

Bagram News Express

Fighting Terror, Building Peace

Vol. 1, Issue 9, May 2, 2008



Photo by Army SGT Kevin M. Gibson

Honoring a fallen comrade

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – A memorial in honor of Senior Airman Jonathan A. V. Yelner was displayed during a ceremony here May 1. Airman Yelner died April 29 near Tagab, Kapisa Province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. Airman Yelner was assigned as a convoy driver with the Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Our Heritage, Our Mission

By Col. Art McGettrick
455 Expeditionary Operations
Group commander

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Sixty-four years ago, the 455th was deployed during World War II, flying combat missions from San Giovanni, Italy. Back then, they were called the 455th Bombardment Group (Heavy), flying Consolidated B-24 Liberators, a heavy four-engine bomber. Their mission was to help defeat Germany by bombing strategic targets in Europe like factories, rail yards, oil refineries, airfields and harbors.

On April 2, 1944, the support personnel, maintainers and aircrew of the 455th prepared for a dangerous mission into enemy territory. Despite a shortage of personnel and only having 40 percent of their equipment, the ground crews overcame this challenge by working long hours to keep a high percentage of the aircraft operational. On this day, 35 B-24's took off, along with bombers from three other groups, to attack an aircraft factory in Austria. As they approached the target area, the aircrew noticed it was covered by clouds and other

see **HERITAGE**, Page 3

Airmen paint cultural mural



Master Sgt. Albert Greig, Craig Joint Theater Hospital medical logistics superintendent, performs some final touch ups on a mural he and 38 other artist painted in the hospital conference room here April 24. The mural featured local culture and a panoramic view of the mountains from Bagram. Sergeant Greig is deployed from the 1st Special Operations Support Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester)

By Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester

455 Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – When the Taliban took power in 1996, they imposed a new way of life and removed basic freedoms for the people of Afghanistan. Among those freedoms was the banishment of art.

For more than a decade, art has been missing from this historic society. So a group of 39 artists from Task Force MED wanted people to understand Afghanistan’s colorful culture and what better way to convey this but through art.

Master Sgt. Al Greig was assigned as the art director for painting a cultural Afghanistan mural in

the conference room of TF MED along with the other artists.

“I don’t want this to come off as a one-man show by any means,” said Sergeant Greig, who’s deployed from the 1st Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla. “This project was a complete team effort of 39 artists.”

“I thought this was going to be a quick paint job, but it turned into part of the GWOT mission because of the Taliban’s ban against art,” said Master Sgt. Cruz Torres Jr., who is deployed from the 710th Medical Squadron Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. “I learned how beautiful Afghan culture really is and I tried to capture it.

After a series of panoramic photos were taken and stitched together, Sergeant Greig and his crew

began working. They completed etching the mountain panorama — true in both direction and size — in a single day.

Although paint became an obstacle because of its limited supply in Afghanistan, that didn’t prevent the group from accomplishing this feat. The task force’s morale committee donated \$220 to purchase artist-quality paint shipped from the states. Other donors added \$200 in paint and supplies.

According to Sergeant Greig, who’s taken formal art training since the age of 10, the 864-square foot mural is appraised at \$178,000, based on industry cost standard of \$200 per square foot.

Nearly 290 man-hours later, the entire conference room wall space is vibrant in color and culture while all 39 artists’ dream was realized. Their satisfaction comes from the feedback they get from the local Afghan nationals.

“I enjoyed it,” said Staff Sgt. Jessica Newcomb, a medical technician deployed from Scott Air Force Base, Ill. “From what I’ve seen, all the locals who come in to see the work enjoy it and that’s a good feeling. It is so nice... I really wish my parents could see it.”

“When the locals come in here, they are speechless” added Sergeant Greig. “I hope this art continues to bring peace and prosperity even when the military is gone. I believe this painting is absolutely significant to the Global War on Terror. Culturally, it’s that important.”

HERITAGE, from Page 1

bombers.

Faced with mission failure, the group leader quickly decided to switch their attack to a nearby ball-bearing plant. As they made their bomb run, the formation was attacked repeatedly by anti-aircraft fire and approximately 75 enemy fighters using rockets, cannon and machine guns in an attempt to destroy or disrupt the bombers. Despite the intense enemy fire, our Airmen were able to maintain a tight formation, which concentrated their defensive fires and increased the accuracy of their bombs.

As a result of their outstanding courage, Airmanship, flexibility and skill, they scored many direct hits on the target, severely hurting the enemy's ability to produce aircraft. Their solid teamwork and mutual support kept the bombs on target and allowed our aerial gunners to destroy 27 enemy fighters, with 17 more probably destroyed and three damaged. For this mission, the Airmen of the 455th received one of two Distinguished Unit Citations, which says "the officers and enlisted...upheld the highest traditions of the Military Service."

During the 15 months the 455th flew combat missions from Italy, they dropped 14,702 tons of bombs and the gunners destroyed 119 enemy fighter aircraft. However, this great success came at a cost, with 147 KIA, 268 missing, 173 POWs and 112 injured.

Today the 455th is deployed again, this time as an air expedition-

ary wing. Some things are the same. We are still flying combat missions and dropping bombs, and several of our Airmen have made the ultimate sacrifice. We still have enlisted aerial gunners serving on our HH-60 rescue helicopters. Most importantly, we are still using the same teamwork, courage, Airmanship and hard work to succeed like the 455th Airmen of 1944.

However, many things are different. First, the 455th AEW's mission is much more diverse. Our mission is to provide close air support, air mobility, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, combat search and rescue, electronic attack, aeromedical evacuation, and combat support for U.S. and Coalition forces. We even have over 1,000 personnel filling in-lieu-of taskings "outside the wire" with the Army.

Second, we are in a different kind of war – a counter insurgency battle against Anti-Afghan forces, while supporting the global war on terror against extremists groups. Our mission is to save coalition lives, protect innocent civilians and kill the enemy. This is part the larger coalition effort to help the Afghan government, Army and Police develop a more stable and secure environment that is inhospitable to terrorism.

As you can see, the 455th has a great heritage that we should be proud of. Like our fellow Airmen of 1944, we face many challenges and have a dangerous mission. However, thanks to your courage, Airmanship and hard work, we can overcome all challenges and write our own chapter in the history books.

News Briefs

COMBAT PUSH TIMES

Combat Push times are Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the Camp Cunningham Rec Tent from 0900L/0430Z to 1000L/0530Z. Services, Comm and PERSCO will be available to sign outprocessing checklists. Personnel must complete your Post Deployment Health Questionnaire on-line and pick up your medical records at Flight Medicine/Public Health before coming to Combat

ATTENTION ALL AIRMEN

The Bagram Airmen Committed to Excellence, or ACE, meet Wednesday at 1700L/1230Z at Camp Cunningham's Town Hall. The meetings provide Airmen an outlet to voice concerns. Contact Senior Airmen Vanna Johnson at vanna.b.johnson@afghan.swa.army.mil or Airmen 1st Class Rayyuri Powell at 431-4359 for more information.

ATTENTION ALL JUNIOR NCOS

The Bagram AF Route 5/6 meets Thursdays at 1800L/1330Z at Camp Cunningham's Town Hall. The meetings are open to all staff sergeant selects, staff sergeants and tech sergeants. Contact Tech Sgt. Stephen DeWeese, 431-3212 or Tech Sgt. Charles Heywood, 431-2820 for more information.

BAGRAM AIRFIELD FLIGHTLINE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron reminds all service members that the Bagram Airfield flightline is a "controlled area" and all personnel require either specific inclusion on a certified entry authorization list (EAL), a restricted area badge issued by the 455 ESFS Pass & Registration section, or an authorized escort. Additionally, personnel driving vehicles onto the flight line must have both a restricted area badge and an authenticated AF Form 483 (Flightline Driving Competency Card) on their person to enter. For additional questions or

Wing honors new promotees, award winners

By Capt. Toni Tones

455 Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Members of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing honored the Wing's newest promotees, top performers and outstanding contributor during the monthly recognition ceremony here May 1.

The newly-appointed NCOs and senior NCOs in attendance were administered their respective charges by members of the 455th Expeditionary Mission Support Group.

The May promotees were:

To Airman 1st Class: Jullian Alcorn, Timothy Babb, Joshua Brooks, Nicole Lopez and Max Sorci.

To Senior Airman: William Cassady, Byron Corley, Jamie Curran, Shawn Delaware, Johnathan Dewerd, Shawn Lindamood, Joshua Livingston, Joshua McConnell, Charmanie Olivarez, Joshua Rosiere, Matthew Smith, Michael Summers, Dustin Turner, Brian Wagner and Timothy Westphal.

To Staff Sergeant: Jason Armstrong, Zachari Averys, Joel Bertrand, Richard Bonsra, Michael Boylan, Christopher Burris, Nicholas Cawley, Daniel Collins, Ryan Conversi, Matthew Davis, Richard Debolt, Joseph Gagin, Adam Haviland, Paul LeCompte, Matthew Manfredi, Myrone Moses,

Javier Pupiales, Harrizel Staszewski and Jeremie Wilson.

To Technical Sergeant: Paul Delong, Marion Elsas, Adrian Hall, Ryan Kruse, James Wentzel and Allyson Young.

To Master Sergeant: Christopher Burnett, Daniel Hanaway, Theresa Hess, Deborah Hester, Jason Holbert, Shaft Jacobs, Melissa Petosky, Alisha Rowland and Jeffrey Thomas.

To Senior Master Sergeant: Larry Schneck and Kenneth Townsley.

The Wing also recognized its best of the best for outstanding contributor outside the wing and the Top Performers in the Airman, NCO, Senior NCO, CGO and civilian categories for April. The winners in their respective category were:

Outstanding Contributor: Spec. Rebeca Ward, Task Force Medical

Airman of the Month: Senior Airman Rickey Easter, 455th Expeditionary Mission Support Group

NCO of the Month: Staff Sgt. Randy Jeffrey, 455 EMSG

Senior NCO of the Month: Master Sgt. Timothy Gable, 755th Air Expeditionary Group

CGO of the Month: Capt Terri Chapin, 455th Expeditionary Medical Group

Civilian of the Month: Jeremy Maurseth, 755 AEG

NEWS BRIEFS, from page 3

concerns, please contact Air Force Security Forces operations at 481-6018.

101st ABN DIV (ASLT) ROCK
BAMD --'OUT OF UNIFORM'

DATE: May 5

TIME: 1400 Local

LOCATION: Route 5/6 area

CINCO DE MAYO CELEBRATION
ACE will be hosting a Cinco de Mayo celebration at the Camp

Cunningham recreation tent from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. local. Come enjoy the fun, pinata contest, salsa contest, limbo contest and door prizes.

HOMETOWN NEWS

Airmen who are deploying or redeploying can "get the word out" about notable events related to their service via the Hometown News Program. The process is easy - individuals simply fill out, sign and return the Hometown News Release (available on the Bagram website, <http://www.bagram.afnews.af.mil>, under "Other Links") to Public Affairs (paper copy or scanned electronic

copy) and PA will take care of the rest by marketing these events to their local media. Some examples of events include: award of Afghanistan Campaign Medal, NATO Medal, arrival for deployment, completion of deployment, etc. For more information, contact public affairs at 455aewpa@swa.army.mil.