



BAGRAM NEWS EXPRESS

Start Right, Finish Strong

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Air Force/Staff Sgt. Jason Lake

455th EOSS change of command

Col. Raymond Strasburger, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group commander, shares his thoughts about Lt. Col. Wayne Straw's one-year tenure as the operations support squadron commander during a change of command ceremony May 20. Colonel Straw relinquished command of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron to Lt. Col. Cloyce Adams who is deployed here from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C.

Monument dedication culminates effort of embedded American advisors

By Staff Sgt. Jason Lake
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

More than 250 U.S. servicemembers and Afghan security forces celebrated seven years of military cooperation during a monument dedication ceremony at Camp Blackhorse May 14.

The ceremony also culminated

the efforts of nearly 20 Airmen, Soldiers and Sailors who have embedded with the 5th Kandak (Battalion) as training advisors.

"This monument represents hope ... a hope that future generations of Afghan Soldiers and citizens will see the sacrifices and commitments made by both the Afghan and American military working together,"

Maj. Brian Freeman said before hundreds of Afghan national army and policemen who have come to know his training team stationed just outside the capital of Kabul. "It represents a hope that one day any person can travel to Afghanistan without guns or weapons and walk in downtown Kabul [with] a true feeling of safety and security."

For the past year, the team has provided combat support and counter-insurgency training to more than 430 Afghan soldiers within the Afghan National Army.

"We've built an exceptional working relationship with our Afghan counterparts," Major Freeman explained.

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ADVISOR

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“We respect each other’s culture and religion and have many opportunities to share ideas, thoughts and similarities. The military-to-military relationship is awesome and my Kandak commander counterpart really appreciates how we are mentoring his officers and NCOs.”

The 18 Airmen on the team come from various specialties ranging from maintenance and logistics to medical and communications.

“It’s a job none of us Airmen have ever done before,” said the major deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. “We are mentoring a combat service support battalion that consists of logistics, transportation, maintenance, communications, medical and headquarters staff functions. We do all these types of missions in the Air Force, but the unique part is [Airmen] mentoring Afghan Army soldiers in a combat zone.”

The team has spent its fair share of missions outside the wire, sometimes even sleeping between convoy vehicles in remote areas of the country.

“Most of our team has more than 150 convoys and 3,000 miles under their belts,” said Major Freeman, who directs tactical operations as the convoy commander. “On many occasions, our team has lived in arduous conditions - pulling dismounted security, interacting with the local



Air Force courtesy photo

Air Force Maj. Brian Freeman, embedded training team chief for more than 20 Airmen, Soldiers and Sailors embedded with the 5th Kandak (Battalion), talks about the bond shared between his team and the Afghan National Army unit during the dedication ceremony.

population, eating MREs for days at a time and not getting a bath for five or six days. We’re all pretty good at convoying now and we certainly know and respect the dangers of convoying in Afghanistan.”

The Airmen have also gotten proficient at calling for artillery, medical evacuations and close air support missions in case the team makes contact with insurgents.

Lt. Col. Robert Fournier, who assumed command of the new 855th Air Expeditionary Squadron stood up earlier this month, also attended the

dedication to witness the accomplishments of his newly assigned Airmen.

“I was honored the invitation to attend the monument

dedication and impressed by the professionalism and dedication shown by both our Airmen and the Afghan National Army,” Colonel Fournier explained.

“The most inspiring thing I witnessed was the true camaraderie and genuine friendship that has developed between the people of both nations. I wish all Americans could have seen what we saw. They would be proud of their men and women in uniform and would share our hope for the future of this country.”

The monument dedication ceremony marked a bittersweet moment for Major Freeman as he wrapped up his one-year deployment and prepared to return home a few days later.

“A lot of work has been done between the 5th Kandak soldiers and our team,” he said. “The cooperation that we have built is truly a brotherhood that is forged day-by-day - especially when we are working collectively on missions that serve the same cause ... the future of Afghanistan.”



Air Force courtesy photo

Airmen, Soldiers and Sailors embedded with the 5th Kandak (Battalion) as training advisors salute alongside their Afghan counterparts.

We REMEMBER...

455th AEW remembers
Airmen who died
within the past year
supporting operations in
Afghanistan & Iraq

1Lt Roslyn Schulte - May 20, 2009
SrA Jacob Ramsey - Apr 10, 2009
TSgt Phillip Myers - Apr 4, 2009
SSgt Timothy Bowles - Mar 15, 2009
SSgt Timothy Davis - Feb 20, 2009
SrA Omar McKnight - Jan 17, 2009
SSgt Brian Hause - Oct 23, 2008
Maj Rodolfo Rodriguez - Sept 20, 2008
TSgt Jackie Larsen - July 17, 2008

All gave some,
some gave all.



USAFCENT honors fallen Airmen on Memorial Day

Today we will again honor our service men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our great nation as we have done for the past 141 years.

In last few years of commenting on the celebration of Memorial Day, I've discussed with you the history of Memorial Day, how it became a national holiday and even shared with you memorable quotes from speeches past. But this year, let me simply express my gratitude...and our collective respect to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our nation during past conflicts and those who have lost their lives supporting the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Let us pay special tribute to the nine airmen we lost this year supporting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are 1st Lt. Roslyn Schulte, Staff Sgt. Timothy Bowles, Staff Sgt. Timothy Davis, Tech. Sgt. Philip Myers, Senior Airman Jacob Ramsey, Maj. Rodolfo Rodriguez, Tech. Sgt. Jackie Larsen, Senior Airman Omar James McKnight and Staff Sgt. Brian Hause.

They served with distinction and honor. They are heroes to us all. As we remember those who we have lost, let us offer a "thank you" for their sacrifice--a "thank you" to their families for all they have sacrificed as well. They offered their sons and daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, mothers and fathers for our nation and for developing nations throughout the world. This does not go unnoticed by our nation, or by the people for whom our heroes shed their very lifeblood to protect and defend.

Let us remember them this Memorial Day and as you serve in your place of duty, near or far, or for those service members who can share day with their families. We will never forget their sacrifice or the sacrifices of those who have gone before us. -- Lt. Gen. Gary North

PRT medics improve medical sanitation

By Senior Airman
Ashton Goodman
Panjshir PRT

As soon as the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team arrived in the Panjshir Valley in November 2008, they noticed a need for a more sanitary way of disposing of contaminated needles.

"We saw that they were using cardboard boxes and buckets for [sharps] disposal. We also observed needles laying all over the ground," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. James Bailey, a PRT medic from Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

To solve this problem, Bailey and Air Force Tech. Sgt. Alfred Greene, a medic deployed from Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., met with the Panjshir Director of

Public Health to find some ways to safely dispose of needles.

After much brainstorming, they decided that using old ammunition cans was a fast and easy way that allowed medical facilities to transport used needles to a disposal area.

Ammunition cans are reusable and inexpensive. After they are spray-painted white with the word "SHARPS" stencilled in Dari, a clasp is placed on the lid to prevent spillage. A hole is then drilled in the top allowing needles to be safely dropped inside.

"So far, over the past few months, 20 clinics have benefited from our sharps containers, to include 17 DoPH clinics, two non-ER nongovernmental organization clinics, and five maternal

child health clinics," explained Bailey.

The clinics are provided with two cans each, one for clinic use while the other is being emptied at the disposal site.

Clinic personnel have readily accepted the program and were taught proper ways to clean the cans. Also, a placard is given to the health clinics to provide information regarding what goes into the containers and how to properly dispose of the waste in the valley's only disposal pit.

"Our goal was to provide a safe way to dispose of sharps," said Bailey, "Hopefully this program will help eliminate disease and sickness spread by biohazardous waste. Overall, we feel it's already a success because it will ensure the safety of the medical workers and the people of Panjshir," Bailey said.

NEWS BRIEFS

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: Staff Sgts. Melinda Rowe, Lauren Taylor or Master Sgt. Carey Lambert at 431-2070/4409 or email 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 O: Combat Orientation is Thursday at 0930Z/1400L at the Enduring Freedom Chapel. This is a mandatory briefing for all Air Force personnel assigned to Bagram Air Field. Accountability is tracked and will be forwarded to the first 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, visit Finance in the crow's nest tower on Camp Cunningham. If you know for a fact that you did not inprocess with PERSCO, please visit PERSCO

located in Bldg. 700 near the passenger terminal. Call 431-2070/4409 for more information.

MEO CONTACT INFO:

The Camp Cunningham Military Equal Opportunity Office at Bldg. 726 can be reached by calling 481-6226 or call the Air Force Discrimination/Sexual Harrassment Hotline at 1-866-229-7074.

EAGLE CASH:

All deployed personnel (military, civilian and contractors) utilizing Air Force finance office services within the USCENCOM 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. Sign-up for your EagleCash Card today.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

Are your immunizations up to date? Active duty members are required to stay current on all immunizations during their deployment. Report to your nearest medical treatment facility to check your status and

get vaccinated. For questions, contact Task Force Medical Public Health.



Air Force/Senior Airman Erik Cardenas

Pushing your weight around

Senior Airman Derrick Tolliver, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, bench presses 190 lbs. in "The Rock" gym at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, May 15. The 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron hosted a bench press competition for all of Bagram, consisting of lifting one's body weight as many times until failure. Airman Tolliver won in the male category with 28 repetitions at 190 pounds and 1st. Lt. Katherine Loffer, Task Force Med, won the female category with three repetitions at 135 pounds.