



BAGRAM NEWS EXPRESS

Start Right, Finish Strong

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Wing surpasses historic 5K combat hours in single month



Air Force/Staff Sgt. Jason Lake

A pair of A-10 Thunderbolt IIs from the 74th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron get their final weapons check before taking off on a close air support mission June 9. Last month the 74th EFS and 336th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron together logged a total of more than 5,000 combat flight hours over Afghanistan. The F-15s and A-10s assigned here provide close air support and airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance for American and coalition ground troops.

By Staff Sgt. Jason Lake
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

The 455th Air Expeditionary Wing surpassed a historic milestone after two fighter squadrons deployed here accumulated more than 5,000 combat flight hours in a single month.

The A-10 Warthogs, from the 74th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, and F-15E Strike Eagles, from the 336th Expeditionary Fighter

Squadron, accomplished the feat last month while providing close air support and airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance for American and coalition ground troops throughout Afghanistan.

For Cols. Raymond “Donk” Strasburger, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group, and Dave Blanks, 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Group, the accomplishment couldn’t come at a better time as both prepare for their final

week at Bagram before their respective change of command ceremonies.

“I can’t begin to tell you how proud we are of our combined maintenance and operations team,” said Colonel Blanks, a 23-year aircraft maintenance veteran. “Both units flew more hours in a single month than any previous fighter squadron deployed here. Five thousand combat flight hours in one month is unprecedented, and represents approximately five

or six months worth of flying back in the states.”

For the 336th EFS, the milestone caps off the unit’s first month in country.

“For the ‘Rockets’ to accomplish this in their first month here is particularly impressive because the maintainers, pilots, weapon system operators and more importantly the jets have to get acclimated,” Colonel Blanks said.

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Air Force/Staff Sgt. Jason Lake

Lt. Col. Christopher Didier, F-15 pilot, and Capt. Thomas Veilleux, weapons system operator, for the 336th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, walk back to the squadron after completing a close air support mission June 9.

CAS

“They’re adjusting to the environment and using a number of the systems on the aircraft differently than they do at home station.”

On the flip side, Colonel Strasburger said the 74th EFS mastered the challenge of keeping its A-10 aircraft mission-ready despite nine months of wear and tear in a combat zone. Before the 74th EFS arrived in March, its sister squadron, the 75th EFS logged more than 10,000

flight hours over a six-month deployment. Together, the two A-10 squadrons deployed from the 23rd Fighter Group have logged more than 18,000 combat flight hours in nine months.

Since the two colonels took command last summer, the wing has missed only one air tasking order line out of more than 11,000 close air support sorties generated.

“I have never seen a work relationship between the operations group and maintenance group like this,” Colonel Strasburger, a 25-year veteran A-10 pilot said of the competitive relationship

sleeves, worked together and found a way to make things happen because they knew what was at stake - safeguarding America’s and our coalition partners’ sons and daughters.”

As more American and coalition ground troops deploy ahead of the Afghanistan’s scheduled elections in August and the demand for air support steadily increases, Colonel Strasburger said the maintenance and operations team will continue to do whatever it takes to protect “the 18-year-old warriors on the ground.”

“Our guys are out there making it happen, working long hours and sometimes under less than optimal conditions without a complaint,” he said. “It’s a 24-hour a day, seven-days a week operation and we never stop because there’s always someone out there with their life on the line who’s depending on us.”

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that typically exists between the two groups at home stations. “No matter what the challenge, our combined teams rolled up their

Airmen provide training for Afghan National Police

By Senior Airman Erik Cardenas
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

In 2005, the State Department contracted civilian trainers to provide law enforcement skills to Afghanistan National Police, but three years later came the realization that the police really needed a logistics system to support the growing police force.

The lesson the U.S. learned is sound logistics support is crucial for retaining the trained policemen in the Afghan force.

A year ago, Air Force Maj. Michelle Hall became the U.S.'s first Logistics-Embedded Training Team areas advising the police on building a national logistics system.

While coalition forces and the Afghanistan National Army are charged with clearing insurgents in Afghanistan, the ANP is charged with maintaining peace and stability in local villages.

Twenty Airmen from the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan in Kabul are charged with training ANP on a new NATO-standard logistics system. The Airmen, joined by 18 Sailors are logistics mentors for 400

ANP logisticians, expanding that ANP logistics force to 7,000 strong across 365 police districts in the country. The team provides mentoring in maintenance, supply, transportation, and Humvee training.

"The ANP is often criticized for being uneducated and corrupt, but our experience has been different - many of the ANP we work with are smart, willing, and committed to reforms that reduce the corruption that long troubled the police force," according to Maj. Tara Parker, senior mentor for the Ministry of Interior's new Materiel Management Center.

The team helped open a logistics center in Herat, enabling police in the west of Afghanistan to receive supplies, vehicle maintenance, and food--the type of support that was once difficult to receive in the remote western region.

As Afghanistan prepares for presidential elections in August, the U.S. is supporting a rapid expansion in the ANP. Last month, the Log-ETT trained eight Kabul City Police Logistics Officers on procedures and documentation of organizational

clothing and individual equipment in which members distributed equipment to 750 new ANP at three separate training sites.

"With the expansion of the Afghan forces going on, you really see how important security is when new recruits, as young as 18 years-old, stepping up to take on the responsibilities for their nation," said Senior Master Sgt. J.J. Hughes, deployed from 366th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Mountain Home AFB, Idaho.

With the upcoming Afghanistan national elections in August, training ANP members is critical for maintaining security.

"Afghanistan is reforming and growing quickly - the people want to put the violence behind them, and that's why they're coming forward so readily to join the police and the army. Our job is to help build the logistics system that will support this bigger force, and to reform the old system's Soviet-style management," Master Sgt. Erik Rush commented, shortly before he returned home to Lackland AFB, Texas, after finishing a year-long deployment with the police.

Air Force uniform policy changes

The following provides a snapshot of approved uniform wear. Follow-on messages will be released that contain detailed guidance and instructions. All information will be incorporated into AFI 36-2903.

- Effective Oct. 1, 2010, trousers on utility uniforms will be tucked into boots and give a bloused appearance. Tucking had previously been optional.

- The green fleece formerly worn only as the All-Purpose Environmental Clothing System liner is authorized Air Force-wide as an outer-wear garment. The addition of the name, rank and service designators to the green fleece when worn as an outer-wear

garment is authorized.

- Airmen may use personal cellular telephones while in uniform and walking. Cell phones may be worn on either left or right side; however, the cell phone must be a conservative color. Military customs and courtesies are required and take precedence. Talking on a phone is no excuse for not saluting. Still prohibited is wearing hands-free devices such as cell phones attachments worn on the ears.

- Enlisted chevrons will be worn on light weight blue jacket sleeves instead of the metal rank insignias on the collar effective Jan. 1, 2010.

- The ends of boot laces must be tucked into boots. Wrapping the laces around boot is authorized.

- The length of airman battle uniform lower leg pocket will increase by approximately

1/2 inch.

- Upper sleeve pockets are authorized on fire-resistant clothing authorized for the Central Command region.

- Airmen earning and awarded the Army Parachute Riggers badge are authorized permanent wear on all uniform combinations. For the airman battle uniform and the battle dress uniform, the badge will be blue. On the desert combat uniform the approved color is brown.

- Wearing the black Army Air Assault Badge on the battle dress uniform is authorized upon graduation from Air Assault School.

- Organizational ball caps are not authorized to be attached to either lower leg cargo pockets on the BDU trousers.

- The female ABU trouser fly buttons will be the same as on men's pants.

New command to focus on Afghanistan battle tactics

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said a new “intermediate” command set for Afghanistan will allow the commander to concentrate on day-to-day tactical events across the country.

Gates spoke to reporters traveling with him aboard an E-4B aircraft taking him to NATO meetings in Brussels after leaving Regional Command South meetings in Maastricht, Netherlands.

U.S. officials see the new command arrangement to be a NATO International Security Assistance Force function, Gates said. Army Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez - now the secretary’s senior military assistant - would be the commander.

If approved for the post, Rodriguez would serve under the command of Army Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, whom the Senate confirmed yesterday to receive his fourth star and take command of ISAF and U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Officials expect him to take command this week.

“The problem we needed to address is [that] the commander of ISAF under the current arrangement has far too many responsibilities to be able to guide the tactical battle on a day-to-day basis across the country,” Gates said. “The plan is for General McChrystal and the



Army/Pfc. Derek L. Kuhn

U.S. Army soldiers rehearse dismounting a CH-47 Chinook helicopter before a recent air assault operation on Bagram last month. The U.S. soldiers, assigned to the 509th Infantry Division’s 3rd Battalion, participated in a joint effort with Afghan soldiers and border police.

[British] deputy commander - Royal Marines Lt. Gen. Jim Dutton - to have more of a strategic role in looking across the country at a more elevated level in terms of cooperation between civil and military efforts.”

The command as proposed would be an intermediate headquarters under the ISAF commander that would focus on the tactical situation. “It would be very much like the corps commander in Iraq under the Multinational Force Iraq commander,” Gates said. “So you’ve got somebody with the overarching responsibility for strategy, but somebody working the day-to-day battle.”

The secretary said the

proposal has broad support across NATO, with the North Atlantic Council - the alliance’s top political arm - giving the unofficial go-ahead. “This is an agreement in principle,” Gates said.

Gates said he has told McChrystal to develop a detailed implementation plan for the new command within 60 days. Rodriguez will deploy to Afghanistan soon and will serve as deputy commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, until the plan is approved.

“Immediately on the establishment of this ISAF headquarters, he will take off the U.S. hat and put on an ISAF hat, and his only role will be in an alliance

role,” Gates said.

The secretary said he hopes the plan will be adopted before August.

In Maastricht, Gates and other defense ministers with forces in Afghanistan’s Regional Command South area of operations received a briefing from Dutch army Maj. Gen. Mart de Kruif, who commands those forces. The secretary said the briefing was “realistic, but encouraging,” and that the Dutch general detailed how the command will use the additional American troops now being deployed to the region.

“He clearly has specific plans in mind to use the additional forces in a way to get maximum effect,” the

secretary said.

The ministers also spoke about coordination of provincial reconstruction teams in the south and the need for a civil-military cell in the headquarters to look at the situation across Regional Command South.

The defense ministers also stressed the importance that civilian agencies bring to the region, Gates said, noting that he encouraged his counterparts to send more civilian experts to the area. The United States has sent 100 civilians - mostly from the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Agriculture Department - to the region, and they

have been absorbed into existing teams.

Gates said the ministers are pleased with the growing cooperation among Afghanistan, Pakistan and ISAF. The creation of border coordination centers is a concrete example of this cooperation. "Everyone is very supportive of the Pakistani operations in Swat and elsewhere," Gates said. "But they are also very mindful of Pakistani sovereignty and the need to work with them as a partner."

The additional troops are coming in well before the Afghan elections in August. Gates said NATO must shift the momentum in the fight against

the Taliban and other terror groups in Afghanistan.

"It's my view - and, I think, the president's - that if we can show we are making progress, if we're headed in the right direction, then the American people and the Congress will sustain this effort," he said. "But if in a year or so, it appears that we are in a stalemate and we're taking even more casualties, then patience will wear thin pretty soon."

The same is true for the NATO allies, he said. "But I think we are putting all the assets in place for the first time to have a reasonable prospect for success to shift that momentum," Gates 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, call PERSCO at 431-2070/4409 or email 455EMSG.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 Hotline at 1-888-231-4058.

EAGLE CASH: 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. 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.