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# Bagram News Express



*Fighting Terror, Building Peace*

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## AFCENT commander sends holiday message

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**By Lt. Gen. Gary North**  
U.S. Air Forces Central  
commander

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Rain, snow and cold temperatures are swiftly moving into Iraq, Afghanistan and the 18 other countries in the U.S. Central Command AOR, where more than 25,000 Airmen are deployed this holiday season.

While the holidays serve as an opportunity for gatherings among families and friends, those of us deployed, continue to serve where our country needs us, far from home as the New Year approaches.

The holiday season often makes being separated from loved ones feel more pointed, for both us and our family members. For our families back home, as they gather and celebrate the holidays they know their mother or father, brother or sister, son or daughter, is serving far away in harm's way, defending the freedom's we enjoy.

Though we can't celebrate the holidays with our loved ones, I encourage you to take the time to call, e-mail or send a letter to let them know they are central to our thoughts. While we're deployed, it is easy to, and a must do to focus on mission and duties, but we should also remember to keep those connections to our families and friends strong, especially this



*U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Samuel Morse*

*Lt. Gen. Gary North, U.S. Air Forces Central commander, delivers a holiday greeting over American Forces Network radio here, Christmas Eve, Dec. 24.*

time of year.

I know each of you realize that you and your families' sacrifices and services are appreciated by a grateful nation and are absolutely necessary to ensure the safety and security of millions of people in the U.S., the Middle East and throughout the world. Simply put – "Thank you!"

From snow-covered battlefields and icy fox holes throughout Europe during World War I and II — to wet tents and soggy camp sites in Vietnam — to every other past war and conflict, American service members and their families have made countless sacrifices with the knowledge and understanding that serving in the Armed Forces enables generations of Americans to enjoy the holiday

season and to enjoy your greatest gift to them – the gift of freedom.

Today, you carry on these examples of service before self, from the mountains of Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan and the deserts of Iraq and Southwest Asia, to the shores of Djibouti.

Your senior Air Force leadership is proud of each and every one of you. Your service is truly making a difference!

To all friends and families of deployed Airmen, thank you for your unwavering support and sacrifice. To all deployed Airmen, thank you for your dedicated service. May the joys of the season enable both you and your families to continue to appreciate your "gift of service" to our Air Force and our nation. Again – Thank you!

# Services Airman helps troops connect with families during the holidays

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

**BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan** — The main job of a deployed Services Airman is to provide morale and recreation activities. During the holiday season, there is even more emphasis on building morale for all the Airmen who will be spending it away from their families. One Airman here came up with two special ways to help deployed Airmen connect with their families during this time of year.

Senior Airman Marco Palacios, a services technician deployed from Beale Air Force Base, Calif., offered to videotape holiday greetings and readings of “A Night Before Christmas” for Airmen at Bagram Air Field. He turned these recordings into a DVD for Airmen to mail home. He also took photos of Airmen with Santa and created e-cards for them to send to their friends and family.

“One of the things I wanted to emphasize is morale,” said Airman Palacios, from Reno, Nev. “They are away from their families — I tried to do something so they can feel close to their families.”

With the help of the civil engineer squadron, the services troops created a holiday-themed backdrop. With a little advertising, Airman Palacios downloaded different versions of “A Night Before Christmas,” set up his camera and waited for people to show. More than 130 people recorded personal

greetings and readings of the book, and nearly 300 had their picture taken with Santa.

“Mostly people with families showed up to do it,” Airman Palacios said. “A lot of people said their families are going to watch their video Christmas Eve night.”

While more people



*U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Rachel Martinez*

*Senior Airman Marco Palacios, a services technician with the 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, takes an Airman's photo with Santa at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Dec. 17.*

posed for a photo with Santa, they weren't so willing at first.

“People are shy or some people think they are too old for a picture with Santa,” Airman Palacios said. “But once one person did it, they would see them excited and getting in to it, then they would want to do it too. We had whole work places to do it. Especially the people with kids — they wanted to tell their kids that they saw Santa in Afghanistan.”

Whether or not people felt a little old or silly, the DVDs and e-cards were greatly appreciated by those who participated.

“We can't be there, but it's a great opportunity to let our families know how we're doing and wish them the best,” said Master Sgt. Amado Azua, 455th Expeditionary Mission Support Group first sergeant, who read “A Night Before Christmas” for his family back at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. “It makes them feel like we're there with them in spirit.”

Airman Palacios said listening to all the heartfelt greetings and receiving so many words of appreciation made him realize how important it is to help Airmen connect with their families over the holiday season.

“Seeing them smile is like a paycheck for me,” he said. “We are all far away from our home and our families. This is the least I can do for them.”



# A-10s keep up fight during holidays



*Capt. Eric Fleming, A-10 pilot, performs a preflight walk-around here Dec. 2. Preflight checks help to minimize the number of in-flight emergencies by catching small problems.*



*Airman 1st Class Michael Ward, A-10 Thunderbolt II crew chief, talks to the pilot of his A-10 during engine startup here, Dec. 2. Airman Ward helps the pilot by acting as his eyes and ears outside the aircraft to make sure everything is working properly. He is deployed from the 23rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Moody Air Force Base, Ga., and hails from Cincinnati, Ohio.*



*Capt. Eric Fleming, Assistant Wing Weapons and Tactics and A-10 pilot, performs a preflight inspection of a GBU-12 here, Dec. 2. As the pilot of the aircraft, he has the final authority to say the aircraft and its ordinance is "good to go." Captain Fleming is deployed from Moody Air Force Base, Ga., and hails from Philadelphia, Pa.*



*An A-10 Thunderbolt II crewchief climbs the crew ladder to assist a pilot here, Dec. 2. The pilots, crewchiefs and aircraft all deployed from the same unit at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., so that they would be able to assume duties and missions right from their first day at Bagram Air Field.*



*Left: An A-10 Thunderbolt II, piloted by Capt. Eric Fleming, prepares for takeoff at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Dec. 2. The teeth painted on the nose of the aircraft symbolizes the legacy of the fighter squadron, dating back to the famous "Flying Tigers" of WWII.*

*U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Samuel Morse*

**THE U S AIR FORCE  
CENTRAL EXPEDITIONARY BAND  
PRESENTS:**

# **MOJAVE**



**SHOWTIMES**

**2000L 27 Dec**

**LOCATION**

**MWR Clamshell**

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## News Briefs

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### **COLD WEATHER GEAR**

Per the USAFCENT Commander: effective 1 Oct 08, the only authorized uniform in the AOR is ABUs (w/exception of Civil Engineering AFSCs - 3E0X1, 3E0X2, 3E1X1 and 3E8X1). However, since the cold weather months are quickly approaching, it is imperative we outfit our Airmen with the proper cold weather gear. Because All Purpose Environmental Clothing System (APECS) demand continues to outpace existing inventory and projected production levels, the DCU Gortex jacket w/liner and the DCU field jacket are authorized for wear with the ABU in the AOR until 1 May 2009. Additionally, those Airmen who process through an Army Power Projection Platform and are issued ACU patterned cold weather gear may wear the uniform items inside the wire, as determined by their commander.

### **NATO MEDALS:**

The NATO Medal typically takes approx. 90 days upon arrival for approval and distribution back to PERSCO. PERSCO has a spreadsheet posted to the SIPR public drive which you can view to see the status of your medal. If you notice any errors, please contact the following POCs: SSgt Amethia Dandy or MSgt Jesse Rouse at 431-2070/4409 or email [445EMSG.PERSCO@afghan.swa.army.mil](mailto:445EMSG.PERSCO@afghan.swa.army.mil)

### **GOING TDY?**

All Air Force members are required to in and out-process through PERSCO for TDYs, Emergency Leave or R&R Leave/Pass. The PAX terminal will not

manifest you until they have documentation stamped from PERSCO. All personnel assigned to the 455th are required to complete the AOR Travel Authorization Memo for any type of TDY. Please direct questions to PERSCO, 431-4409/2070.

### **COMBAT PUSH**

Effective 22 Dec 08, Combat Push has extended their hours to accommodate the surge. New times are Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the Camp Cunningham Rec Tent from 0900L-1100L and from 2230L-0030L. Services and PERSCO will be available to sign outprocessing checklists. Personnel must complete their out-processing checklist entirely, complete their Post Deployment Health Questionnaire online and pick up their medical records at Flight Medicine/Public Health before coming to Combat Push. For more information contact PERSCO, 431-2070/4409.

### **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 arrival. Accountability is tracked and will be forwarded to the 1st Sergeants.

### **NEWCOMERS INPROCESSING**

All Air Force members are required to inprocess with PERSCO. The inprocessing will start your combat pay entitlements. If you have been in the AOR for at least 30 days and you are not receiving combat pay, please stop by Finance located in the tower on

Camp Cunningham. If you know for a fact that you did not inprocess with PERSCO, then please visit PERSCO located in the Pax terminal. Call PERSCO 431-2070/4409 with any questions.

### **A.C.E. MEETINGS**

Airmen Committed To Excellence meets Fridays at 1700L/1230Z in front of Town Hall. Meetings are open to all Airmen E-1 to E-4.

### **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 Airmen in the rank of E-5 and E-6.

### **AFSA MEETINGS**

Air Force Sergeants Association Exeditonary Chapter 1657 holds meetings bi-weekly on Saturdays. The next meeting is Jan. 3 at 0800 and Jan. 17 at 1700.

### **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.

## Air Force Bowl Game

The Air Force Academy Falcons will play against the University of Houston Cougars in the 2008 Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Game Dec. 31 in Ft. Worth, Texas. The game will be aired live on AFN Sports at 2030L Dec. 31.