

On August 11, 2011, the Eatontown Lions Club invited Major Paul Eberhardt, U.S. Army Aviator, Operations Officer and Ocean Township resident, to speak with the general membership about his recent experience in Afghanistan.

Major Paul Eberhardt is a graduate of Red Bank Catholic High School and West Virginia University. He is a U.S. Army Aviator and Operations Officer who served in Kosovo, Iraq and most recently in Afghanistan. Most importantly, he returned home from active military service on August 10, 2011. He believed it was very important to relay the message to the community of how important their support has been to both him and the other service members deployed into battle. He was personally grateful for the support, thoughts and prayers from the community and performed with the knowledge that every day he knew that someone back home was thinking about him.

Major Eberhardt began his discussion of his experience in Afghanistan by noting that the country was broken up into five parts – Regional Command North, South, East, West and Capital. Regional Command Capital is also referred to as Regional Command Kabul. His company was located in Regional Command West - about 60 miles from Iranian border. This area covered by this command was the approximate to the size of the state of Georgia.

He arrived in Kandahar on June 10, 2010 and his company built up their aircraft for their move to Regional Command West. The aircrafts assigned to his company, known as “Task Force Comanche”, were 10 UH60s (utility helicopters), 4 CH47s (Blackhawk helicopters), 8 AH64 (Apaches helicopters) and 12 medi-vac helicopters. Major Eberhardt was the operations officer for Task Force Comanche and managed both its’ “day to day” and future operations. Once he arrived in Kandahar, the task force started immediately but slowly because of the lack of experience in managing and controlling these different types of air vehicles.

During his stay in Afghanistan, his task force performed various tasks ranging from troop transport, general support (moving a troop from one point to another), medi-vac missions, and resupplying all units in Regional Command West. Due to lack of infrastructure, resupplying the various outposts in the region was done by air. He noted that there were four resupply missions run each day to the various outposts scattered throughout regional Command West.

As time went by, he started to see the “hot spots” in his Company’s area of operations. There were other entities, such as Marine Special Forces, working through Regional Command West, that worked with their Company in conducting deliberate operations to obtain “high valued” targets or locate insurgent strongholds. Their unit ran about one such deliberate mission per week utilizing air assault vehicles such as 4-5 UH60 Blackhawk helicopters, 2 CH47s, Apache helicopters and Air Force AC130s for coverage overhead. These operations were done at any time of the day but preferably performed under the cover of night, especially for operations involving extractions. Their unit ran about 55 deliberate missions

per year. Unfortunately, the success rate for these missions were not as good as expected but the enemy knew that they could come at anytime and anyplace and was not restricted by time of day, weather or terrain. Despite not getting the target, the enemy could not move around as they saw fit.

Major Paul Eberhardt then completed his presentation and conducted a question and answer session with the general membership.