



Bagram News Express

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Airman receives Purple Heart after IED blast

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

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- While most Airmen were celebrating the Air Force's 62nd birthday, Tech. Sgt. Richard Gibbons woke up dazed and scared in an operating room at the Craig Joint Theater Hospital here with doctors and nurses tending to wounds inflicted by the enemy.

Sergeant Gibbons, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Airman, said he owes his life to the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle he was traveling in recently when that vehicle hit an Improvised Explosive Device in the Logar Province.

The soft spoken and humble Colorado Air National Guard noncommissioned officer from Buckley Air Force Base, Colo., was awarded the Purple Heart Medal recently by Brig. Gen. Steven Kwast, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing commander for the wounds he received.

The wounds aren't serious, according to the seven-year Air Force veteran, but he credits the skilled men and women in the hospital here for his expected 100 percent recovery. He's lauded their efforts and attention to detail with the surgery, the continued physical therapy and tests for Traumatic



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Chief Master Sgt. Jerry S. Shelton Jr. (left) and Tech. Sgt. Richard Gibbons (right), both Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians, inspect an EOD bomb removal robot here. Sergeant Gibbons and his team have disarmed dozens of Improvised Explosive Devices and unexploded ordnance while deployed. His team has gone on dozens of patrols that have helped clear more than 950 miles of roads from explosives. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

Brain Injury, to name a few.

"His actions directly saved American and Coalition lives," said Master Sgt. Phil Hartzell 755th Air Expeditionary Group's EOD NCOIC here. "Taking the fight to the enemy on his terms and in the enemy's home," is what Gibbons did. "Almost any man can be sustained in combat, and many are exceptional followers, but this man is an outstanding leader of men in the highly stressful combat environment."

Air Force EOD is vital to op-

erations in Afghanistan, according to Gibbons.

"By securing and clearing the roads and villages of IEDs and UXOs [un-exploded ordnance], other combat units have the freedom of movement to engage the enemy and protect the local community," he said.

From his five months in Afghanistan, Sergeant Gibbons said many of the locals he's

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BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Brig. Gen. Steven Kwast, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing commander, presents the Purple Heart to Tech. Sgt. Richard Gibbons, an explosives ordnance disposal member attached to the 755th Air Expeditionary Group recently. Sergeant Gibbons was wounded in combat by an Improvised Explosive Device. Gibbons is deployed from Buckley Air Force Base, Colo., and hails from Denver, Colo. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

EOD

been around are happy that he's there but there's an ever-present threat from the enemy.

"It's hard to tell exactly who they [the enemy] are," the Tucson, Ariz. native said, pausing to reflect on the EOD Airmen serving on the frontlines. "But our EOD Airmen, who have been seriously wounded, humble me every day; it's amazing that so many give blood and flesh to the country. My mind wanders back to other service-members who are the real heroes - those running and shooting every day; they are the real heroes."

When asked about his most memorable EOD experience, Sergeant Gibbons recalled a

special event.

"I was in a bomb suit working an IED," Sergeant Gibbons said. "I heard a horn blast; confused, I looked around and came face to face with an Afghan child. He looked terrified of me. Knowing the grave danger, I had no choice but attempt to further scare the child away. Raising the tools I had in my hands I started jumping up and down and screaming, then the kid was jolted out of a trance and bolted away as fast as he could. Frazzled, I turned back to my work and disarmed the IED. I will forever remember the Afghan child I had to scare the hell out of to protect."

His team had disarmed dozens of IEDs and UXOs and also participated in dozens of patrols

that have helped clear more than 950 miles of roads from explosives.

Chief Master Sgt. James McCarty, 755th Air Expeditionary Group superintendent here said Sergeant Gibbons "struck me as very humble man and proud to serve" as he reflected on the Purple Heart ceremony.

The NCO didn't lose his sense of humor after the explosion.

"I was really proactive in trying not to get this medal," Sergeant Gibbons said referring to the Purple Heart. "My job is to actually not get that medal. It's kind of like I failed a little bit."

Editor's Note: Exact details of the explosion were omitted for security concerns.

Father and son Guardsmen deploy to Afghanistan together

By Senior Airman Felicia Juenke
455th Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Missing family members is a common feeling many Airmen have while deployed, but for two Airmen, serving with the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, that feeling is a little less prominent. This father and son duo, from a family of Airmen, deployed to war together.

Lieutenant Colonel Bartley O'Toole, 774th EAS director of operations and his son Senior Airman Bartley O'Toole, an Aircrew Flight Equipment journeyman, are both deployed here for several months from the 152nd Airlift Wing, Nevada Air National Guard.

A third O'Toole, cadet Brogan O'Toole, is serving his country as a senior at the Air Force Academy.

Back home as the 192nd Airlift Squadron commander, Colonel O'Toole felt it was his duty to volunteer for the deployment with his squadron.

"To watch the squadron deploy without me prior to becoming squadron commander was tough," said Colonel O'Toole. "Now that I am the squadron commander I could never fathom the thought of the squadron deploying without me."

"It's just like being at home station, except my dad always tells me to call my mom."



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Lieutenant Colonel Bartley O'Toole (left) and his son Senior Airman Bartley O'Toole (right), both from the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, hold the University of Nevada, Reno flag here. The elder O'Toole graduated from, and the younger O'Toole attends the university. By the luck of the draw both were deployed on the same rotation to the same destination. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

Airman O'Toole also volunteered to deploy, "The squadron asked for volunteers, so I took the opportunity," he said.

Colonel O'Toole has had nine previous deployments in 25 years, but for Airman O'Toole, this is his first deployment.

The two could have been separated and sent at different times, but it was the luck of the

draw that they were deployed on the same rotation to the same destination. They enjoy being deployed together, and in some ways it's the same old routine -- the family at home worries about those far away.

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DEPLOY

"It's just like being at home station, except my dad always tells me to call my mom," Airman O'Toole said.

"I understand he's an Airman [and an adult], but every time I talk to my wife she asks about him, so there's a parental feeling there too," said Colonel O'Toole.

"I am glad my father is there to look after my older brother on his first deployment," said Cadet O'Toole.

Not only did Airman O'Toole make his father proud by joining the Air Force, but he is also attending the same university his father graduated from. Colonel O'Toole graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno with an Agricultural Science degree in 1987. When he's not fulfilling his duty with the Air Force, Airman O'Toole also attends the University of Nevada, Reno.

Airman O'Toole is only 30 credits short of finishing his degree in Criminal Justice which should take about a year.

Upon graduation, Airman O'Toole will work towards becoming an officer in the Air National Guard and hopes to be a pilot or maybe a navigator just like his dad.

Cadet O'Toole also has aspirations of becoming a flyer, seemingly a family tradition. He is slated to enter pilot training after graduation from the Air Force Academy.

"I am very proud of my family and the fact that all three of us are in the military," said Cadet O'Toole. "I do worry about my father and brother quite a bit when they are deployed, but I am still very proud of both of them."

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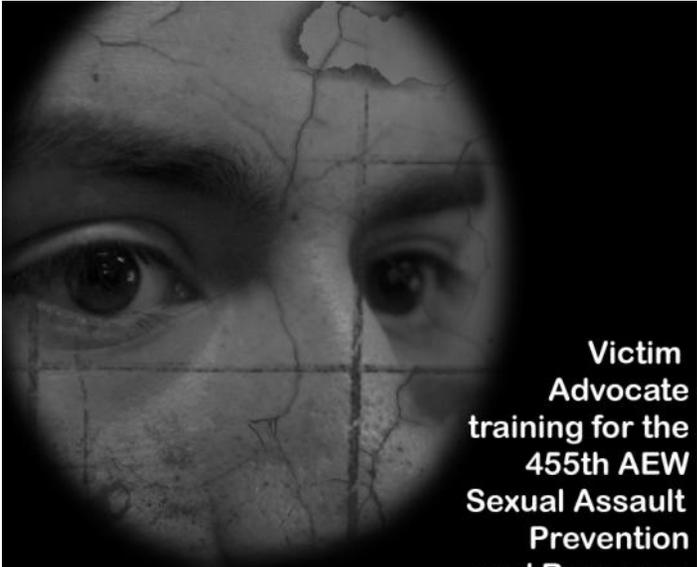
NEWS BRIEFS

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, 431-4426.

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.

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/lserver/455AEWBAGRAM>. Just fill out the form and hit submit. It's that easy.

COMBAT O: Combat Orientation is Wednesday at 0100Z/0530L at the MWR Clamshell (Near the Four Corners). Uniform is Air Force PT uniform. This is a mandatory briefing for all Air Force personnel assigned to Bagram Airfield. Accountability is tracked and will be forwarded to the first sergeants.



Victim Advocate training for the 455th AEW Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program.

No experience needed | Men and women welcome
All ranks are encouraged to participate.

Training will be 0700 - 1700, 29-30 October
in the **Wing Conference Room**
(Across from Command Post in the LRS Building, 2nd Floor).

If you are interested, please contact Capt Tabitha Stump:
431-4060 or tabitha.stump@bgab.afcent.af.mil





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774 EAS - SSgt. Jerome Roberts

455 EAEF - MSgt. Cliff Smith

335 EFS (F-15) - Capt. David Nierenberg

755 AEG - SrA Frances Castillo/Capt. Bursick

577 EPBS - A1C Matthew Gilder

755 AES - TSgt. Janna Kuh

504 EASOG - Capt. Jacob Chisolm

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