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# Bagram News Express



*Fighting Terror, Building Peace*

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## Airmen welcome first MRAP vehicles

**By Staff Sgt. Rachel Martinez**  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

**BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan** Airmen operating “outside the wire” in Afghanistan now have more protection from roadside bombs. The first mission-ready mine-resistance ambush-protected vehicles, or MRAPs, were delivered to 455th Air Expeditionary Wing units recently.

The armor-plated MRAP vehicles are designed with raised V-shaped hulls to deflect blasts from roadside bombs. The 455th AEW’s first MRAPs are Category One types smaller and lighter vehicles designed for urban operations.

A lot goes in to getting these vehicles from the manufacturer to units in the field. From the manufacturer, the MRAPs are delivered to another factory in South Carolina where government-furnished equipment is installed. Next the vehicles are transported by air or ship to locations in Southwest Asia. From there, they are delivered to various bases where field service representatives from the manufacturer and vehicle maintenance members bring the MRAP to full mission-capable status.

“The greatest benefit of these vehicles versus your standard humvee, it’s really in the name



Airmen take a MaxxPro mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle through a driver’s training course at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, August 22, 2008. The 455th Air Expeditionary Wing received its first mission-ready MRAPs in August. The vehicles are designed to protect its occupants from roadside bombs. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Rachel Martinez/Released)

mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle it provides great security and keeps our warfighters safe while they are fighting the war on terror,” said Capt. David Duke, 455th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, who helped manage the logistical process.

With the MRAPs in position, the Airmen who will be taking them outside the wire received some driver’s training. The training is a four-day course taught by the vehicle manufacturers. In it, Airmen learn about all the aspects of the vehicle and how to operate the equipment. The course culminates in a road test where each Airman gets his or her turn behind the wheel.

“It was great for cops,” said Staff Sgt. Stephen Lezala, deployed from the 128th Security Forces Squadron, Wisconsin Air National Guard. “We usually get a down and dirty class, but this class was very thorough. There was ample time for training in the vehicles and making sure we knew what we are doing.”

With the new MRAPs and driver’s training, Airmen in Afghanistan are ready to hit the road and accomplish their mission, knowing they are better protected.

“I feel a lot better going out in one of these,” added Sergeant Lezala. “They are really going to help us accomplish our mission in a safer manner.”

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# Airlift or airdrop C-130s get the job done

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By Staff Sgt. Joe Maker  
774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron

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**BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan** – There is no such thing as a typical day for a member of the 774<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.

Day and night, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, it's airland and airdrop. Air National Guardsmen from Rhode Island, California, and Maryland are here making it happen in the C-130J Hercules. As part of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group, their mission is timely and accurate support to U.S. and coalition forces, protecting innocent civilians, and killing our enemies; everything else is secondary.

At 4:15 a.m., Lt. Col. Daniel Walter is alerted for the start of his three-sortie mission. Walter and his crew prepare for the mission with a tactics and intelligence briefing. They study the terrain and weather for the entire mission. Then, they focus all attention on the first leg -- airdrop. Leg one is a night airdrop to U.S. Special Forces with 17,000 pounds of sustainment supplies. The aircraft approaches the drop zone completely blacked-out. Walter precisely positions the aircraft at the release point. "Five seconds...green light," comes the announcement over the intercom and the load exits into the darkness. The aircraft climbs rapidly from drop altitude for the route to Kandahar.

"It's never an easy route in," said Walter. "There's always the terrain and weather to contend with, but we find a way to get it done."

The loadmasters prepare the cargo area for the next stop. The plan is to pick up a 37,000 pound piece of tactical equipment destined for a dirt landing zone. The crew checks the aircraft performance data. The tactical equipment just barely fits in



**BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan** -- A C-130J Hercules taxis out to the runway here on August 1, 2008. The C-130Js form the backbone of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing's transportation and supply mission, being the largest fixed-wing cargo airframe capable of landing on a dirt runway. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Samuel Morse)

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the C-130 – only inches to spare. Still on night vision goggles, it takes focused concentration to land on the short, dirt runway used at the forward operating base. Engines stay running at the FOB as the equipment is offloaded and 43 passengers embark for Kabul.

The mission ends almost exactly 12 hours after it began from Bagram, but the Hercules is up to the task.

"The updated C-130J with newer and more powerful engines allows us to operate at maximum weights from austere airfields throughout Afghanistan, even in the hot summer," said Walter.

The C-130 has always been a workhorse of theater airlift. In just the last month, the 774th EAS has airdropped more than 450 tons, moved nearly 8,000 passengers, and flown more than 720 sorties – the busiest airdrop month in Afghanistan in at least the last three years.

"If there's a way, it gets done ... and then some," said Lt. Col. David Swanson, 774th EAS commander. "If we can take more, we take it; and if you need us to fly more, we fly."

Swanson said credit goes to the lean-forward attitude the squadron and maintenance team shows in getting the mission done everyday.

## *What PERSCO can do for you?*

The primary mission of PERSCO is force accountability. PERSCO is the collection of manual and automated procedures, systems, hardware and deployable teams employed to achieve, maintain, and report up-to-date total force strength accountability for all Air Force personnel assets deployed or employed in support of a wartime, contingency, emergency or military missions.

PERSCO has the ability to provide limited personnel support to deployed forces. Areas of support include, but are not limited to: assignment actions, change to vRED and SGLI, retraining actions, evaluation processing, processing promotion releases, separation/retirement actions, reenlistment/extension processing, awards/decorations, emergency leave processing and casualty reporting.

For questions or concerns regarding changes in a member's duty status (hospitalization, TDY, leave, etc.) or any MPF-like support, please contact your PERSCO team! They can be reached at 318-431-4409, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## News Briefs

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### **COMBAT PUSH EXTENDED HOURS**

Combat Push times have been extended starting Sept. 1 until Sept. 20. New times are Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the Camp Cunningham Rec Tent from 0900L/0430Z to 1100L/0630Z and from 2230L/1800Z to 0030L/2000Z. Services, Comm and PERSCO will be available to sign outprocessing checklists. Personnel must complete Post Deployment Health Questionnaire on-line and pick up medical records at Flight Medicine/Public Health before coming to Combat Push. For more information call 431-4409.

### **POST OFFICE HOURS**

As of Aug. 25, the Bagram Post Office is open from 0900-1730L Monday through Saturday and 1200 - 1600L on Sunday to handle all your postal needs. If you are a unit that is departing the area and need to set up a time to mail out your personal gear or you are a unit mail clerk and need to set up an appointment to process Official Mail please contact the post office at (318) 431-3023/4679.

### **BATTERY DISPOSAL**

Used batteries of any type should be turned in to supply for proper disposal -- do not throw them away in the trash. Expired batteries can be used by the enemy as part of explosive devices.

### **COMBAT O**

Combat Orientation is Thursday at 0900Z/1330L at the Enduring Freedom Chapel. This is a mandatory briefing for all Air Force personnel assigned to Bagram Air Field. Newcomers must attend the briefing within a week of their arrival. Accountability is tracked and will be forwarded to the 1st Sergeants at the end of

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## *Services Info*

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- ◆ First Run Movies: Sunday, Wednesday and Friday at 1000L and 1500L.
- ◆ Capoeira/Brazilian Martial Arts: Sunday from 2000L to 2200L and Tuesday from 1630L to 1830L.
- ◆ Abs Workout: Monday through Friday at 1215L.
- ◆ Salsa: Monday from 2030L to 2230L.
- ◆ Texas Hold'em: Tuesday at 1900L, Thursday at 1330L, and Saturday at 1330L and

- 1900L.
- ◆ Dominoes: Tuesday at 2100L
- ◆ Reggae Night: Wednesday from 2000L to 2300L.
- ◆ Spades: Thursday at 1800L.
- ◆ Blackjack: Thursday at 2100L.
- ◆ Bingo: Friday at 1900L.
- ◆ Hip Hop/R&B Night: Friday at 2030L.