



BAGRAM NEWS EXPRESS



START RIGHT. FINISH STRONG Vol. 3 Issue 3 July 26, 2009

Commander mourns loss of BAF Airmen

By Col. Steven L. Kwast, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Commander

My fellow Airmen, I write to you with a heavy heart as I mourn the recent loss of two more Airmen.

Since I've taken command of this extraordinary Wing, we've lost five teammates and I ask that you keep their loved ones in your thoughts and prayers as we remember and honor our fallen.

Our fallen Airmen include Lt. Col. Mark Stratton, Capt.

Thomas Gramith, Capt. Mark McDowell, Lt. Roslyn Schulte and SrA. Ashton Goodman. I am confident our Airmen have gone to a better place and I pray for them and their families.

These five were brave, courageous and

loving Airmen, dedicated to their families, our mission, our Wing and the Country. I, like many of you,

your commanders, the Chaplains or the Combat Stress Team. They are here to help, as we all are.

We're fighting a ferocious enemy; our nation demands that we be razor sharp and that we're 100% fo-



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Even as a memorial service for the recent casualties on BAF was being held, maintenance professionals readied aircraft for their daily missions in the skies of Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo/Capt. David Faggard)

mourn for them. These Airmen are national treasures which we will never get back. However, you must mourn them in your own way. I urge you to seek out counsel during this tough time and discuss this with your First Sergeants,

This is a dangerous business we're in and we must never forget our valiant heroes. This is not a time to lose focus; it's a time to mourn and honor our fellow Airmen while continuing to engage and defeat America's enemies.

cused on the task at hand - we must take the fight to our enemy and let them know we mean business in all that we do while honoring our fellow Airmen.

We're all here supporting a cause that is much bigger than any one Airman.

We're here defending our homeland, defending our way of life and protecting our peaceful Afghan allies. This is a fight that we must and will win.

Remember and honor our fallen Airmen. Start Right, Finish Strong.

Historic Flying Tigers Excel at Close Air Support Mission in Afghanistan

By Tech. Sgt. John Jung, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- They trace their heritage back to the famous Flying Tigers of WWII's war-torn China. In homage to the storied Airmen of the past, the 74th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, deployed from Moody Air Force Base, Ga., still has the iconic sharks face painted on the front of their A-10 Thunderbolt II's, lovingly nicknamed the "Warthog."

The Warthog's mission is to provide close air support and precision engagement missions throughout Afghanistan on a daily basis in support of Coalition ground forces.

But before the pilots ever get in the Warthog, it's the 74th Aircraft Maintenance Unit that gets the aircraft airborne. There has not been a single day in the deployment of the 74th EFS that squadron didn't have at least two aircraft airborne providing support to their warrior counterparts on the ground.

"Just like the Airmen that defended China in World War II, the 74th AMU is often short on resources, maintain aging aircraft and must make do with what they can," said Capt. James Schieser, 74th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Unit, Officer-in-Charge. "The strong leadership, dedication and perseverance of our non-commissioned officers, senior non-commissioned officers and officer corps, are what ensure every aircraft is fully mission-capable. The maintainers of the 74th AMU understand, with the Flying Tiger legacy they inherited, failure is not an option." To date the Flying Tigers have broken records by flying upwards of 12,000 mission hours, expend-

ing more than 100 tons of ordinance in the close air support mission since arriving in February 2009. However, many times all it took was a show of force to end an engagement.

"We seek to avoid civilian casualties in all our operations – period," said Senior Master Sgt. Victor Castillo, 74th AMU Weapons Section Superintendent. "We have a variety of methods we use including loading of precision guided munitions,

monthly updates of aircraft digital maps, and daily maintenance of our targeting systems to ensure the safety of innocent civilians on the ground."

But when enemy combatants don't flee after a show of force, the Warthog can deliver a precise strike to protect Coalition ground forces.

Army Specialist Jason Dorsey, "C" Company, 178th Infantry, saw firsthand the precision



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Staff Sgt. James Irvin, from the 455th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron's, 74th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, performs an air cycle machine inspection to ensure the A-10 Thunderbolt functions properly, here July 20. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

and power of the Warthog.

"The A-10s were a valuable asset to us on ground missions. Their speed and precise targeting provided great support for us and kept the bad guys' heads down. I always felt better knowing they had our backs," Spc. Dorsey said.

"We have so many soldiers coming in from the field to thank us – it's their stories of desperately needing 'air' and seeing an A-10 flying overhead providing cover for them that kept us energized and motivated," said Senior Master Sgt. Thomas E. Moore, 74th AMU Lead Production Superintendent. "It kept us working hard even when it seemed all we were doing was launching and recovering jets 24/7."

CJCS speaks to servicemembers about families, resources for Afghanistan, leadership

By Capt. David Faggard
455th Air Expeditionary
Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan

- In a clam-shell tent packed with standing room only crowds, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen discussed top issues with more than 300 servicemembers here recently.

The Admiral discussed families, a resource-strained operation in Afghanistan and leadership.

"I believe you make up the best military in history, not just of our country, but on this Earth," Admiral Mullen said. "I believe in the depth of my heart and soul, we can succeed here."

The Admiral asked for a show of hands of how many deployments there were amongst the crowd. Several raised their hands that this was their first. But, for a few they were on their sixth and seventh.

"The average is about four deployments," he said. And



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Staff Sgt. Patrice Hansen, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Legal Office, receives a personal coin from Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Sergeant Hansen hails from Creole, La., and is deployed from Misawa Air Base, Japan. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. John Jung)

as he said this he moved on to an important issue he said he focuses on, families.

"It's not just about those who serve; family support is vital," he said looking at the all volunteer force while thanking the families

at home who sacrifice so much while servicemembers are in Afghanistan.

With this, he said the focus has been on Iraq and that resources will start to shift to this country, a country that's been at

war for more than 30 years.

We're about to "shift our main effort from Iraq to Afghanistan," he said. And "getting it right for the civilians requires security."

"The strategy is right; now we must resource it correctly," he said. "We need to do everything we can to eliminate civilian casualties. It's about how many civilians we protect."

"We're very committed to getting the resources here for this fight," he said. "You are living in a great time of change in Afghanistan, and leading in this time of change is absolutely critical."

"The toughest times result in the best leaders stepping forward," referring to leadership at all ranks, not just the top. "Focus on the people side of this to take care of each other."

As the Admiral concluded, he made it a point to shake every single person's hand and offered a "thank you for what you're doing here."



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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