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For Immediate Release

Utah Apaches To Return From Record-setting California Training Event Thursday

DRAPER, Utah – Twelve Utah AH-64 Apaches are scheduled to return Thursday evening at the Army Air Support Facility in West Jordan from a record-setting California military training event at Fort Hunter Liggett, California.

Approximately 22 aircraft from multiple states culminated in a complex air assault operation, which inserted more than 1,200 servicemembers, making California history as one of the largest combined operations executed.

1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion 211th Aviation participated in the operation named 'Thunder Hammer,' a large, multi-division training event with the 40th Infantry Division and 91st Training Division June 7-15.

"It was a very demanding mission and we were able to integrate quickly," said Maj. Ricky Smith, commander of the 1-211th ARB. "Our guys performed fabulously."

Sixteen Apaches and 82 Guardmembers from the 1-211th ARB, the "Air Pirates" of the Utah Army National Guard in West Jordan, trained in collective, complex, and often challenging missions that were flown day and night, with a formations of Apaches, UH-60 Blackhawks, and CH-47 Chinooks.

"Our pilots are really competent and extremely professional," said Capt. Kelly Kimber, operations officer for the 1-211th ARB. "The plan came together well and everybody got busy and dirty and made it happen."

Utah aviators honed their skills during the exercise with missions to Camp Roberts, Hunter Liggett and the Mountain Warfare Training Center, a remote Marine Corps base near Bridgeport, which presented rugged terrain and high altitude landing zones well above 10,000 MSL.

The Air Pirates, three-time recipient of the prestigious Army Aviation Association of America National Guard Unit of the Year, have deployed three times since 2001, twice of which were to Afghanistan.

The 1-211th ARB was awarded the "Fahnenband des Ministerpräsidenten" personally by Joachim Guack, President of Germany on its most recent deployment. This award is the the highest award given by Germany to another military unit, which was awarded for the support of the International Security Assistance Force.

Media Notes: The twelve-Apache formation is scheduled to fly into the AASF (7563 South Airport Road, West Jordan) between 5:30-6:30 p.m. Thursday June 26. Media are invited to the return of the Apaches (four returned previously) and interviews with members of the 1-211th ARB will be available. Please contact LTC Fairbourn for coordination at above contact numbers. Pictures of the 1-211th participation in Operation Thunder Hammer can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/1mfyzy6>.