



Adam James Kreutter <[REDACTED]>

People Helping People

2 messages

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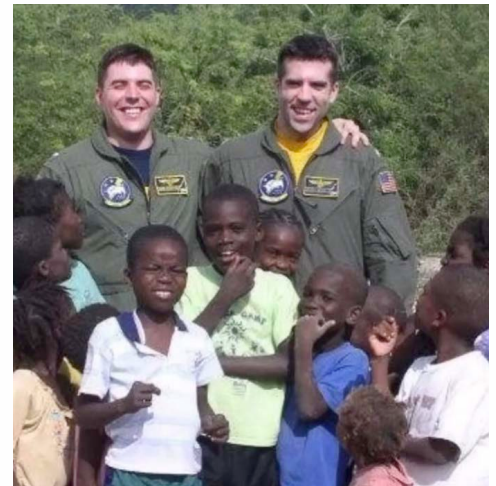
Thu, Jan 21, 2010 at 3:12 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Friends and Family,

I have enjoyed receiving all of your emails, they have kept me going. However, I have realized my dilemma: I love receiving emails, but I have to respond to everyone to receive more! This is my attempt to reopen the flood gates. I apologize for the impersonality (don't know if that's a word; help me out mom) of not responding to you all individually, but our detachment only has three computers and plenty of people that need to use them.

Let me first say that this has been one of the most (if not THE most) rewarding experiences of my life. The flying is incredible. I've never experienced such a dynamic flight regime. I never thought that I would learn so much and increase my skill as an aviator in such a short period of time. Up to this point, flying tactical formation on night vision goggles (NVD TACFORM) was the most challenging and exciting experience I had in a helicopter. However, the day we left, we flew NVD TACFORM to the USS Carl Vincent for SIX HOURS. Then, on Saturday, we flew Day TACFORM through the mountains of Haiti, landed on a pier, that was just wide enough, and deployed a Special Operations Force (SOF) team. Then we landed on a beach nearby (a Caribbean beach) hung out for 15 minutes and flew back. On the way back we were having some fun doing river runs and different mountain flying maneuvers, scaring a couple of the SOF team guys, and entertaining one of the Haitian civilian officials so much that he tried to give me a dollar as a tip. Every day I'm having to stay flexible, switching between landing on small deck ships, large deck ships, the Port Au Prince Airport, a variety of different LZs including soccer stadiums, golf course fairways, beaches, piers, the US Embassy and the front yard of the Presidential Palace (landed there twice today). There's a special way to get into and out of each one, and I'm pretty sure some of the maneuvers we've done haven't been written in any flying manuals.



On our first day flying missions in Haiti we tried landing in an LZ to drop off food and water. I was in the wing aircraft, just orbiting overhead to back up our lead aircraft. As they approached the first zone, a soccer stadium filled with makeshift tents, the crowd saw us approaching and cleared off half the field. Kids playing soccer stopped and started waving their hands over their heads. One guy came out into the middle of the field and started waving a big flag to signal us to land. Lead got close to landing, but had to abort because our rotor wash started blowing tents over. We went to another LZ close by, circled overhead a couple times, and lead went in for another approach. As he came in, I watched as thousands of Haitians, literally from as far away as I could see, began sprinting towards where they were about to land. It was surreal and horrifying, all in the same breath. By the time they got over the zone, they were only able to unload about half of the stuff before the LZ was saturated with desperate people (standing under the helicopter), arms outstretched, waiting for a box of food to fall into their hands. By the time lead flew out of the zone, and

the dust settled, there was nothing left but torn boxes and plastic.

In the past few days I've flown over 26 flight hours, performed 30 medevacs (medical evacuations), delivered over 500 cases of water and food, flown some reporters around, and undoubtedly changed the lives of thousands, including my own. It's been a "baptism by fire" experience for me. I've never flown so much and so hard in a week. My reason and motivation for flying my best has been because I have to. Many times there is very little room for error, and waveoffs aren't necessarily free. There is much more at stake than a grade card. There are lives in the balance.

(Jimmy you'll probably read this next paragraph and think "That's nothing," so feel free to skip it)

It can be quite exhausting. Yesterday I woke up at 4:30, briefed at 5, launched at 7:30 and didn't get out of the aircraft until 7 pm that night. It wouldn't have been so bad except we were supposed to be done at 5 pm, but we were halfway done with our shutdown checklist when tower tasked us to fly to an LZ on shore, pick up passengers and take them to a hospital ship, then RTB. I can't say I was happy when that tasking came over the radio. After we finished that, we landed again at 5:45 pm, and were about to shutdown our second engine when tower said "Wait! 76, don't disengage yet." As some of you are my family, I'll leave out what I said to your imagination. It had been a long day, but we still had to wait, strapped in, sitting on deck for 45 MINUTES before they decided to send our other squadron helo (who had also been flying all day) to pick up three more patients and take them to the hospital ship. That technically makes me the lucky one. I went straight to bed, woke up at 4:30 again, and flew for five more hours this morning.

We do, however, try to mix in some fun. Other than the fun flying, we try to keep everything else lighthearted. Today we landed in a valley where the UN had parachuted personnel and supplies. As we started to unload our cargo, I heard "Oh s*%#! Uh, we might have to lift up... We got a bull charging at us!" I look up and, sure enough, there's a bull charging at our helicopter (got right past the UN guards, way to go). We almost lifted up until a Haitian guy chased the bull off with a stick. We were laughing our asses off. One of our other crews flew Geraldo Rivera off the boat (when the captain decided it was time for him to leave), which was cool. We joke around a lot on the intercom because only the pilots and crewmen on our helo can hear it. When our crewmen get out at the airport, sometimes we'll send them to find hot reporters to take flying around with us. He'll walk up, stand behind them and say "how about this one?" It's also funny getting reports from the back of people hanging on for dear life because they're not used to flying in helicopters. Good times.

Anyway, many of you may have already stopped reading, so I'll cut it off here. Please feel free to forward this (more people to email me!), just don't let it get too far because there are some things here I obviously don't want to end up as a quote in a newspaper. DON'T POST ANY OF THIS ON FACEBOOK. That'd be very bad. Try to keep it one or two degrees of separation from me at the most.

I love you all. Please continue to write.

Live it, love it,
-Jason

 **smime.p7s**
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