

Hello from Fort Campbell, fellow Spaders!

Similar to Blue Spaders assigned to the 1st Expeditionary Division in Europe during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, Spaders today must be trained and ready, while safeguarding soldiers during a pandemic. It is a privilege to witness firsthand (and virtually!) the ingenuity and dedication of our team as we developed new ways to maintain readiness.

The challenges of the COVID environment provided opportunities for innovative training and professional development. The battalion conducted a virtual learning professional development (LPD) series to learn from each other about the longest conflict in US history – Afghanistan, and hosted two book discussions with the authors. CSM (R) Matt Bartel visited the footprint with copies of Bill 'Doc' Strusinski's book "Care Under Fire," which details his account of life-saving actions, race relations and camaraderie, and the Blue Spader legacy during his year in Vietnam. Our leaders and medics will benefit by absorbing these timeless lessons from a fellow Spader.

Blue Spaders completed an intensive training cycle with dozens of collective training events in June and July, which resulted in our readiness to deploy to JRTC in August. The Blue Spaders are eager to increase our readiness as a contingency response force. We look forward to setting the standard for keeping Soldiers safe and ready to fight in this era of social distancing.

On the 26th day of each month, Soldiers in the unit celebrate Spader Day to commemorate our history and culture. Each month's event integrates history, fitness, and competition to strengthen our esprit de corps. The battalion held a cookout and history walk early this year and more recently held fitness competitions in-person and virtually. Blue Spaders ran over 2,500 miles, and lifted 50,000 pounds for May and June's Spader Days, respectively, demonstrating the shared drive of our Soldiers.

Blue Spaders continue to receive recognition throughout the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) for exceptional professionalism. SGT Flagg (J CO) won the Division Chef of the Quarter, and was awarded a 101st trophy. PFC Thomas (Medics) was the Honor Graduate for his Air Assault Class. Twins 1LT Micah Mills (B CO XO) and 1LT Jonah Mills (A Co XO) were featured in the Fort Campbell Courier on their shared first Father's Day and SFC Fotias (J CO) was featured for his distinct lineage with his father, who also served in the 101st.

For the first time since joining the 101st in 2015, the Blue Spaders report 100% completion of the FY 21 retention mission, which is a testament to our leaders' dedication to Soldiers and the hard work of Spader 7 and our retention NCO SSG Dodd.

Within the past several months, three new Company Commanders joined the team, eager to keep leading the Blue Spaders in the right direction: CPT Dickerson (B Company), CPT Dinklaker (HHC), and CPT Benoit (C Company). Additionally, the Battalion welcomed MAJ Satterwhite as the Battalion Executive Officer, MAJ Townsend as the Battalion Operations Officer and SGM Jacques Andrews as the BN Ops Sergeant Major.

Regrettably, the 2020 reunion was canceled in light of COVID-19 restrictions. However, the battalion looks forward to celebrating our milestone 120th anniversary for next year with as many Spaders as possible.

Palmas Qui Meruit Ferat, Latin for "Let him bear the palm who has won it" symbolizes the triumph, victory, ascension, and regeneration of the Blue Spaders. Once a Spader, Always a Spader. We are RELENTLESS!

LTC Michael Starz
Commander, 1-26 Infantry, 2BCT, 101st Abn Div (Air Assault)