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# HIGH ADVENTURE VIEW FROM ABOVE

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**From sandstorms to flying over jungles in Central Africa, Erickson Pilot has seen it all.**

*By Jennifer Ferrero, APR, DTM*

While flying over the Sahara Desert, James (Jim) Strobel said that he is most concerned about an errant sandstorm which can overtake his aircraft, the Bell 214ST which can carry both cargo and people. He can carry up to eight people with 500+ pounds of cargo on operational or logistical missions.

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*James Strobel, pictured left with co-worker*

Strobel was a career military pilot, who took a slight detour to work in business development mid-career. But he decided that he would rather be flying and applied to work with Erickson Incorporated in 2012. His first deployment was to Afghanistan as a lead pilot.

He said he flew between bases and went around the world between Afghanistan, Central Africa, South Sudan, and Niger, to name a few locations. He is now stationed in the Philippines in Erickson's Defense and National Security division (<https://ericksoninc.com/aviation-services/air-operations/>).

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Strobel works six weeks on – six weeks off, and said his family is used to his schedule. He said the most exciting thing he has done is fly over the jungles in Central Africa. He enjoys piloting because he, “has the freedom to get out and see the animals, the countryside, and support worthwhile missions.”



He has seen baboons, elephants, and other tropical animals while flying over the land. He has also experienced the humidity and hot temperatures in many countries. Strobel said it was commonplace to fly over villages with thatched roof mud homes, dirt roads, and no running water or electricity.

Strobel said some of the greatest risks are when he is flying over territory between bases and there is nowhere safe to land. He said regarding the sandstorms in the Sahara Desert, “you learn the weather and adjust flying times,” and added that afternoons are when the sandstorms can come up out of nowhere. “It’s like that movie The Mummy,” he said. Flying through a sandstorm, “Is like going through a sandblaster. It’s the harshest environment for a helicopter, and you never have enough water.”

In that environment he said he carries a bag of clothes along with food and water, but how much he can bring is contingent on what is being hauled in the payload. An unexpected desert landing is a top concern because of sandstorms, and a lack of resources. He said that he wouldn’t be able to carry enough water to walk anywhere.

Strobel loves his work with Erickson Incorporated. He said, “If there is a good company that treats me well, I stay there,” he recommends to those interested in a travel, and adventure that they [join the Erickson team](https://ericksoninc.com/about/careers/) (<https://ericksoninc.com/about/careers/>).

Within Erickson, he said he values dedication above everything. “When you do the type of work, I do, you are dedicated. You have to give up a lot to do this work, but it is worth it for the missions that you do,” he added. He said that when they participate in a medical mission, it can be enormously satisfying being there

to save someone's life.



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