



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2023

November 21, 2010

*517th Parachute Infantry Regiment
460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

Website
Mail Call
Mail Call Archives
Roster

www.517prct.org
MailCall@517prct.org
www.517prct.org/archives
www.517prct.org/roster.pdf

Society of the Honor Guard - Tomb of the Unknown Soldier



Frequently Asked Questions about the Honor Guard:

From <http://www.tombguard.org/FAQ.html>

How does the Guard rotation work? Is it an 8 hour shift?

Currently, the Tomb Guards work on a three Relief (team) rotation - 24 hours on, 24 hours off, 24 hours on, 24 hours off, 24 hours on, 96 hours off. However, over the years it has been different. The time off isn't exactly free time. It takes the average Sentinel 8 hours to prep his/her uniform for the next work day. Additionally, they have Physical Training, Tomb Guard training, and haircuts to complete before the next work day.

How many steps does the Guard take during his walk across the Tomb of the Unknowns and why?

21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.

How long does the Sentinel hesitate after his about face to begin his return walk and does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time, and if not, why not?

He does not execute an about face. He stops on the 21st step, then turns and faces the Tomb for 21 seconds. Then he turns to face back down the mat, changes his weapon to the outside shoulder, counts 21 seconds, then steps off for another 21 step walk down the mat. He

faces the Tomb at each end of the 21 step walk for 21 seconds. The Sentinel then repeats this over and over until he is relieved at the Guard Change.



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Why are his gloves wet?

His gloves are moistened to improve his grip on the rifle.

How often are the Guards changed?

The Guard is changed every thirty minutes during the summer (April 1 to Sep 30) and every hour during the winter (Oct 1 to Mar 31). During the hours the cemetery is closed, the guard is changed every 2 hours. The Tomb is guarded, and has been guarded, every minute of every day since 1937.

Is it true they must commit 2 years of life to guard the Tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives.

No, this is a false rumor. The average tour at the Tomb is about a year. There is NO set time for service there. The Sentinels live either in a barracks on Ft. Myer (the Army post located adjacent to the cemetery) or off base if they like. They do have living quarters under the steps of the amphitheater where they stay during their 24 hour shifts, but when they are off, they are off. And if they are of legal age, they may drink anything they like, except while on duty.

Is it true they cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives?

Again, another false rumor.

Is it true after two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as Guard of the Tomb, that there are only 400 presently worn, and that the Guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin?

The Tomb Guard Identification Badge is awarded after the Sentinel passes a series of tests. The Badge is permanently awarded after a Sentinel has served 9 months as a Sentinel at the Tomb. Over 500 have been awarded since its creation in the late 1950's. And while the Badge can be revoked, the offense must be such that it discredits the Tomb. Revocation is at the Regimental Commander's discretion. But you can drink a beer and even swear and still keep the Badge. The Badge is a full size award, worn on the right pocket of the uniform jacket, not a lapel pin.

Are the shoes specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet?

The shoes are standard issue military dress shoes. They are built up so the sole and heel are equal in height. This allows the Sentinel to stand so that his back is straight and perpendicular to the ground. A side effect of this is that the Sentinel can "roll" on the outside of the build up as he walks down the mat. This allows him to move in a fluid fashion. If he does this correctly, his hat and bayonet will appear to not "bob" up and down with each step. It gives him a more formal and smooth look to his walk, rather than a "marching" appearance.

The soles have a steel tip on the toe and a "horseshoe" steel plate on the heel. This prevents wear on the sole and allows the Sentinel to move smoothly during his movements when he turns to face the Tomb and then back down the mat.

Then there is the "clicker". It is a shank of steel attached to the inside of the face of the heel build-up on each shoe. It allows the Sentinel to click his heels during certain movements. If a guard change is really hot, it is called a "smoker" because all the heel clicks fall together and sound like one click. In fact, the guard change is occasionally done in the "silent" mode (as a sign of devotion to the Unknowns"). No voice commands - every thing is done in relation to the heel clicks and on specific counts. How many times will a Soldier be on duty during the shift?

Each Relief (team) has a rotation during the 24 hour work day. This rotation is dependent on the number of Soldier-Sentinels who are proficient enough to guard the Tomb. The standard is 3-4 qualified Sentinels, 1-2 Relief Commander/Assistant Relief Commander, and 1-2 Sentinels in training. Generally, the Sentinel will be on guard duty for a tour and have two tours off in between - then go out for another tour. However, in extreme cases, Sentinels have been known to go back-to-back for the entire 24 hour shift.

How do the Soldiers get to and from the quarters without being seen?



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Most wear civilian clothes - although the short, tight haircuts tend to give us away.

There is a small green shack next to the Tomb. What is it for?

"The Box" is used primarily during wreath-laying ceremonies for the Sentinel to retreat to while flowers and Taps are being presented. There also is a phone with a direct line downstairs to the Tomb Guard Quarters - this is used in times of emergencies or just to notify the next shift of something.

Has anyone ever tried to get past the Tomb guards, or attempted to deface the Tomb?

Yes, that is the reason why we now guard the Tomb. Back in the early 1920's, we didn't have guards and the Tomb looked much different (see attached picture). People often came to the cemetery in those days for picnics during which time some would actually use the Tomb as a picnic area (probably because of the view). Soon after, 1925, they posted a civilian guard; in 1926, a military guard was posted during cemetery hours; and on July 1, 1937, this was expanded to the 24-hour watch. Since then, the ceremony has developed throughout the years to what we have today. Today, most of the challenges faced by the Sentinels are tourists who want to get a better picture or uncontrolled children (which generally is very frightening for the parent when the Soldier challenges the child).



What happened to the soldier that was in the Tomb from the Vietnam War?

The remains of the Vietnam Unknown Soldier were exhumed May 14, 1998. Based on mitochondrial DNA testing, DoD scientists identified the remains as those of Air Force 1st Lt. Michael Joseph Blassie, who was shot down near An Loc, Vietnam, in 1972. It has been decided that the crypt that contained the remains of the Vietnam Unknown will remain vacant.

What is it like to guard in bad weather?

The guards at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (we call ourselves "Sentinels") are completely dedicated to their duty of guarding the Tomb. Because of that dedication, the weather does not bother them. In fact, they consider it an honor to stand their watch (we call it "walking the mat"), regardless of the weather. It gets cold, it gets hot - but the Sentinels never budge. And they never allow any feeling of cold or heat to be seen by anyone.

Do you guard in a blizzard or a bad thunderstorm?

YES, BUT the accomplishment of the mission and welfare of the Soldier is never put at risk. The Tomb Guards have contingencies that are ready to be executed IF the weather conditions EVER place the Soldiers at risk of injury or death – such as lightning, high winds, etc. This ensures that Sentinels can maintain the Tomb Guard responsibilities while ensuring soldier safety. It is the responsibility of the Chain of Command from the Sergeant of the Guard to the Regimental Commander to ensure mission accomplishment and soldier welfare at all times.

It was erroneously reported that during Hurricane Isabel, the Sentinels were ordered to abandon their posts for shelter and that they refused. No such order was ever given. All proper precautions were taken to ensure the safety of the Sentinels while accomplishing their mission. Risk assessments are constantly conducted by the Chain of Command during changing conditions to ensure that soldier welfare is maintained during mission accomplishment.

Do you guard all night long, even when the cemetery is closed?

The Tomb is guarded 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In fact, there has been a Sentinel on duty in front of the Tomb every minute of every day since 1937. And the Sentinel does not change the way he guards the Tomb, even at night when there is no one around. The Sentinels do this because they feel that the Unknown Soldiers who are buried in the Tomb deserve the very best they have to give.

How many Sentinels have been female?

There have been 3 female Sentinels.



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Corbin Zickefoose, HQ 1st Bn

To the men of the 517th:

My father Corbin Zickefoose HQ 1st Bn. Passed away today 15 Nov. 2010 at 0230. He was in the VA nursing facility at Clarksburg WV.

Dad was 87 years old. On 13 Oct. he was admitted to the VA hospital with pneumonia in both lungs. On 15 Oct. he had a heart attack and the doctors said it was not survivable, a week later he was setting up in bed eating and they moved him from ICU to a regular floor. Two days later he had another massive heart attack. They moved him into a hospice room and told the family to say goodbye. The next afternoon he was setting up in bed stretching and touching his toes. The doctors didn't know what to think. Two days later they moved him back to his room in the nursing facility.

I believe dad just didn't know how to give up. "Quit", "Give up", "Stop fighting", were just not options. He wouldn't know how. He maintained his Airborne determination his whole life. His heart was at 25% but wouldn't quit, his kidneys were at 22% and wouldn't quit, his lungs were shot, but he kept going.

Finally the Lord said, "Well done trooper, but it's time to come home!"

It wasn't till much later in his life that dad would talk about the war. I cannot put into words the pride dad held in being a trooper in the 517th. He spoke of the unbelievable quality of the men he served with. The 517th was always a part of dad's life that he absolutely cherished.

Please think of dad, and ask the Lord to give my mother and the family the strength to get through this great loss.

God Bless the men of 517th RCT !
AIRBORNE !

Larry Zickefoose

<http://www.polingstclair.com/ZickefooseCorbin.html>





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Morning Reports

Bob:

I know some time ago there was some discussion about the morning and casualty reports being reconstructed and published for E Co and many others. Was there ever any headway made as I've noticed recently H Co's were addressed in the last mail call.

Don Sliker

Bob - I hope this finds you well. I went through the H Co reports and wondered if there are plans to put E Co's morning reports up as well? If help is needed, I'll be happy to help. Just let me know. Thanks!

Mark Landreth

Subject: Morning reports

... I've had a daughter working to put the morning reports in a PDF format. This format helps to be able to read some of the microfiche that are hard to read. Wish I'd have done this when I did H Co. I am going back over my list and using the PDF formats to see if I can clarify some of the areas I had a hard time reading. Hope to have all of them by the first of the year. What a TREASURE of historical information for the 517th; much of the Who, What, When and Where but lacking a bit on the How.

Rhonda and Mike Wells

Mike,

I don't remember the details. Did you get the morning reports from Joanne? I know she had a couple of stacks of reports, and I don't know if they all ended up in the same place.

Bob Barrett

RE: Morning Reports

Yes, Joanne brought all that she had to the funeral in D.C.; Lory and I left a few things in D.C. to make room for the reports in our luggage! I have MR's for most all of the companies; some have more reports than others. Lory spent a few hours looking over the reports and found his dad on several of them.

My daughter has been putting them in PDF format; I had hoped to be able to scan/search the PDF format for names, etc., but that is not working out. But, with them in the PDF format, they are easier to read and it will facilitate "farming" them out to have folks input the information in the Excel Format that I've been using. I sent you a copy of the Excel spreadsheet for H Co. quite a while ago.

There are folks who have volunteered to assist with the spreadsheets for two other companies. I hope to find more people to assist as I'd like to have the project completed for the reunion. People who attend could



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then search the databases for names and find out more about the Trooper; if they are in any MR notation.

As my daughter gets a complete Company scanned, I'll put that out on MailCall and solicit assistance to put the data into the spreadsheets. Would you like me to send you the scanned PDF's to you also? These could be put on the Web Site and then the spreadsheets added as they are completed. I've attached some examples of H Co's PDF's for you to see what they look like. In this format, contrast can be adjusted to make a document easier to read.

Do you know if Don Sliker is looking for a specific Company? I could get the daughter to put that higher on the priority list.

Sample Morning Reports:

COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDING 2400 1 AUG 1944

STATION 9 MILES SE ROME ITALY

ORGANIZATION Co H 517th PRC 1st Inf

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
32460345	RODRIGUEZ, LUIS V	PVT	
MOS 745			
dy to sk in 9rs (ld)			
32530456	WATKINS, ELZA L	PVT	
MOS 745			
ARR in 9rs to dy			
31296639	FARIA, LOUIS A	Pfc	
MOS 675			
3270845	WHITFIELD, JACK B	PVT	
MOS 745			
ABOVE 2 EM dy to ATCHD TO Hq Co 3rd Bn for dy rat 9rs and adm.			
36184300	EINO, AHO	Pfc	
MOS 675			
33654467	FISHBACK, PHILIP F	Pfc	
MOS 945			
ABOVE 2 EM dy to D.S. ABTC APO 312 20 July 44			
32882114	CRAIG, ROBERT E	Pfc	
MOS 675			
dy to rd to Hq Co 3rd Bn this report			

OFFICER STRENGTH

FLD O & CAPT	1ST LT	2D LT	WO	PLT O	
PRES	ABST	PRES	ABST	PRES	ABST
		4		4	

ENLISTED MEN

PRESENT	ABSENT	PERMISS	NOT PRE SE	ABSENT	AND ABSENT
101	5	8			114

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MEN REQUIRED FOR DAY OF WEEK

DAY OF WEEK	ESTIMATED NUMBER	DATE
MONDAY	111	1 AUG 1944

MEAL ATTENDANCE FOR DAY OF THIS REPORT

BREAKFAST	DINNER	SUPPER	TOTAL	AVERAGE
3	3	3	9	3

MEN AUTHORIZED TO BE SEPARATELY

MEN ATCHD TO OTHER ORGN FOR RATIONS	MEN ATCHD FOR RATIONS O & OTHERS BEHELD	TOTAL
2	9	11

MEN PRESENT 111 **LESS** 2 **PLUS** 9 **TOTAL** 118

PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES

SIGNATURE: Harold D. Morris

W.D. A.R. FORM NO. 1 MARCH 29, 1943

COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDING 2400 1 AUG 1944

STATION 9 MILES SE ROME ITALY

ORGANIZATION Co H 517th PRC 1st Inf

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
17099664	ROBB, RICHARD B	PVT A	
MOS 745			
D.S. to ADTC APO 312 1850d to Co. dr Hq Co 3rd Bn this report			
Aptd SGT (MOS 814)			

OFFICER STRENGTH

FLD O & CAPT	1ST LT	2D LT	WO	PLT O	
PRES	ABST	PRES	ABST	PRES	ABST
		4		4	

ENLISTED MEN

PRESENT	ABSENT	PERMISS	NOT PRE SE	ABSENT	AND ABSENT
101	5	8			114

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MEN AUTHORIZED TO BE SEPARATELY

MEN ATCHD TO OTHER ORGN FOR RATIONS	MEN ATCHD FOR RATIONS O & OTHERS BEHELD	TOTAL
2	9	11

MEN PRESENT 111 **LESS** 2 **PLUS** 9 **TOTAL** 118

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SIGNATURE: Harold D. Morris

W.D. A.R. FORM NO. 1 MARCH 29, 1943



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COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDING 2400 17 Aug 44

STATION Les Acrees, France
ORGANIZATION Co H 517th Parach Inf

SERIAL NUMBER _____ NAME _____ GRADE _____ CODE _____

NO CHANGE

RECORDS OF EVENTS
97 KM 8 Officers for rations, Company remained in Les Acrees

OFFICER STRENGTH	PLD O & CAPT		1ST LT		2D LT		WO		PLT O	
	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT
ASSIGNED	1		4		2					
ATTACHED UNASSIGNED ATTACHED FE OTHER ORGN										
TOTAL	1		4		2					

AVN CADET & ENLISTED STRENGTH	AVIATION CADETS		ENLISTED MEN			
	PRESENT	ASSENT	PRESENT FOR DUTY	PRESENT NOT FOR DUTY	ASSENT	PRESENT BUT ASSENT
ASSIGNED			104	1	11	116
ATTACHED UNASSIGNED ATTACHED FE OTHER ORGN			4			4
TOTAL			108	1	11	120

R I ESTIMATED NUMBER OF / DAY OF WEEK RATIONS REQUIRED FOR / DATE NUMBER

T II RESS ATTENDANCE FOR DAY OF THIS REPORT TOTAL AVERAGE

O III MEN AUTHORIZED TO RESS SEPARATELY MEN ATCHD FOR RATIONS O & OTHERS RESSD TOTAL

S MEN PRESENT LESS PLUS

PAGE 1 OF 1 PAGES
SIGNATURE: E.H. SCHOFIELD GWO USA
WD COPY THRU WFO DO BCY

COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDING 2400 18 Aug 44

STATION Les Acrees, France
ORGANIZATION Co H 517th Parach Inf

SERIAL NUMBER _____ NAME _____ GRADE _____ CODE _____

NO CHANGE

RECORDS OF EVENTS
Company remained in Les Acrees

OFFICER STRENGTH	PLD O & CAPT		1ST LT		2D LT		WO		PLT O	
	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT	PRESEN	ASNT
ASSIGNED	1		4		2					
ATTACHED UNASSIGNED ATTACHED FE OTHER ORGN										
TOTAL	1		4		2					

AVN CADET & ENLISTED STRENGTH	AVIATION CADETS		ENLISTED MEN			
	PRESENT	ASSENT	PRESENT FOR DUTY	PRESENT NOT FOR DUTY	ASSENT	PRESENT BUT ASSENT
ASSIGNED			104	1	11	116
ATTACHED UNASSIGNED ATTACHED FE OTHER ORGN			4			4
TOTAL			108	1	11	120

R I ESTIMATED NUMBER OF / DAY OF WEEK RATIONS REQUIRED FOR / DATE NUMBER

T II RESS ATTENDANCE FOR DAY OF THIS REPORT TOTAL AVERAGE

O III MEN AUTHORIZED TO RESS SEPARATELY MEN ATCHD FOR RATIONS O & OTHERS RESSD TOTAL

S MEN PRESENT LESS PLUS

PAGE 1 OF 1 PAGES
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James Benson – 596 PCEC



We recently received a group of photos and letters home from the family of James W. Benson, including a [6-page letter recounting the drop into southern France.](#)

[See all the photos and letters here.](#)





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Guestbook

Submitted by	Comments:
Name: Dannie Perry From: rockville Indiana E-mail: dannieperry@att.net	<p>My brother James and I had been told that our fathers records perished in the fire of 1973 and March 2010 we found a copy of our father's seperation record at the Indina State Library Archive where he signed for the post discharge bonus and the lifetime hunting and fishing license, Floyd Russell Perry is listed as being with the 517th Hq Co 2nd Bn when he was injured in combat Jan 7th and again on the 14th of 1945 in Belgium. We found him on the '44 Christmas Roster and he is on the document authorizing the Combat Infantryman Badge General Order #22 signed/ordered by Gen. Graves 14 Nov 1944. We are having his record reconstructed and the Army put the burden of proof that he parachuted on 15 Aug 1944 in Operation Varsity into Southern France for the Invasion Arrowhead on his EAME Theatre award that has the silver Star for 5 campaigns. Can anyone help prove that he was there. He died in the indy VA hospital of a staph infection i July 1961 when I was 3 and my brother was born a month later so we only had rumours to go on. In Italy he was at Naples Rome and North Africa with the 1178th Infantry MPs befor showing up on the documents for the 2nd Bn Hq Co 517th.</p> <hr/> <p>Added: November 19, 2010</p>

MailCall News

I'm attaching a small photo of a lapel pin that was with other memorabilia of the 517th, but I don't see it included on the web site among photos of Insignia, patches, etc. There is one on eBay, but without identifying the unit. Can anyone tell me if this pin has any connection to the 517th?

Thank you,
Elaine Berger





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MailCall News (continued)

Dear Bob,

The PDF format looks and works great! I have been absent for too long and behind in my personal e-mails. I missed Howard's football message until today and worse yet, I missed his birthday.

Happy belated 90th, Mr. Hensleigh! You are a classy trooper and the pride of the Hawkeye Nation. Yes, Wisconsin is having a pretty fine season, but Iowa is a very good team, much better than their record, in my opinion.

Keep in mind that Wisconsin's coach played for Hayden Frye (Iowa) and coached at Iowa with Kirk Ferentz, AND he sports a Hawkeye tattoo on his leg. So the Iowa-Wisconsin connection is alive and well.

Howard, I hope you are feeling well and on the mend. I appreciate all you do for all of the descendants of the 517th.

Happy and safe holidays to the 517th family!

Regards,

Tom Reber
son of Lt. Bob Reber, HQ 3rd, Heavy Mortar Platoon

Dear Bob -

Since there may be a problem with transmissions from Helen's computer to yours I too am sending the information on the Kissimmee reunion which please, please, please, needs to go out in a special Mail Call, hopefully today, since time is growing short. I'm very concerned about people being able to make their airline reservations early enough to take advantage of special rates, and additionally, we will need to provide an advance to the Ramada on December 14th of 75% of the estimated charges, so we need to get those registration fees coming in.

As I look towards this reunion I have a catch in my throat thinking of the big space - we will all miss your dad so very much. Thank you for continuing Mail Call as you have. From its inception, which I know was in large measure due to you, it has functioned the as the primary connection and source of information for members of and supporters of the 517.

The documents I'm attaching are the registration form which people will be sending to me, and the information on reserving a room(s).

Thank you.
Brenda



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Kissimmee Mini-Reunion info

517th Annual Florida Mini-Reunion

January 15-17, 2011

Hosted by: Brenda Verbeck Mortensen and Helen Beddow

Location: Ramada Hotel and Inn Gateway

7470 Highway, 192 West

Kissimmee, Florida 34747

Tele: 1(800) 327-9170

web site: www.ramadagateway.com

For more information, please call
Brenda Verbeck Mortensen at (813) 335-8002 or
Helen Beddow at (912) 665-2766

Step 1: Hotel Information

Special hotel rates apply January 14 – 17

\$65.00 + Tax per night

For those that will be arriving on Friday, January 14, these rates will apply.

For room reservations: Call 800-327-9170

Daily between the hours of 9 am – 5pm EST

Identify yourself as attending the 517 Parachute 2011 Reunion

Step 2: Reunion Registration

Registration fees are \$45.00 per person which includes your banquet meal. For those that will be coming just for the banquet, your meal will be \$38.00 including tax and gratuity. Please send your [Registration form](#) and money to:

*Brenda Verbeck Mortensen
13046 Race Track Road #220
Tampa, FL 33626
(813) 335-8002*

Click here for the [Registration form](#)



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Administrivia

- If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/>
- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: MailCall@517prct.org
- If you send me email that you do not want included in MailCall, just label it as FYEO.
- I now understand how Ben could get confused about what he already posted and what he didn't. If I miss something, please just send it again.
- Donations for any programs involving the 517th should be sent to our treasurer:

Leo Dean
14 Stonehenge Lane
Albany, NY 12203

Save the date!

Annual 517th Reunion (probably the last one)

**July 13-18, 2011
Atlanta, GA**

with visits to Camp Toccoa and Fort Benning



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM