



The Canopy

Issue 4 / Volume 34 / Sep 2026

12 Months in the Middle East

That's a long summer.

Read more on page 3.

Staying Alive on Foot

The sky is watching you now. Here is how infantry survives.

Read more on page 5.

The Gold Falcons

From gliders to Panama.

Read more on page 8.

Chapter Officers

Position	Name
Chairman	Gary Blasczienski
Vice Chairman	Stephen Fern
Treasurer	Heath Davenport
Secretary	Vacant / Interim
Service Officer	Joyce Damon
Events Officer	Tony Alger
Recruiting / Villages	Tony Alger
Recruiting / Ocala	Tig Blackman
Canopy Editor	Ron Dahlgren

Upcoming Events and Historical Notes

September 12 @ 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting	VFW Post 8083
October 10 @ 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting	VFW Post 8083
November 11	Veterans Day	Nationwide

From the Editor



This month we explore the way drone warfare is unfolding in the battlefield of today. It's a nightmare landscape out there. The videos coming out of Ukraine are shocking to watch. I hope that The Canopy's readers can stay up to date on how warfare is evolving under ubiquitous surveillance and cheap explosive drones. It's not like anything seen on the Earth before, but I fear it will be the new normal for how combat gets done from now on.

This month's cover comes from Capt. Jennifer French, 173rd Airborne Brigade. Taken December 1, 2025.

Airborne! All The Way!

Ron Dahlgren

Editor, The Canopy

<https://www.the-canopy.org>

10 Most Recent Canopy Boosters – Thank you for your support!

Galen Mitchell
John Kinney
Thurston Helmes
Ken & Linda Hall
Jerry & Robby Brust

Heath Davenport
Christopher Adams
Nick Harty
Regis Rossa
Darla & Jay Tatman

12 Months in the Middle East

By Ron Dahlgren



U.S. Army paratroopers load a 155mm artillery round into an M777 howitzer.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Central

FORT BRAGG, North Carolina — The letter arrived on families' doorsteps late August. Division commander Maj. Gen. Brandon Tegtmeier signed it on Sunday, August 30. It confirmed the war with Iran is entering its seventh month, a timeline that has stretched beyond initial expectations. The conflict crossed the six-month mark in late August, signaling a shift from a short crisis to a prolonged campaign.

The Army confirmed the authenticity of the letter regarding the deployment extension. Col. Allie Scott said writing letters to an internal, private audience is a regular means of communication between commanders and families. "Writing letters to an internal, private audience is a regular and expected means of communication between commanders and families," Scott said.

Why the extension. Operational requirements keep the division forward for a full year. Tegtmeier wrote that the decision weighs heavily on every household, including their own. "We do not share that lightly, and we understand that a longer tour weighs heavily on every household, including our own," Tegtmeier wrote.

The deployment began in March. About 2,000 paratroopers received written orders. They came from the Immediate Response Force, a quick-reaction brigade of 3,000 soldiers designed to mobilize anywhere in the world in 18 hours. This capability defines the unit.

This quick-reaction brigade mobilizes worldwide in 18

hours. They joined roughly 50,000 U.S. troops already in the region.

The force on the ground. The contingent included two battalions of roughly 800 soldiers each. The division's commander, Maj. Gen. Brandon Tegtmeier, and supporting staff were included in the order.

They were expected to be positioned within striking distance of Iran. One possible operation involved seizing Kharg Island. Kharg Island handles 90% of Iranian oil exports. Experts say the force size is not sufficient for a major invasion or to hold a single city. "That force is not sufficient for a major invasion nor to hold a single city," Plitsas said.

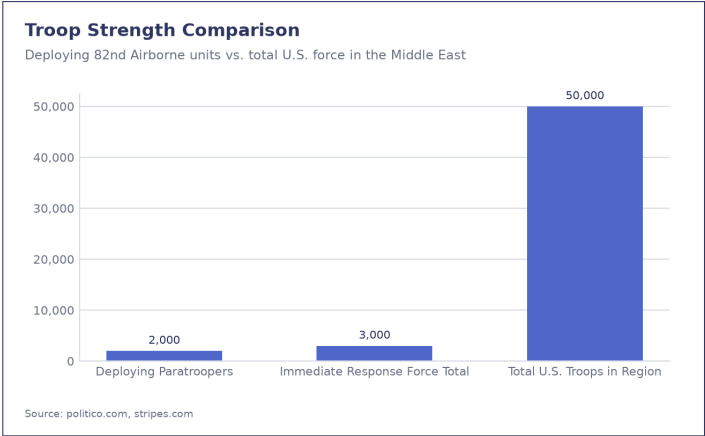
The cost. The conflict has claimed 18 U.S. service members. Over 750 were wounded in action. CENTCOM reported they "destroyed more than 9,000 military targets" since February. The U.S. already has 50,000 troops operating in the area. The Pentagon confirmed these strikes began on February 28.

Specific units remain forward for twelve total months. Division Headquarters, DIVARTY, ADSB, 3-4 ADA, and 307th Division Engineer Battalion are included. Paratroopers with the 1st Brigade and Combat Aviation Brigade serve up to twelve months. Col. Allie Scott confirmed the letter was authentic.

In 2022, elements of the brigade mobilized as a precaution to Europe. The brigade also assisted in the evacuation of U.S. Embassy personnel in Kabul. The 82nd Airborne Division is

the Army’s ONLY Airborne Division. They specialize in joint forcible entry operations. As the only conventional force who can deploy a Brigade Combat Team in 96 hours, the Nation expects us to be ready.

U.S. and Israeli airstrikes began on February 28. President Trump pushed back threatened attacks due to productive talks. Tehran has denied any direct talks. The conflict crossed the six-month mark in late August. For the paratroopers reading these pages, that readiness standard will sound familiar. It is the job to be ready when the phone rings.



The 2,000 paratroopers deploying from the Immediate Response Force represent a fraction of the 50,000 U.S. troops already operating in the region.

Chart: The Canopy; data from politico.com, stripes.com

Staying Alive on Foot

By Ron Dahlgren



An illustration of a small infantry team using spider holes for cover.

Image generated with seedream-5-0-lite

The New Reality

If you've ever been sweating in a harness waiting for a green light, you know the feeling of exposure. You trust your chute. You trust your stick. In Ukraine, that trust is a liability. The sky is no longer just a route to the drop zone; it is a camera lens pointed directly at you. After-action reports from the front lines show stark changes to dismounted infantry survival. What we learned in the 82nd decades ago is being tested against a new kind of transparency.

The battlefield has become a transparent space. Drones operate down to the squad and fire team levels on both sides. They don't just watch; they call in fires within minutes of spotting a target. Unmanned aerial systems accounted for 60 to 80 percent of all combat casualties in the conflict in 2025. If you can be seen, you can be hit. If you can be hit, you can be killed.

General William E. DePuy made that famous statement in 1974. Back then, reconnaissance capabilities were still in their infancy. Today, the sensors are everywhere. The Russian forces learned this the hard way during their initial invasion. Mechanized infantry did not dismount and were cut down in their vehicles or while dismounting under ambush conditions. They lost thousands of tanks and armored vehicles. The losses account for the largest armored vehicle losses Russia has suffered since World War II.

The Transparent Battlefield



Soldiers rapidly dismantle a vulnerable command post to evade drone detection.

Image generated with seedream-5-0-lite

So how do you survive when the sky is full of eyes? You break up. You get small. Russian forces adapted to drone warfare in 2025 by reducing assault groups to four to six soldiers. These groups practice close combat in confined spaces like trenches and buildings. They approach strongpoints and clear them room by

room. There is no ideal assault. Every trench and settlement has its own differences.

This sounds like urban clearing, but the stakes are higher now. The fighters have to act quickly, harmoniously and carefully. They use spider holes for rapid disappearance. They move in short nocturnal bounds of 200 to 400 meters. Thermal camouflage nets have become standard equipment down to the squad level. It is a return to the storm group tactics of World War I, but with modern eyes watching every move.

Command posts are not safe either. Contemporary tented command posts are easily targetable to even the untrained eye. They have radio frequency emitting antennas and dozens of generators. Western command posts have significant challenges with survivability. Even where efforts have been made to improve mobility, the inability to hide multispectral signatures negates any benefit. Field Manual 3-0 codifies a departure from legacy foundations for command posts. Convergence is now an outcome created by the concerted employment of capabilities from multiple domains. Endurance is the ability to persevere over time throughout the depth of an operational environment. You cannot converge or endure if you are sitting in a tent that shows up on a drone feed. The old way of digging a hole and setting up comms is a graveyard.

Small Groups, Big Risks

Another major gap is smoke. Two types of offensive operations have shown a lack of obscuration capability in the Russian and Ukrainian armies. This obscuration gap resulted in debilitating casualties. The Ukrainians did not employ vast quantities of smoke or white phosphorus to blind Russian defenders. It cost lives in the breach. Over the last few decades, the Army has divested obscuration capabilities. We lost the Chemical Corps organizations and smoke platoons.

At the platoon level, obscurants include hand-employed smoke grenades. At the company level, you add mortar white phosphorus rounds. But at the brigade level, cannon artillery smoke rounds compete for high explosive missions. Individual vehicle systems use an obscurant smoke system that only screens a single vehicle. In a war where a few minutes of exposure can mean death, this is a critical shortfall. You need to blind the sensors before you move.

The Obscurant Gap



Paratroopers dispersed across a field to evade modern aerial

surveillance.

Image generated with seedream-5.0-lite

Ukrainian forces have had to adapt their doctrine to survive. The Armed Forces of Ukraine deliberately diverged from U.S. Army doctrine to achieve battlefield success against a superior enemy. U.S. Army doctrine directs mounted infantry squads to dismount at the last covered position before an assault. The AFU commonly dismounts infantry at greater distances from the objective. They use the Bradley Fighting Vehicle as a fire support platform. They anticipate anti-armor threats.

One gunner told Line of Departure that the enemy's anti-tank teams tried to neutralize them, but the Bradley's speed and firepower gave them the edge. They could respond before the teams could strike. Another soldier said the Bradley took multiple hits, but the crew survived. They managed to withdraw while continuing to fire. It saved his life. Knowing you have a vehicle that can withstand RPG hits and keep moving changes everything. It allows you to push forward with confidence.

They also use the vehicle to set traps. A platoon leader described setting up along a tree line, waiting for a Russian convoy to enter their kill zone. The M3s opened fire with 25mm bushmaster cannons and TOW missiles. They knocked out the lead and rear vehicles, trapping the convoy. They then dismounted and finished the rest with anti-tank guided missiles and small arms. It is a textbook ambush, but executed with the urgency of a live fire exercise.

This is not just about tactics; it is about the nature of the fight. The historical character of operations has evolved along two main lines: lateral extension across a front, and distribution in depth. Soviet military theorist Georgii Isserson wrote that. Attackers are forced into costly breakthrough operations similar to World War I. Modern means of suppression make it possible to achieve a simultaneous attack and destruction of the entire depth of the tactical deployment.

Soviet theorists determined that strategic success could only be achieved through a cumulative effect of multiple successive operations. You cannot destroy an enemy army by a single blow. Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky wrote that the impossibility in the presence of modern wide fronts to destroy an enemy army by a single blow compels us to achieve this by a series of successive operations. This is the reality of the grinding war of attrition. It is not a blitzkrieg. It is a series of small, bloody steps.

There is a lesson here for paratroopers. We are trained to jump behind enemy lines and disrupt the rear. But the rear is no longer safe. The sheer density of drones operating in the air littoral has created a transparent battlefield. The level of transparency is near absolute along the front. It is hard not to imagine the similarities between Soviet depictions of future war during the 1980s and the current character of the fighting in Ukraine.

Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov envisioned a future war being fought with precision-guided munitions and reconnaissance drones by 1986. He was right. But the solution was not mass. It was dispersion. One of the main problems currently facing both Russia and Ukraine is how to establish the necessary correlation of forces. Both require mass and a concentration of forces, all the while being forced to disperse to great depths. It is a paradox. You need mass to win, but mass gets you killed.

Infiltrations allow light infantry formations to use restrictive terrain as an advantage. In Ukraine, advancements in unmanned aerial systems have made larger scale maneuver untenable for long durations. Units in the U.S. Army seldom conduct a textbook infiltration during combat training center rotations. They prefer envelopment or frontal attack. But in this environment, the infiltration is the only way to survive. It is a march technique used well before encountering enemy forces to avoid information

collection assets.

Lessons from Poland

The 82nd Airborne Division knows a thing or two about operating in difficult environments. Several thousand paratroopers were deployed to Poland in February 2022. We were there to reassure our NATO allies, deter any potential aggression against NATO's eastern flank, train with host-nation forces, and contribute to a wide range of contingencies. It had been over seventy-five years since a paratrooper from the division set foot on Europe during such tension.

We arrived with limited equipment. One infantry battalion deployed with just four tricon containers of equipment. That is only four containers for an entire battalion of over 550 paratroopers. Companies across the brigade had on average a third of their authorized quantity of rolling stock equipment. We had to fight with what we had. Forward support companies were called fight-

ing support companies because they provided firepower in addition to logistics. We repaired damaged howitzers in the field.

That spirit is what matters. It is being able to fight or accomplish the mission with our teammates even if they speak something else or wear a different uniform. The technology changes. The drones change. The weapons change. But the need for small unit leadership and discipline remains. When the green light comes on, you go. You trust your stick. You trust your jumpmaster. And you trust the training that got you to the door.

If you've jumped in the dark, you know that final standard. It is the same one we hold ourselves to, every time we stand up and answer the call. The battlefield may be transparent, but the mission is clear. Come out and watch our chapter jump. See the discipline in action. See the trust in the stick. All the Way!

**Sources include reporting from Line of Departure, Small Wars Journal, and official Army publications. Casualty figures reflect open-source estimates through late 2025.*

The Gold Falcons

Airborne Notes



M113 armored personnel carriers on a road in Panama during Operation Just Cause, December 1989. Photo courtesy of the South Carolina Army National

Guard

The Clock Starts

For the paratroopers reading these pages, December 1989 sounds familiar. It was the kind of alert that makes you check your gear twice. The Division Ready Force-1 status required all personnel to be on a two-hour recall alert for three weeks. Major General James H. Johnson, Jr. assumed command of the 82nd Airborne Division in October 1988. By the time the order came, the division was ready to move. The clock starts ticking, and you don't stop until you're wheels up.

The 82nd Airborne Division can rapidly deploy within 18 hours of notification. This is the N-hour sequence. Captain David D. Hollands, commander of Alpha Battery, 3rd of the 319th Field Artillery, explained the rhythm. "N-hour sequence is the eighteen-hour cycle the division uses from notification until it wheels up on the first aircraft." It was a standard drilled into every soldier. You show up, you check your ruck, and you wait for the word.

Before the jump, there was the cover. On December 20, 1989, the unit was initially told they were participating in an Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise. "And all's that he could say is that we were going to do an EDRE, that we would be jumping on post, and to prepare people for that," Hollands re-

called. The notification to deploy came at the Personnel Holding Area at approximately N-plus-4 hours. Hollands hit the area at about 1:00 o'clock and told the troops exactly what was going on. He called a bunch of guys and said that they were deploying to Panama.

Lineage of the Falcons

The Gold Falcons trace their roots back further than the 1980s. The 325th Infantry Regiment was activated in the National Army on 25 August 1917. It was part of the 82nd Division from the start. Under the command of Colonel Walter M. Whitman, the regiment trained at Camp Gordon, Georgia. It was a long road from the mud of France to the jungle of Panama.

World War II changed the nature of the unit. In August 1942, the regiment was redesignated the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment. The 325th Glider Infantry Regiment arrived in Normandy by glider on 7 June 1944 to serve as a division reserve. Private First Class Charles N. DeGlopper earned the regiment's first and only Medal of Honor of World War II on 9 June 1944. The nickname Falcons stuck with the regiment through the decades.

By the mid-1980s, the battalion structure shifted. In June 1986, the 1-509th based in Vicenza, Italy was re-flagged as the

4-325 Airborne Battalion Combat Team. The 4-325 began to rotate to Fort Bragg, NC in June 1986. The 4th Battalion, 325th Infantry Regiment replaced the 509th Infantry Regiment as part of the 82nd Airborne Division. It was a new chapter for the old regiment.

Just Cause

The mission was clear. The 82d Airborne Division's primary mission was to prevent Panamanian Defense Force reinforcement of the International Airport or Panama City and deny P.D.F. escape into the interior. The three major P.D.F. garrisons in the 82d Airborne Division's area of operations were Panama Viejo, Tinajitas, and Fort Cimarron. At the time of deployment from Fort Bragg, the priority order of execution for the three targets was Panama Viejo, Tinajitas, and Fort Cimarron. And that's the order in which we executed them.

Preparation was intense. The unit underwent a division operational readiness survey and achieved a perfect score with no faults in vehicles, communications, howitzers, or weapons. The equipment was serviceable and ready to go. The average ruck weight for troopers in the battery was between 55 and 60 pounds. "Oh, I guess most of the troopers carried about fifty-five pounds, sixty pounds." Officers jumped with their own radios to ensure communication capability upon landing. "All officers jump their radios into combat," Hollands said. He noted there was no sense in jumping in without the ability to communicate if the RTO landed elsewhere.

There was a catch. Captain Hollands culled 12 soldiers from the battery's deployment roster because the unit was only allocated 48 parachutes for 60 soldiers. "After all the haggling between the branches, we were allocated forty-eight parachutes." So he had to cull twelve more soldiers. The criteria for culling soldiers included those with new babies, soldiers with less than 30-45 days remaining in their service, and inexperienced troops. It was a hard choice, but the mission came first.

The jump itself was a night operation. "I think 2:10 was the first 82d drop." The plan was for 2/504 to go to Panama Viejo, followed by 1/504 into Tinajitas, followed by 4/325 into Fort Cimarron. The 4-325th executed the drop at Torrijos International Airport. "I landed I estimate about two kilometers to the east of the runway is where I went in." It took him three hours to make his way through the swamp and the elephant grass to get to the air strip itself.

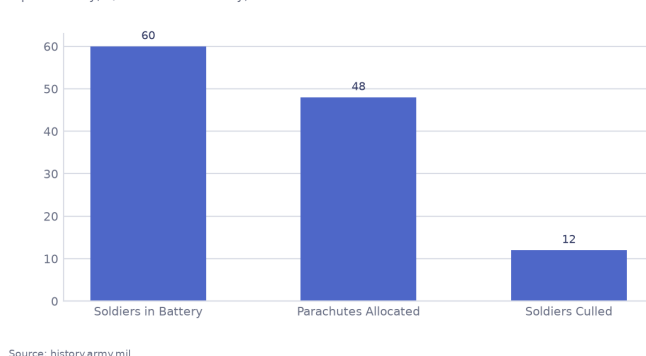
The ground was tough. "The problem was, of course, that after fifty feet east of the runway where it was fairly hard... you got into some real tall elephant grass." The 4th Battalion replaced the 509th Infantry Regiment as part of the 82nd Airborne Division. Terrain made movement difficult, with swamps and holes just at the fence.

Once on the ground, the fight continued. "We accomplished our mission without anybody really being seriously wounded, other than our lieutenant's getting shot." There were heat casualties. "I'd say that at one time there was maybe six guys having IVs administered to them." One severe case involved a PFC who had cold weather gear on. "Well, we did have one severe case where there was a PFC there, and he had some cold weather gear on." At one point, they said he stopped breathing.

The troopers were tired but focused. "I think everybody had three prayers. I prayed that I'd get out the door, prayed I'd hit the ground, and prayed I'd get to the assembly point. Once you made it through that, all of your prayers have been answered."

Parachute Allocation Shortfall

Alpha Battery, 3/319th Field Artillery, December 1989



Due to a shortage of parachutes, 12 soldiers were culled from a battery of 60.

Chart: The Canopy; data from history.army.mil

The Standard

The 82nd Airborne Division is the Army's ONLY Airborne Division. It is the primary fighting arm of the XVIII Airborne Corps. The performance of the 1st Battalion of the 504th Infantry at Tinajitas was notable. "I'm really proud of the performance of the 1st Battalion of the 504th Infantry at Tinajitas, because they went into a pretty hot situation, dealt with it, and accomplished their mission as quickly as one could possibly hope for." The Gold Falcons maintained the standard. They were ready. "To the guys, you know, it means they're that much closer to going to war, as we did."

For the chapter members who served in the 1970s and 1980s, this history is part of the legacy. The 4-325th was a critical rapid-reaction force within the 82nd Airborne Division. They deployed to the Persian Gulf in 1990. They participated in subsequent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The standard is still the standard. When it turns green, you go.

Sources include U.S. Army Center of Military History interviews (JCIT) and official division records.

Support The Canopy

Your booster donations help to cover expenses related to reporting and publication. Your \$25 covers a month of website hosting, or a half-tank of gas, or a day's worth of meals on the road, or 20% of a hotel stay. Please consider sending a donation to:

\$25/month Donation



THE CANOPY

c/o SWGY, Inc.
Box 1324
Minneola, FL 34755-1324

\$2.50/month Donation



THE CANOPY

c/o SWGY, Inc.

Box 1324

Minneola, FL 34755-1324

