



BAGRAM NEWS EXPRESS

Start Right, Finish Strong

Vol. 3 Issue 2, July 19, 2009

Searcy awarded Bronze Star Medal, reflects on EMSG

By Capt. David Faggard
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Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan -- In a ceremony fitting for a true warrior, Col. Steven L. Kwast, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing commander awarded Col. Patricia Searcy, outgoing 455th Air Expeditionary Mission Support Group commander the Bronze Star Medal, first oak leaf cluster outside the base Fire Department July, 10.

Colonel Searcy was lauded for many quality of life improvements here, to include bringing the new fitness center to Bagram. Her Aerial Port Squadron Airmen also streamlined aerial port processes ensuring the base was the "most productive airfield in



Colonel Steven L. Kwast, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing commander, congratulates Col. Patricia Searcy, outgoing 455th Air Expeditionary Mission Support Group commander, after pinning on her Bronze Star Medal, July 10. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

Bagram history," according to the citation.

Deployment was nothing new for this commander who has seen five AEF rotations come through in her year deployed here and when she reflected back on her time, the people and the mission made an impression.

"What we do here is

vital to quality of life; working the ramp; building facilities; everything we do impacts the wing," she said.

When asked what her best memory was here, she said there were "too many," and related stories about many of the 1,100 plus Airmen she had under her command.

Colonel Kwast said there were three qualities about Col. Searcy that made her stick out from others.

"She has a fierce loyalty to the mission and to her people. She's tenacious and vicious about her people. And she has courage to do the right thing all the time," he said.

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Colonel Steven L. Kwast, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing commander, hands the guidon to Col. Christopher Pike, incoming 455th Air Expeditionary Mission Support Group commander, at a change of command ceremony held July 10. Colonel Pike arrives from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

Flyleaf delivers high-spirits to Bagram troops

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan -- Nearly a thousand service members were treated to a healthy dose of hard rock recently thanks to the Texas-based band Flyleaf.

On a tour sponsored by AKA Productions, the band arrived at Bagram Air Field just in time to take the stage in the Morale, Recreation, and Welfare "clamshell" tent, somewhat late from a previous show at Forward Operating Base Ramrod in southern Afghanistan.

While waiting for Flyleaf's arrival, the band's opening act consisted of a group of service members playing the videogame Rock Band. Projected on a massive screen, people took turns singing and playing on guitar and drum game controllers while the crowd howled for more.

"The Rock Band part was fun," said Army Pfc. Jessica Kimball. "They should do that more often. It's a good way for people to interact with each other."

The warm-up act starred a "band" that won a Rock Band competition on Bagram just weeks prior. Many of the service members who took the stage participate every Wednesday in a weekly get-together for, what else, Rock Band night.

"Rock Band is important because it's the closest thing on BAF to a party," said Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Miller. "It's a great social event and anybody can be a rock star for an evening."

Flyleaf got into the electronic gaming world with one of their songs, "I'm So Sick" appearing on the Rock Band video game.

After two hours of jamming, the "Rock Band night" regulars relinquished the stage to the newly arrived Flyleaf, who took the stage to a mass of cheering people.

First up in their hour-long set was a new song titled "Justice and Mercy".

"This first song was written with all of you in mind," said vocalist Lacey Sturm as she greeted the crowd.

In the lyrics, the words "The living and dying, surviving, we're trying to breathe in safety - come home safely" were written for Soldiers, said tour manager Kat Hartmann.

"The song is about respect for the troops," Hartmann went on. "We respect everything they've done like putting their lives on the line, which is also in the lyrics to the song."

As the musical set began, the intensity of the crowd was audibly carried up a notch when Sturm's lyrical voice turned to primal scream in the middle of "Breathe Today", a song off their debut, self-titled album "Flyleaf".

"We've travelled overseas to Europe and other places before," said Hartmann. "But we've never gone into a war zone."

Their first ever tour for the troops took them from Qatar to a remote outpost called FOB Bayload in southern Afghanistan near the Pakistan border.

"The FOB is a really rough place," said Sturm. "They just have the bare essentials and the guys there said no one had been out to see them in years, so we were really excited to get out to see them."

According to Sturm, Flyleaf had wanted to come see the troops for a while and the band got lucky when another group cancelled its tour.

Travelling light, Flyleaf performed their shows acoustically, which is something they're not used

to doing. In addition to a light equipment load, two members of the band couldn't make the tour. Bass player Pat Seals and guitarist Sameer Bhattacharya stayed behind for personal reasons while lead singer Sturm's husband Josh stepped in to play guitar for the duration of the tour. But in true wartime fashion, Flyleaf did the very best with what was available.

"They did a great job with what they had," said Army Pfc. Michael Langford. "The show was great and it's nice to know that people actually do care about us."



Flyleaf vocalist Lacey Sturm performs in front of hundreds on Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Michael Greenberger)

And care they do. Flyleaf got their start in Belton, Texas, a "stone's throw" from one of the largest military bases in America, Fort Hood.

The band played lots of shows near Fort Hood, Sturm explained. "But this was our first time out playing to a completely 'military' audience," Sturm said. "It was just overwhelming to look out into the crowd and see nothing but uniforms."

The Flyleaf show was full of special treats for the troops. According to Hartmann, the group played their new songs "Chasm" and "Circle" from their upcoming album "Memento Mori" for the first time live. The band also stuck around and signed autographs for anyone who wanted them, a process that took the rockers well past 2 a.m.

"I think that after being exhausted from flying all day and performing multiple concerts, the fact that they offered to stay, sign autographs, and take pictures with the troops really exemplifies how down to earth and selfless they really are," said Army Staff Sgt. Charlene Fick. "They stated during the show how proud they were of us, but I am proud of them for thinking of us and jumping at the opportunity to come to a somewhat dangerous area to perform for us."

"This was our first tour for the troops," said Sturm. "I hope we can come back and do it again."

Airmen make combat milestone while supporting Coalition operations in Afghanistan

By Capt. David Faggard
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BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan -- Taking the fight to the enemy, Airmen here hit a major milestone recently when they completed their 2,000th combat mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The aircrew on-board the EC-130H Compass Call provided direct support to Coalition ground forces in Afghanistan.

The Airmen are assigned to the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing's 41st Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron and are deployed from Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

The mission was like any other, according to Capt. Kelly Weber, a Compass Call pilot from Ft. Worth, Texas. "It was a very rewarding mission," he said while not discussing the exact details of the sortie due to opera-



Staff Sergeant Andres Jaramillo, working on the wing, and Tech Sgt. Jose Rodriguez, both from the 41st Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Unit, perform maintenance on the EC-130H Compass Call. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

tional security.

Often called a "Super-E" model, some of the EC-130H aircraft are more than 40 years old. The aircraft's electronics dis-

rupt enemy command and control and are often used to attack hostile communications.

"We're a small community with a small

inventory of aircraft," said Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Chris Kirschman. "We're one hundred percent committed to the mission and this couldn't get done without our great maintainers on the ground."

The three crewmembers discussing the mission, none of whom were in the Air Force on Sept. 11, 2001, weren't even aware that it was such a monumental flight.

It was almost "routine," said Staff Sgt. Ashley House, from Portsmouth Va., as Airmen from around the world are in the skies and on the ground supporting operations here.

The mission was about seven hours and supporting the Coalition forces was "very rewarding," said First Lt. Lori Brophy, an Electronic Warfare Officer, from Raymond, Ne. "They're very professional and know what capabilities we bring to the fight."



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NEWS BRIEFS

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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 Wednesday at 0830Z/1300L at the Enduring Faith 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) using Air Force finance office services within the USCENCOM AOR are required to have an EagleCash Stored Value Card and highly encouraged to use it.

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.

PAPERLESS HOMETOWN NEWS RELEASE: Just arrived here at Bagram? Got promoted? Hit a milestone in your career? Tell your family and friends at home by sending a paperless Hometown News Release available on the Bagram Air Field public Web site at this link: <https://hnforms.dmasa.dma.mil/lfserver/455AEWBAGRAM>. Just fill out the form and hit submit. It's that easy.

Greetings from
CALIFORNIA

Calling all **Sacramentoans:**

If you are in the Air Force and would like to do a

video shoutout that will be aired during

Air Force Week (Sept 5-13th)

in Sacramento at the AirShow,

the River Cat's stadium and

the Monarch's stadium,

Contact: SrA Susan Tracy at 431-3260 or

susan.tracy@bgab.centaf.af.mil

DEADLINE: 1 AUGUST 2009