Press Release

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10th Combat Aviation Brigade’s Task Force Dragon earns best overall Army aviation battalion award

The 10th Combat Aviation Brigade’s 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment (Task Force Dragon) earned the distinction as the Army’s top aviation battalion with the presentation of the 2020 Lt. Gen. Ellis D. Parker award June 15 at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield.

Col. Travis McIntosh, 10th CAB commander, welcomed senior leaders, colleagues and invited guests at the awards ceremony to recognize the Soldiers deserving of this accolade.

“Welcome to Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield, home of the world’s premier Army aviation brigade,” he said. “We are glad to host this ceremony and happy that we get to show off the Army’s best aviation battalion of 2020. These Soldiers’ dedication to service, tactical and technical proficiency and genuine professionalism has earned them the distinction of the Ellis D. Parker Outstanding Aviation Unit of the Year Award.”

The award acknowledges the battalion’s accomplishments during a 10-month deployment to Afghanistan as Task Force Dragon, which also included Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, and six National Guard units.

Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence commander and former 10th CAB commander, presented the award to the battalion.

“The 10th Mountain Division leadership should be very proud for this recognition, especially given the size and scope of the mission that Task Force Dragon had,” he said. “I know firsthand the rich tradition and history of this brigade, and it is an honor to be here.”

The Ellis D. Parker award is a multi-component Department of the Army-level award that recognizes excellence at the battalion level – the primary warfighting Army Aviation force. It is presented annually to the best combat, top combat support, combat service support and table of distribution and allowances battalions, before selecting the best overall aviation battalion.

“This award looks at leadership, training, maintenance and safety in competing units across the aviation enterprise,” Francis said. “The review panel looks at each unit by category and then selects the organization that is clearly above the rest as an overall selection. It is clear to me why you won, not just the combat unit of the year, but the overall award for aviation excellence.”

Task Force Dragon is credited with maintaining 24-hour combat operations in support of 15 combat and advisory units across 10 provinces in Afghanistan. The Soldiers executed 100 engagements and 150 air assaults, and flew more than 13,000 hours. Task Force Dragon operated 58 aircraft on seven different bases to meet the demanding day-to-day operations.

Francis said that the task force rotation included a challenging mission set that involved a reduction-of-violence campaign, peace treaty initiatives and a local pandemic.

“In addition to a living, thinking enemy, you had to deal with COVID-19 considerations during the second half of the deployment,” he said.

Beyond these accomplishments, Francis said that the unit training leading up to deployment had to be relevant, rigorous and comprehensive for them to be successful.

“The train-up for this deployment with a culture of risk mitigation, not risk aversion, was continually promoted by the chain of command,” Francis said. “As a result, you experienced zero aviation Class A or Class B incidents across the entire task force.”

Maj. Kyle Maki, 10th CAB operations officer, served as Task Force Dragon executive officer. He remarked how the ceremony felt like a reunion after seeing Soldiers from Pennsylvania and Connecticut National Guard in their formation.

“It was absolutely awesome to have a ceremony like this where we could thank them and shake their hands one last time, because we parted ways a little while ago,” he said.

Maki said that the operational tempo of the deployment was non-stop mission support, but the Soldiers of Task Force Dragon remained positive throughout.

“Nobody ever said ‘no,’ and I think that was one of the cool things about the deployment,” he said. “Everybody got together, pulled through missions and we brought everybody back home.”

Photos from the award ceremony are available at [www.flickr.com/photos/drum10thmountain/albums](http://www.flickr.com/photos/drum10thmountain/albums). The ceremony was livestreamed and is available at [www.facebook.com/10thCAB/](http://www.facebook.com/10thCAB/).

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