we can stop this," said Conaway. "I hear you loud and clear about your objection to this legislation and I am working hard to communicate that to my colleagues in Washington. What you can do to help stop this process is talk to anyone you know who lives in a district that has a Democrat for a congressman or senator and urge them to voice their opinions as well."

"If this reform passes in its current form, I believe we will spend the rest of our lives tweaking the system."

The congressman presented a handout with facts about the proposed bill in addition to showing the audience a copy of the 2,000 page document that served as the basis of the discussion.

He highlighted many of the points with which he and his Republican colleagues take issue. From the 53 new boards, offices, bureaucracies and programs, to the challenges it will present to small businesses, the issue was overshadowed by the staggering number of dollars associated with implementing the plan and how those funds would be generated.

"The Congressional Budget Office estimates total Federal spending of at least \$1.6 trillion over 10 years."

According to the handout provided by Conaway, healthcare costs continue to increase because insurance shields consumers from actual pricing, there are tens of billions in fraud, particularly in government programs, medical liability laws encourage defensive medicine and payment in the industry is for quantity and not quality of care provided.

One pie chart in the handout detailed the government's estimation of uninsured Americans. There are currently 47 million Americans who lack coverage—though some are voluntarily uninsured and others are undocumented immigrants.

That number is broken down as follows: 11 percent are childless adults 18-34 years of age; 22 percent live at more than 300 percent of the poverty level, 20 percent are non-citizens, 23 percent are Medicaid eligible and the remaining 23 percent are uninsured.

That target population of uninsured persons is about 10 million people.

"This plan proposes spending \$1.6 trillion for government take-over in the name of covering three percent of Americans truly without coverage," said Conaway.

Another issue Conaway stated he has with the plan is that he believes the plan will mean less choice and higher costs for the consumer.

"This plan abolishes the

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Standard-Herald photos by James Stewart

CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS—Cong. Mike Conaway visits with members of the local community during a town hall meeting last week. The meeting was part of a string of similar gatherings held throughout the district to provide information on the pending healthcare reform legislation.

Commissioners approve change to CR 472, consider insurance renewal

By NEAL ULMER
Newly-appointed County Judge Danny Neal has his hands full during his first session of the McCulloch County Commissioners' Court held Monday morning as interested parties gathered regarding road change of County Road 472.

The meeting room of the county extension office was nearly full as this important agenda item was before the court.

The four major interested parties involved in the county road change stated their case to the commissioners' court regarding the three-tenths of a mile gap in the road which had no written easement. The county road has been maintained by Precinct 4 maintenance workers for at least eight years.

After considerable discussion, the court approved a motion made by Commissioner Jerry Bratton and seconded by Commissioner Brent Deeds; a declaration establishing county road and granting application for a road easement.

Another agenda item of great importance was the renewal of county insurance with the West Texas Rural Counties Association Risk Management Pool. The policy premium will renew in October; the coverage period runs from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 and includes the insur-

ance of all the counties' rolling equipment, buildings, sheriff's department employees' liability as well as commissioners and county judge liability.

The Texas Association of Counties Risk Management Pool aids in obtaining additional rates below the commercial market, works to help curb rising insurance costs and reducing the number of claims.

The commissioners voted to table this agenda item until complete information could be obtained.

The landscaping of the courthouse lawn was tabled for a noon recess, until added information could be obtained. Commissioners Jim Quinn and J.P. Murray, Jr. were able to contact a company out of San Angelo for grass sodding.

The commissioners approved up to \$2,500 to have the lawn sprayed with grass seed and fertilizer as opposed to sodding the lawn altogether. After calculating the two options, the more favorable solution (which the commissioners approved) will reduce the landscaping cost by over 75 percent.

The continued collection of optional county fees as outlined by Texas Department of Transportation, such as the Road & Bridge Fees, Child Safety Fees and/or fees for transportation projects was discussed. Com-

missioners approved to keep fees at current levels, as this produces funding for these projects in the county.

County Clerk Tina Smith said there was a need for two election judges to be appointed by the court. The court appointed Gwen Ragsdale as voting precinct 402 election judge and Glenda Ranne as the early voting judge.

A discussion was held regarding the mowing and maintenance of the courthouse lawn. It was suggested that the county take bids for this service. The court voted to table this agenda item until more information could be obtained.

Three discussion items were on the day's agenda with Commissioner Quinn updating the court on the moving process, timing and related duties. He gave a report on the courthouse security locks, the architect fee, the sound system, change orders, vault door restoration and the courthouse maintenance test.

Judge Neal announced and distributed information regarding programs offered by the United States Department of Agriculture that funds business, community and housing programs. Also announced was information given to

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City to build speed humps in school zones

With the new school year just around the corner, the City of Brady and the Brady Police Department are reminding citizens of the importance of obeying speed limits in and around school zones.

In an effort to curtail habitual speeding on streets in school zones, the City of Brady will next week begin building speed humps on several city maintained streets. The humps will be located within the school zone and will be designed to be crossed at or near the posted speed limit.

The use of speed humps is known as "traffic calming," and according to reports from the National Transportation

Safety Administration, the use of speed humps was associated with a 53-60 percent reduction in the odds of injury or death among children in school zones.

Brady City Manager James Minor indicated that the speed humps will be approximately 16-20 inches wide and several inches tall. Construction on the humps could begin as soon as Monday in various locations within school zones.

"There are several streets that will not warrant these traffic control devices, but there are a few locations where they are needed," said Minor. "This is an ongoing project that can be changed. If citizens have problems on streets that are located inside a school zone, I encourage them to contact me to discuss the problem and put the location up for consideration."

