
Bagram News Express



Fighting Terror, Building Peace

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Strike Eagle dawn patrol

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Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — It's two o'clock in the morning. A bus pulls into a parking space at Camp Cunningham in the heart of Bagram Air Field. Aircrew members, still wiping the sleep from their eyes, climb on board and head out. While the rest of Bagram sleeps, these F-15E Strike Eagle pilots and weapons systems officers get ready to protect coalition forces yet again in their ever-vigilant close-air support mission.

This is dawn patrol.

"Dawn patrol, put simply, is



Capt. Vanessa Mahan, F-15E Strike Eagle weapons systems officer and, dons her flight gear here August 27, 2008.



Capt. Vanessa Mahan, F-15E Strike Eagle weapons systems officer, checks the wiring on a joint direct attack munition here August 27, 2008. Part of the WSOs job is to ensure the JDAMs are wired correctly to ensure they hit their target.

just a time that we fly. This is the first go for the day shift, getting up real early before the sun rises," said Capt. Vanessa Mahan, a weapons systems officer deployed from Seymour-Johnson Air Force Base, N.C.

While just the thought of waking up so early may seem daunting, pilots and WSOs have other difficulties to face. The air and ground crews must perform a thorough preflight inspection with little more than dim illumination from their flashlights. One oversight in preflight and setup could mean the difference between mission success and failure - the difference of life and death for the aircrew and the coalition forces they protect.

It doesn't get easier with

sunrise. Blinding light of the new day's sun washes out instrument panels and the glare makes even routine tasks, like refueling, a challenge.

For Mahan though, it's also a rewarding experience. She enjoys waking up early and seeing the sunrise each day.

"If you go east, it's all mountains up there, and in the winter they're all snow-covered. It's gorgeous. This really is a beautiful country," said the St. Johns, Ind., native.

However, the beauty doesn't distract her from her mission. As a weapons systems officer, she is charged with making sure her F-15E's munitions are used timely,

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Wing recognizes promotees, award winners

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 Sept. 1.

The September promotees were:

To Airman 1st Class: Donald Jenkins and Melissa Moreno

To Senior Airman: Mitchell Cargill, Christopher Dixon, David Freel, Kenneth Gasilos, Johaun Ko, Zachary McKenzie, Adam Mungin, Brandon Potts, Marshal Quebatay, Ryne Ritchie and Martin Ruddy.

To Staff Sergeant: Sean Beebe, Gary Buoniconti, Jason Christiansen, Michael Disori, Randy Gagnon, Jacob Gibson, Christopher Irwin, Jared Jones, Thomas Reilly, Paul Sliwinski and Joshua Utt.

To Technical Sergeant: Jeremy Benoit, James Decker, William Feely, Lauren Goldstein, Stacy Hannahs, Jason Koder, GERAL Messier, David Nyland, Kenneth Roudenbush, Richard Shelton, David Skonieczny, Richard Shelton, Garth West and Tremayne White.

To Master Sergeant: Aileen Letterlough, Scott Rauscher and James Redmond.

To Major: Brandon McDonald.

To Lieutenant Colonel: Timothy Devine and Kevin Virts.

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 August. The winners in their respective category were:

Outstanding Contributor: Capt. Jesse Mitchell II, 101st Joint Logistics Command

Airman of the Month: Senior Airman Kevin Ramer, 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Group

NCO of the Month: Staff Sgt. Jordan Ellis, 455th EMXG

Senior NCO of the Month: Master Sgt. Wayne Kiefer Jr., 755th Air Expeditionary Group

CGO of the Month: Capt. Christopher Auger, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group

Civilian of the Month: Mr. Miles Wagatsuma, 755th Air Expeditionary Group

Services Info

- ◆ 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.

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 - simply fill out, sign and return the Hometown News Release form to Public Affairs and PA will market these events to local media. Some examples of events include: award of Afghanistan Campaign Medal, NATO Medal, arrival for deployment, completion of deployment, etc. For more information, call public affairs at 431-3260.

Senior leaders meet to discuss, decide way ahead for force

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — Senior Air Force leaders gathered for a strategic summit Aug. 27 at Bolling Air Force Base to discuss the way ahead for the Air Force as a part of the August emphasis on strategic planning.

“The summit allows us to identify issues that need senior leader review and decide on matters affecting the entire Air Force,” Acting Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley said.

The group — including Mr. Donley, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz, assistant secretaries, major command commanders and Headquarters Air Force staff — discussed near-term issues facing the Air Force. Decisions coming out of the summit include a new mission statement for the Air Force.

The new mission statement returns the Air Force to familiar ground. “The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight and win...in air, space and cyberspace.”

While it borrows from the previous statement, this one is shorter, “simple and easy to understand,” General Schwartz said. “This is who we are. It’s what motivates us and drives us to serve.”

The group also decided to halt the initiative to reorganize maintenance functions into operations groups.

Previous global wing reorganization plans included aligning fighter and combat search and rescue maintenance units with their flying squadrons, and forming materiel groups that would encompass maintenance, logistics and aerial port squadrons. Today’s decision means maintenance groups will remain as is.

“This will reduce organizational turmoil as we focus on winning today’s fight,” General Schwartz said. He went on to say the goal is mission effective combat support and Airmen are accomplishing just that.

“Independent maintenance groups produce professionals with the highest levels of maintenance and logistics competency,” he said, “and that translates to mission effectiveness.”

Leaders reached consensus that the focus should be on fixing problems Airmen are having with the current uniforms before moving on to new uniforms.

The staff will field near-term solutions to correct issues with the Airman Battle Uniform, All Purpose Environmental Clothing System jacket, and physical training gear.

“We will consider all other uniform initiatives after we fix the issues we have now with the uniforms we work in every day,” General Schwartz said.

While the strategic summit yielded these decisions, senior leaders focused their discussion on winning today’s fight and addressing the priorities laid out by the acting secretary and the chief in past weeks.

“The priorities — reinvigorating the nuclear enterprise, prevailing in the Global War on Terror, strengthening joint warfighting capabilities, focusing on people and achieving acquisition excellence — are advanced by the decisions reached today,” Mr. Donley said.

Senior leaders received an update on nuclear enterprise matters at the event. An additional nuclear summit will be held in mid-September to discuss the nuclear enterprise roadmap. That discussion will include more dialogue on the Air Force’s cyber mission.

“Cyber operations remain a critical and growing mission area,” Mr. Donley said. “We will continue to develop our cyber capabilities while examining various organizational options.”

Leaders also heard progress reports on other mid-term agenda items including Unmanned Aircraft Systems manning initiatives, personnel end strength and Common Battlefield Airman Training.

By the end of the year, the service expects to complete an unmanned aircraft system roadmap and a review of the acquisition enterprise. Senior leaders will meet for Corona Fall in October, where they expect to make more decisions on key subjects.

Underlying all of these issues, said Mr. Donley, is how to ensure the right mix of Airmen remain in uniform. Previous force-shaping initiatives planned for the active-duty force to eventually decrease to 316,000, but in June Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said the service had been cut too deeply and called for the decrease in Air Force end-strength to stop at 330,000 people.

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effectively and precisely. She talks with the joint terminal attack controllers on the ground, often when they are just waking up. In the ground-based fighting in Afghanistan, the F-15Es perform close-air support for coalition forces.

“CAS is my favorite,” said Mahan, “for the main reason that I think its one of our, as WSOs, primary roles, where we get to shine.”

Her tenacity for flying and being a WSO stems back from her freshman year in the Air Force ROTC detachment at Purdue University. She had already developed a love for flying from her father, a private pilot and instructor, and wanted to be one of the best. Poor eyesight prevented her from becoming a pilot, but without a second thought, she embraced a career as an F-15E WSO.

Nearing the end of her extended deployment here at Bagram, Mahan still expresses a deep commitment and love for her profession.

“When things go bad for the guys on the ground, it’s your time to put a stop to it ... That’s



A crew chief with the 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron marshals an F-15E Strike Eagle of the “dawn patrol” here August 27, 2008. The two F-15Es that made up the “dawn patrol” taxied out just as first light began to break over the picturesque mountains of Afghanistan.

probably one of the best feelings when you know you’re helping them out - you’re saving their lives by putting bombs on target on time.”

Flying over Afghanistan as the new day breaks, Mahan gets a feeling of hope; hope the new day will be better than the last in this war-torn country. When asked what she would like to say to everyone back home, her answer was simple: “We’re doing the right thing.”

News Briefs

COMBAT PUSH EXTENDED HOURS

Combat Push times have been extended starting through 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.

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 the Week.

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.

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.

EAGLECASH

All deployed personnel (military, civilian and contractors) utilizing Air

Force finance office services within the USCENTCOM AOR are required to have an EagleCash Stored Value Card and highly encouraged to use it. Additionally, the Bagram Finance Office has set-up a full-service EagleCash Card Center at the Friday Bagram Bazaar for your use and convenience. The Center has an EagleCash kiosk and a cashier to sign-up new card applicants and to exchange a check for uploaded EagleCash funds. Please sign-up for your EagleCash Card today.

A.C.E. PARTY

A.C.E will be holding an End-of-Tour-Party on Friday, Sept. 5, for all Airmen grades E-1 through E-4. The party will be in the Recreation Tent in Camp Cunningham from 2000-2130L. There will be FREE pizza, drinks and music. Please join us as AEF 3/4 says farewell to Bagram Air Field.