



U.S. Air Force photo by Maj. Dave Kurle

An MQ-1 Predator at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, taxis out for a mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom June 2. The 62nd Expeditionary Reconnaissance Flight, part of the 451st Air Expeditionary Group, acts as the launch and recovery element for Predator sorties flown by pilots and sensor operators from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

Predators provide eyes in sky, gathering intel. over Afghanistan

By Maj. David Kurle
455 AEW/PA

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — What has a 50-foot wingspan, buzzes like a giant insect and can put an AGM-114 Hellfire missile through a window from 8,000 miles away?

It's the Air Force's MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicle, and it's arguably one of the most requested assets in Operation

Enduring Freedom, according to Capt. Jonathan Songer, commander of the Predator launch and recovery element here.

"They can't get enough of us, they simply can't get enough Predators in the air," he said.

Captain Songer and the Airmen in the 62nd Expeditionary Reconnaissance Flight are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the newest Air Force resources in the ongoing war against extremists in Afghanistan.

Their job is to get the Air Force Predators in the air and pass control of the operational missions to pilots and sensor operators at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

After 20, or more, hours in the air, the launch-and-recovery team takes control and lands Predator at this airfield in Southeastern Afghanistan where crews maintain these lethal eyes in the sky.

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INSIDE:

Camp Cunningham's camp mayor says Coalition cooperation is second to none.
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Interservice bond unbreakable

“ *By taking the fight to the terrorists, in their own backyard, we are ensuring that America will never again be violated like it was on September 11, 2001.* **”**



U.S. Air Force official photo by 2nd Lt. Bryon Turner

Chief Master Sgt. Raymond Welton

by Chief Master Sgt. Raymond Welton
455th Expeditionary Mission Support
Group Chief Enlisted Manager

During the month I’ve spent here at Bagram Airfield, I’ve seen a bond that is second to none, between the Air Force active-duty, Guard and Reserve forces.

As a chief I have participated in numerous deployments throughout my career. It’s only natural that I compare them all to this latest adventure, and I’m happy with what I see here today.

I’m also proud to say the cohesion I see between the three components of the Air Force is a microcosm of the unity and teamwork I have witnessed among our troops and the men and women of our sister services and Coalition partners.

I didn’t fully grasp the true meaning of the phrase “One Team, One Fight” until I arrived here.

Now, don’t get me wrong. I know you’re saying, “All those different forces with their allegiance to their own services and their many different rules of engagement, who’s kidding who?”

Despite these challenges, I have seen the “One Team, One Fight” concept proven at Bagram and at the Forward Operating Bases we support. The impact of joint operations became clear to me when I was given the opportunity to tour a number of forward operating bases throughout Afghanistan.

I joined the adjutant general from my home state of Connecticut, Maj. Gen. Thaddeus J. Martin, on a whirlwind tour to visit our Connecticut Army National Guard brothers and sisters deployed around Afghanistan. These teams are providing

direct support to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams working to build a better life for the people of Afghanistan.

At one of these FOBs, a Navy officer was in command of Airmen, and at another, an Air Force commander had a mixture of Soldiers, Airmen and Sailors under her command. In both cases, these joint missions were getting accomplished with excellence, professionalism and team work.

This same spirit can be seen here at Bagram, where you’ll find men and women from nearly every coalition partner working along side members from every branch of the U.S. military, all living and breathing the concept of “One Team One Fight” every day. It’s quite inspiring.

We’re all coming together as a unified team working to accomplish the same goals, defeating terrorism and spreading democracy and prosperity to the people of Afghanistan.

By taking the fight to the terrorists, in their own backyard, we are ensuring that America will never again be violated like it was on September 11, 2001. By bringing democracy and freedom to Afghanistan, we are making a better future for the people of Afghanistan and giving them an alternative to a life of oppression, violence and terrorism.

I’m very proud to be a part of the “One Team, One Fight” concept here at Bagram and throughout Afghanistan, and I am happy to have each and every one of you as part of that team. I’m confident that our combined efforts will lead to a brighter future for the Afghans, our fellow Americans and our Coalition friends. I firmly believe our efforts today will have untold benefits in the months and years to come. Keep up the great work!

Bagram Bullet
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U.S. Air Force photos by Maj. Dave Kurler

An Air Force MQ-1 Predator approaches Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, for a landing June 2. The 62nd Expeditionary Reconnaissance Flight provides the launch and recovery element for all Predator missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

UAV helps troops find improvised explosives

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With that kind of flying time, combined with the array of cameras and sensors onboard, the Predator provides large amounts of intelligence for commanders, troops on the ground and the decision makers in a war against an enemy bent on ruining the future of Afghanistan and conducting attacks against U.S. and coalition forces.

Captain Songer calls this capability “persistence over the battle space,” and it’s saving lives.

“We’re able to look for (improvised explosive devices) and we’re finding folks getting ready to shoot rockets,” he said. “We call it intelligence preparation of the battlefield.

If our forces are going to conduct a raid we’re telling them what window to go in and what route to take to maximize the safety of the troops on the ground.”

A unique Predator aspect is that it’s able to provide continuous coverage of the battlefield, and the Air Force doesn’t have to deploy hundreds of Airmen overseas to operate and maintain the system.

That doesn’t mean that

Predator crews don’t go into harm’s way, after all the team is deployed to a bona-fide combat zone, because to launch and land a Predator requires a “line of sight” signal between the ground and the aircraft to alleviate a slight delay when the aircraft is flown via satellite uplink.

That delay could cause problems with the constant, small control inputs necessary to take-off and land an aircraft.

Using unmanned aerial vehicles, flown by crews at Nellis, saves time and money. The Air Force doesn’t have to deploy the amount of aircrews and maintenance personnel required for most manned aircraft, according to Captain Songer.

“It actually doubles the number of Predator sorties we can fly by operating them from home,” he said.

Most Predator missions in the launch-and-recovery phase are flown by a crew of two, a pilot, and sometimes a navigator, with manned aircraft experience, as well as an enlisted sensor operator, who manages the aircraft’s sophisticated suite of cameras and laser-targeting equipment.



Staff Sgt. Steve Fraser applies a brace to the tail of an MQ-1 Predator at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, following a sortie in support of Operation Enduring Freedom June 2. Sergeant Fraser is a crew chief deployed to the 62nd Expeditionary Reconnaissance Flight from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

“We’re in the only enlisted job that I know of where we can shoot a live Hellfire,” said Airman 1st Class Rachel Veros, a sensor operator with the 62nd ERF.

While the pilots usually pull the trigger, the sensor operator’s job is to guide the missile into the target using the laser, giving the Predator a real kick should an opportune moment arrive for the application of deadly force.

“I think that UAVs are going to be the wave of the future because why put someone’s life at risk when you can fly this from Nellis?” Airman Veros said. “It’s invaluable. There’s nothing that

compares to the Predator. There’s nothing else with our versatility and durability.”

According to Captain Songer the future of the Predator, and UAVs in general, are limitless.

“If you can imagine it with this platform, it can be done,” he said.



U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman Brian Ferguson

Members of the 1st Expeditionary RED HORSE Group, Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, pour concrete for a new ramp here June 5. The ramp will provide support for fighter aircraft.

RED HORSE creates legacies, one project at a time

By Master Sgt. Orville F. Desjarlais Jr.
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Senior Airman Casey Anderson removes his sunglasses to wipe sweat from his eyes.

The areas behind the sunglasses, pale compared to the rest of his tan, are the only clean parts on his face. As operator of the cement-truck chute, he's covered in cement — from the top of his red hat to his steel-toed, desert boots — and proud of it. He wears globs of cement like military medals.

"Everybody else is afraid to get dirty," he says about the job nobody wants and usually the lowest-ranking Airmen get.

Airman Anderson, from Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont., is part of the 1st Expeditionary RED HORSE Group. He's pouring cement to make a fighter aircraft ramp across the runway from the main base. That way, fighter aircraft can scramble to the fight without worrying about other aircraft in the way.

As the wind picks up, his sweat

absorbs a fine layer of dust. It looks like he's sweating mud.

"This wind, it dries out the cement too quickly," Airman Anderson says. "And during dust storms we can't see anything and stuff gets in your eyes. The more concrete we put down, the less the dust."

Standing nearby, 1st Lt. Robert Loniewsky looks at the grade of a drainage area the way a plastic surgeon looks at Joan Rivers — with keen interest. As the project engineer, he's responsible for everything that has to do with building the ramp — including its slope. The ramp is poured at a grade to allow water to roll off into a drain.

The pioneers of Bagram Airfield who arrived shortly after 9-11 didn't have time to think about drainage. They were focused on pitching tents and getting air power in the fight.

"They were like squatters, which is normal," Lieutenant Loniewsky says.

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“RED HORSE” continued from Page 4

“Today, drainage is the biggest issue.”

From drainage to the materials used in cement, no detail is too small for the project engineer.

“Being here is the pinnacle if you’re a design engineer,” the lieutenant says. “We have to design everything. And if something goes wrong, it’s my fault.”

In the shade of a modified temper tent about a rock’s throw away from the construction site, Staff Sgt. Doug Ergish listens to a radio while he works.

Sergeant Ergish joined the Air Force in 1997 and worked in a transportation squadron for five years. In 2002, he joined REDHORSE.

“In transportation, it’s kind of hard to see the impact on the mission,” he says as a wipes off a

tool he used on a dump truck with wheels about chest-high tall.

In transportation, vehicles came in. He fixed them. Vehicles left.

As cement trucks rumble past his tent garage, filling it with dust, he says, “Here, I just have to look outside to see what I contribute to.”

The vehicle mechanics maintain 80 trucks, tractors, heavy machinery and dirt-moving equipment. “Keeping up with these guys,” he said, insinuating the operators, “is pretty hard.”

Despite the age of the vehicles, which are old, and the conditions here, which are dusty and dirty, the mechanics are keeping their machines running. Their 93 percent, in-commission vehicle rate is the highest in the group, partly because what they don’t know, they learn.

Pointing at three wheels hubs scattered about his feet, Sergeant

Ergish says, “We didn’t know how to disassemble or reassemble these hubs, so, like cavemen, we had to figure it out.”

And it’s not just their knowledge that astounds the sergeant, but the vehicle mechanics’ tenacity.

“Our guys work in snow, mud and rain and always come in with a good attitude and put in a full day’s work,” he says.

Like the mail carriers who work in snow, sleet and rain, so do the RED HORSE structure craftsmen building a post office on the main base.

“We had to haul out a bunch of muck, about 200 tons of dirt, mud and snow before we could lay down the pad,” says post office project manager Tech. Sgt. John Ross as he stands in the new building while finishing touches are being done.

Despite the snow, rain and wind, the RED HORSE team built the post office.

Twice the size of the original post office, the 14,000 square foot building is 97 percent complete. They expect the next team of RED HORESE experts to finish July 1. Mail will start flowing through the facility in September.

“To be a part of something like this – to know mail will be going through here for quite some time – is something I’ll always remember because maybe 50 years from now, when my grandkids are in the military and see this building, they can say their grandfather helped build that.”

The Malmstrom RED HORSE team redeploys for home in two weeks, leaving behind more than just memories. They leave behind legacies, such a new post office, a ramp for fighter aircraft, a passenger terminal and a customs building, to name a few.



Senior Airman Case Anderson pours the concrete for a new ramp at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, June 5. Airman Anderson is a part of the 1st Expeditionary RED HORSE Group here.



Coalition forces kill Al-Zarqawi

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Multi-National Force-Iraq commanding general, announced the death of al-Qaida Iraqi leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in the following statement during a press conference June 8:

“Coalition Forces killed al-Qaida terrorist leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi and one of his key lieutenants, spiritual advisor Sheik Abd-Al-Rahman, yesterday, June 7, at 6:15 p.m. in an air strike against an identified, isolated safe house.

“Tips and intelligence from Iraqi senior leaders from his network led forces to al-Zarqawi and some of his associates who were conducting a meeting approximately eight kilometers north of Baqubah when the air strike was launched.

“Iraqi police were first on the scene after the air strike, and elements of Multi-Na-



Filephoto

tional Division North, arrived shortly thereafter. Coalition Forces were able to identify al-Zarqawi by fingerprint verification, facial recognition and known scars.

Al-Zarqawi and al-Qaida in Iraq have

conducted terrorist activities against the Iraqi people for years in attempts to undermine the Iraqi national government and Coalition efforts to rebuild and stabilize Iraq.

“He is known to be responsible for the deaths of thousands of Iraqis. Al-Zarqawi’s death is a significant blow to al-Qaida and another step toward defeating terrorism in Iraq.

“Although the designated leader of al-Qaida in Iraq is now dead, the terrorist organization still poses a threat as its members will continue to try to terrorize the Iraqi people and destabilize their government as it moves toward stability and prosper-

ity.

“Iraqi forces, supported by the Coalition, will continue to hunt terrorists that threaten the Iraqi people until terrorism is eradicated in Iraq.”

PRT and Afghans make history

by Staff Sgt. Trevor Pedro
CENTAF News Team

Twenty-five people – Americans and Afghans, local leaders and Airmen – worked feverishly earlier this week to prioritize and organize future projects that will improve the lives of the people of Parwan Province.

Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team leaders chimed in with ways to effectively take the Parwan province to the next level, economically and governmentally.

“They’ll need to increase the police force and make sure they have a point of contact at the station, and of course that they get paid,” said Maj. Donald Johnson, chief of civil operations.

This is just one of the projects the Bagram PRT has spearheaded in the past few months. They have also provided roadways, new wells and a new high school.

“Projects like these need to happen to ensure trust in the government,” said Jabol Taqwa, Parwan governor. “so, the people understand that the government is there for them. Once we provide increased security and stability, the gap between government and people will close.”

The governor’s answer to closing the gap is the newly-formed Provincial Reconstruction Development Team, which is working side by side with the PRT to stabilize the province.

“This is the first time in history that a province has a development plan,” Governor Taqwa said. “In the past, the government dictated five- or seven-year plans. Now, it is the other way around. The people are making the plans.”

The reconstruction plan is a road map showing people where they need to go and, more importantly, how to get there. That allows the people of Parwan to be a part of the process, according to Capt. Mark Gibson, PRT information officer.

The plan outlines 12 major projects, ranging from health concerns, such as poor drinking water, to irrigation. The drafted document mirrors the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

“This document is similar to our Declaration of Independence or Constitution in that it will move the province and Afghanistan, over the next 20 years, into an international arena and allow it to compete at a higher level economically,” Major Johnson said.

Brief Bullets

Finance rep on station

People with pay problems or question can now visit the new finance representative who recently arrived here.

Tech. Sgt. Tanya Williams can also give advice about the Savings Deposit Program, which provides Airman an opportunity while deployed to deposit in a government savings program that earns a 10 percent annual interest.

Finance hours are noon to 1600L, Sundays; and 0700L to 1100L and noon to 1700L, Monday through Friday.

No check-cashing services are available. For more information, including unit purchases, call her 231-4409, or e-mail af.tanya.williams@afghan.swa.army.mil.

Services events

All events begin at 1900L, unless otherwise noted.

Today	Tuesday
Bingo	Ping Pong
Saturday	Wednesday
Texas Hold'em	Texas Hold'em
Sunday	Thursday
Pizza & movie	Dominoes
Monday	
Volleyball, 1800L	



ENDURING FAITH CHAPEL

Weekly services:

Muslim

Fridays 1800L (1330Z)

Jewish

Fridays 1900L (1430Z)

Seventh Day Adventist

Saturdays 0930L (0500Z)

Roman Catholic

Saturdays 1945L (1515Z)

Liturgical Protestant

Sundays 0830L (0400Z)

Protestant

Sundays 1130L (0700Z)

Latter Day Saints

Sundays 1300L (0830Z)



Church of Christ

Sundays 1400L (0930Z)

Korean Protestant

Sundays 1545L (1115Z)

Gospel

Sundays 1730L (1300Z)

DFAC hours

Breakfast

0530 to 0900L

Lunch

1130 to 1330L

Dinner

1630 to 2100L

Midnight

2330 to 0100L

DCUs and Air Force physical training uniforms are mandatory when dining at any of the facilities here.

No bags, purses or backpacks are allowed in any of the dining facilities.

Plausible Denial

By Jurgi



Just a few unpleasant thoughts going on in in the "B" huts.

Plausible Denial by Jurgi

Camp Cunningham residents who have rights to the shared drive can access other Plausible Denial cartoons at S:/SHARED FILES/PLAUSIBLE DENIAL.



A look back at Bagram history



U.S. Air Force photos by Master Sgt. Keith Reed

Once dropped off by an Air Force transport, life at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, starts with the long walk into the camp from the wind-swept flight line. Coalition troops wage a relentless war on terrorism from the base. The airmen who serve on this frontier keep soldiers supplied and provide air cover.

The Bagram mission remains the same, but life is better

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of stories written about Bagram Airfield in its infancy. It was printed in Airman Magazine in 2002.

by Louis A. Arana-Barradas
photos by Master Sgt. Keith Reed

In the armed camp that is Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, Airman 1st Class Lewis Pollard is just one more face in the crowd.

It's hard to tell him apart from the thousands of other troops.

Like the rest, he wears a desert-camouflage uniform and helmet. And he always has an M-16 rifle slung over his shoulder.

He's one more wide-eyed, gun-toting Airman trying to do his job on the frontier of

the war on terrorism.

Just that thought is mind-boggling enough to Airman Pollard, a security forces troop who doesn't look old enough to shave. Less than 18 months ago he was a civilian — as close to Bagram and the concept of war as he was to the moon.

"Before I joined the Air Force, I didn't know what it was like to serve my country. What it was like being sent to a place like this. Just how hard it could be," he said.

Now he knows. Because Bagram is the staging base from which American Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines — and troops from other coalition countries — fight the war on terrorism in Afghanistan. Serving at this base, 35 miles north of the Afghan capital of Kabul, is tough duty. One accentuated

by around-the-clock operations and sacrifice.

"Coming here was a shock," said Airman Pollard, deployed from Moody Air Force Base, Ga. "It took some adjustment before I came to my senses — before I realized what we were doing here."

Seven days a week Airman Pollard pulls a 12-hour shift, helping safeguard the base's airfield and the A-10 Thunderbolt II jets that provide close air support to coalition ground troops. Beyond the jets is the small Air Force enclave where nearly 500 airmen live and work. The rest of the base is home to Army and coalition forces.

He knows his is a critical job — the base

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has no perimeter fence. Instead, there are hundreds of soldiers dug in and on patrol forming a lethal human shield around the base. If an enemy were lucky enough to get past them, it would be up to Pollard and his fellow security cops to mount the second line of defense.

It's a sobering thought for the young airman. But it's a job he's ready to do.

"This is war — the real thing," he said. "I know the job I have to do."

He's not alone. Getting caught up in the mission makes time go faster. And it makes life at the bare-bones camp more bearable.

Everyone at Bagram has learned to do without.

It's been that way since the first American troops set foot there more than a year ago. What they found was a base destroyed by countless battles.

It was a deadly junkyard full of unexploded ordnance and mines, destroyed aircraft, hangars and gutted buildings. The only safe place to walk was on paved surfaces, and even that was risky.

People still find unexploded bombs and land mines almost every day at Bagram. But camp life has improved, and it's much safer to walk around. Still, it lacks most of the basics found at other sites where troops serve.

With its tent cities, makeshift buildings, piles of equipment and supplies, constant construction and dusty roads, Bagram's the Afghan equivalent of a Wild West frontier town — minus the horses.

Except there's no saloon where a thirsty troop can whet his whistle. No hotel to get a clean room, a bath and a shave. And no time off to lounge by a pool or watch wrestling on television.

No time, in fact, to do much more than work, exercise, eat and sleep.

All work and no play. That's the way it should be in a war zone, Brig. Gen. Greg Ihde said. He admits there's little to do at the base besides work. But that's what he wants.

"I want everyone working 12 hours, seven days a week," the general e said. "And I don't want one extra person here who we don't need to accomplish the mission."

General Ihde is the top Airman in Afghanistan. He's the air component adviser to Combined Joint Task Force-180 and commands the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing.

The task force directs coalition military operations in Afghanistan from Bagram.

The wing — with about 1,700 airmen at

seven bases in five countries — is the task force's air arm.

There's a reason Ihde wants the least amount of people to do the job. He said there's no room for people who work only four or five days a week. Because developing a "12-hour, seven-day-a-week work mentality" keeps troops focused on their jobs. Too much time off, or people who don't have enough to do, detracts from the mission.

Ihde said the hard work "will make people's time here go by faster, minimize our footprint — and we'll be safe."

Needless to say, there's plenty of work for the airmen of the base's 455th Expedi-



Tents. They're home to all the troops who serve at Bagram. In Air Force Village, there's always some kind of improvements being made. Col. Greg Marston, the group commander, said life for the troops gets better each day.

tionary Operations Group. The unit provides all the support for the multinational ground troops, which number more than 11,000.

To do that, the airmen live in a 24-hour operations world.

Their main job is providing close air support to ground forces in the field. That makes the A-10s on the flight line the "cavalry" to coalition forces.

When they get in a tight spot during an operation, soldiers call in the 30 mm-packing ground attack aircraft

"We're here for one thing: to provide air support for the Army and coalition ground

forces," Col. Greg Marston said. "Everything else is secondary."

A Thunderbolt-flying Pennsylvania guardsman, Colonel Marston's the group commander. Every Airman on the base is a contributor to the close air support mission, he said.

"Everything we do is driven toward that cause."

Still, the most visible job Airmen do at Bagram is to greet and launch the big airlifters that land day and night.

"The unique thing about airlift operations here is that we do a lot of blacked-out operations," Colonel Marston said. Airmen at other bases work at night, too. "But we do it with the absolute minimum amount of people."

Nighttime "ops" are a Bagram trademark. Aircrews know when they land they'll get first-class — and quick — service. That's a must, and a relief, at a base still prone to small arms fire and rocket attacks.

Throughout the night, C-17 Globemaster III aircraft swoop in to drop off their precious cargo. They don't stay long enough to shut off their engines, a safety precaution in effect since the first aircraft landed there.

Unless the stars are out, working night shifts takes getting used to. On a cloudy night, people can't see their hands in front of their faces. To avoid getting run over, airmen put green light sticks on their helmets or uniforms.

Then, working with night vision goggles that make them look like aliens, active duty, Guard and Reserve aerial port troops whisk in to unload cargo planes.

Gravel and small rocks cover the main road to keep the dust down. The base isn't much to look at, but it's home to Bagram airmen, who rotate in for 30- or 90-day tours. Or they used to. Now most don't know how long they'll be there.

But no matter how much money the United States pours into the camp, how much improvement is made — it's still a tent city. Life isn't easy. Going to the toilet can be a 100-yard trek for most. There's very little privacy. And the only place to "get away" is the camp's church, base exchange or work. Not the kind of stuff most people write home about.

Yet improvements come every day. Each one is like adding a brick to the building of a new house, Marston said. Not everyone will see the house built, but they will have helped build it.