

Uganda

First Natural Fire

10 flights arrive in Uganda

- US Army Africa - 091011



CAPTION: Capt. Will Kraus, 36, of Kansas City, Mo., serves as a battle captain for the 11th Aviation Command helicopter unit supporting Natural Fire 10 in Uganda. Photo by Rick Scavetta, U.S. Army Africa

Uganda, Oct 12, 2009 - CH-47 Chinook helicopters will play a key role in airlifting supplies and troops around Uganda in preparation for the upcoming military exercise Natural Fire 10, according to a U.S. soldier supporting the exercise.

U.S. Army Sergeant Major Kellyjack Luman relied upon the helicopters, from the U.S. Army Reserve's 11th Aviation Command, to check on the progress of operations in Kitgum, Uganda, in October 2009, just days before the kickoff of Natural Fire, a humanitarian assistance and disaster response exercise co-led by U.S. Army Africa and the East African Community (EAC) Armed Forces. U.S. Army Africa is a component of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

The flight was a first of many for the Chinook aviators, who will airlift supplies and troops around Uganda.

"It's a really long drive from our headquarters here in Entebbe to Kitgum - we're talking roughly an eight hour drive," Luman said. "We'll move more than 500 people both up there and back, plus supplies vital for life support during the exercise."

Operating in Africa is an extreme effort for a U.S. Army Reserve aviation unit to undertake, said Major Doyle Riley, Company D, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment.

"From dismantling the aircraft in Kansas to transporting our helicopters and gear aboard a Russian aircraft to Africa, then rebuilding the Chinooks at Entebbe airfield and beginning operations a week ahead of schedule -- those were monumental tasks we accomplished," Riley said.

In the cockpit, Riley and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Ron Erkie piloted the mammoth two-rotor helicopter through the Ugandan skies. Nearby, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dwayne McQuade and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jim Hand flew their sister ship alongside, carrying a group of aviators who were learning the air routes North from Entebbe.

Luman and Colonel Eric Nantz, U.S. Army Africa's operations officer, led a site survey team to Kitgum to check on construction of a camp that will house soldiers from Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, and the United States during the exercise. The team also inspected the forward area refueling point, known to aviators as a FARP, where they will land during operations to take on fuel.

"Getting the aircraft here, ready to go early, assisted U.S. Army Africa staff greatly, allowing us to check out the areas where our Soldiers will live and work," Luman said. "Without the 11th Aviation, it would have taken two days out of our time to drive there and back."

Source: [U.S. Army Africa](#)



ENTEBBE, Uganda - A CH-47 Chinook helicopter takes off from Entebbe, Uganda en route to Kitgum, the location of exercise Natural Fire, October 2009. The flight was a first of many for the Chinook aviators, who will airlift supplies and troops around Uganda during the exercise, which focuses on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Natural Fire 10 is co-led by U.S. Army Africa and the East

African Community (EAC) Armed Forces.
(Photo by Rick Scavetta, U.S. Army Africa)