



Bagram News Express



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Lone Airman at COP Keating recounts enemy attack

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BOSTICK, Afghanistan --Being the only Joint Expeditionary Tasked Airman assigned to an Army Combat Outpost on the outskirts of Afghanistan-Pakistan border can be a little intimidating and scary.

Being assigned to COP Keating while under attack by hundreds of insurgents armed with assault rifles and rocket propelled grenades is absolutely frightening and exactly where Staff Sgt. Matthew McMurtrey found himself on the morning of Oct. 3, 2009.

Sergeant McMurtrey is a JET Airman from the 755th Air Expeditionary Group, based at Bagram Airfield, and was attached to the Army's 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry, 4th Brigade, 4th Infantry Division at COP Keating. His job there was to set up and maintain a satellite system used to provide Soldiers with internet accessibility. While under direct enemy fire, he overcame his fear, performing his assigned duties admirably according to Army and Air Force supervisors.

The large, coordinated attack began with rocket propelled grenade and machine gun fire at approximately 6 a.m., rocking him out of a sound sleep.

"Basically it knocked me out of bed, it was a pretty big hit," said the 9-year Air Force veteran deployed from Barksdale Air Force Base, La. "The room was covered in dust and I started to hear more explosions... [I] figured OK, this is an attack," continued the Spokane, Wash., native.

Sergeant McMurtrey grabbed his M-16, put on his individual body armor [IBA] and just as he had practiced in a battle drill a week ago, he ran



Staff Sgt. Matthew McMurtrey

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out of his sleeping quarters, turned left and went to his battle position at the COP Keating's aid station.

As he arrived at the aid station, Army Capt. Christopher Cordova, a medic from the 3-61 Calvary, 4th ID, Fort Carson, Colo., told him to get into the back of the aid station as far back as he could go.

"I usually push people to a safe position," said Captain Cordova. "The safest place was back away from the door, behind a wall."

This turned out to be an accurate assessment as approximately 30 minutes into the firefight an RPG exploded on the corner of the aid station's front door, showering shrapnel on everyone in the aid station except Captain Cordova and Sergeant McMurtrey.

"It ricocheted off one of the side walls and hit [a soldier] - he was a couple of inches from me - it hit him in the calf and peppered a couple of the other medics with shrapnel and [also] hit the front of his IBA and started firing off some rounds that were in his vest," said Sergeant McMurtrey.

Sergeant McMurtrey and the medics moved quickly to remove the Soldier's vest and other gear and treated his injuries, putting him in a side room in the aid station. At that time Sergeant McMurtrey was given an M-4 instead of his M-16 and posted behind a table as security at the side door of the aid station.

"I just pointed the red dot at the opening of the door and waited," he said.

Wounded U.S. and Afghan soldiers arrived shortly after the RPG attack. The first to arrive at the aid station were Afghan National Army sol-

diers brought down from the main entry control point who bore the brunt of the first wave of RPGs.

"They [the ANA] started coming in pretty beat up ... with a lots of [bad looking] wounds," said Sergeant McMurtrey.

According to Captain Cordova about five to seven ANA soldiers came in all at once taking up most of his medics' attention. After they were treated and stabilized they were moved back to where Sergeant McMurtrey was posted as security.

"We didn't have a lot of medical personnel on hand so we utilized Sergeant McMurtrey by having him keep an eye on IV [intravenous] bags, checking on patients to make sure they were still conscious and making sure they didn't require any more treatment," said the captain.

As the day progressed, RPG and small arms fire increased, as did the casualties coming into the aid station. Enemy attacks soon took out the power in the building and the medics had to treat patients with only emergency power to work with.

Soon afterwards the first U.S. casualty was brought into the aid station. Sergeant McMurtrey was ordered to clear his weapon and place his body in a body bag, which ended up being placed only a few feet next to where he was pulling security duty.

"I monitored and changed out a few IVs that were low and if anybody looked like they were not doing too well I let the medics know. About that time we heard reports that the enemy was in the wire ... and basically I was waiting for someone to come through the door at that point. It was pretty

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hairly the whole time," said Sergeant McMurtrey.

A short time later Air Force aircraft were on scene and engaging the enemy, according to Army 1st Lt. Cason Shrode, COP Keating's fires support officer.

"We received a heavy volley of fire," the lieutenant said referring to the initial wave of enemies. However, "we had so many different assets up in the air . . . they were stacked on so many different levels...we had everything we needed."

From his perspective on the ground, Sergeant McMurtrey believes that the close air support was what turned the tide of battle.

"Once air support showed up, they started bombing everything... the blasts through the door from the bombs being dropped almost knocked me over," said Sergeant McMurtrey.

After more than 10 hours of bombing and strafing from an Air Force B-1B Lancer and F-15E

Strike Eagles, nearly 100 militants were killed by the combined response that included Afghan soldiers as well as U.S. air and ground units. Eight Americans and three Afghans were killed, while nine Americans and 11 Afghans were wounded, according to CJTF-82 officials.

"There is no doubt that without the incredible air support we received, it would have been a much worse day," said Army Lt. Col. Robert Brown, 3-61 Cavalry commander from the 4th ID. "Your ability to keep a steady flow of aircraft and ordnance on the enemy turned what could have been a terrible defeat into a hard fought victory."

Despite claims from the Taliban, COP Keating was in the process of a scheduled re-positioning as part of a security strategy to focus more on populated areas, according to Combined Joint Task Force-82 officials.

(Capt. David Faggard from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs Office contributed to this story.)



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Mountains in Afghanistan are visible behind the old Russian Control Tower, known as the Crow's Nest. The Russian control tower was built in 1976 during the Soviet Union's occupation of the region. Currently more than 5,000 Airmen are deployed to Bagram supporting Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO International Security Assistance Forces. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

SARC forms first Victim's Advocate Program

By Staff Sgt. Staff Sgt. Angelique N. Smythe 451st Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan --

The Sexual Assault Response Coordinator from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, Bagram Airfield established the first Victim's Advocate Program here on Kandahar Airfield and in Regional Command-South for the U.S. Air Force.

Captain Tabitha Stump, the only Air Force SARC in Afghanistan is on a journey to establish awareness and response programs at each major installation for victims of sexual assault. She visited KAF recently to conduct training for those who wished to be a voice for victims.

Fifteen victim advocates have been trained on KAF and two volunteered as they had already received training from home stations.

"Beginning in November, we will have one victim advocate on duty each week for Kandahar/RC-South," Captain Stump said. "Right now, due to manning, we don't have a SARC who can go to every location, but if we can have a victim advocate at each location who can take restricted reports and filter them to the SARC, we can make sure that our victims are being well taken care of."

Victim advocates respond to sexual assault victims and make referrals for the help they need, whether it be assisting them with going through a medical exam, seeing the chaplaincy, interacting with law enforcement officials, or going through the judicial process. If needed, they are the emotional support for the victim.

"Often we find the victim just becomes a case number and they don't have anyone to speak for them or to speak on their behalf or to take care of them emotionally," said Captain Stump. "A victim advocate is going to be the person who will be assigned to the victim and will work with them

through their case, whether they go restricted or unrestricted. It's the wingman concept. It's someone who will check on them to make sure that they are flying right."

There is no knowledge of whether or not there have been issues with sexual assault on KAF as there has never been a response program. However, Captain Stump said there was an average of 12 reports within the month of September for Regional Command-East. That month's reports

made up one-third of the reports she'd received for the entire year. There is evidence that sexual assault is or has been occurring throughout the country, but until now, there had been no mechanism for victims to report these incidents in a confidential manner.

"And that's our primary objective," Captain Stump said.

Sexual assault victim advocates were trained on things such as the psychology of what a victim goes through and sex offender dynamics. They received briefings from the chaplain, briefings from a medical person who spoke of combat stress and the collection of fo-

nsic evidence, training on Air Force policy, and training on the history of the sexual assault response program.

"We want people to know that we have a service available for them and it doesn't matter when the assault occurred, who was the perpetrator of the assault, or what the conditions behind the assault were," said Captain Stump. "If they were assaulted or felt violated sexually, they are more than welcome to use our services. We want them to get that help because, again, being fit to fight is not just about being able to do sit-ups and push-ups; it's about being able to keep your head in the game. And in this environment, we can't have people distracted emotionally."

Did You Know:
1 in 33 men and 1 in 6 women
will be sexually assaulted
in their lifetime?
Every 150 seconds someone is
assaulted somewhere in America?
80% of victims know their assailant?
Always take a Wingman

If you are interested in becoming a
Victim Advocate, contact
Captain Tabitha Stump
DSN: 318-431-4060
tabitha.stump@bgab.centaf.af.mil

455th AEW HISTORIAN PAGE

By Doug Beckstead
455th Air Expeditionary Wing
Historian

World War I, or “The Great War,” as it was known at the time, officially ended with the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. However, the fighting ended seven months earlier when representatives of the Allied nations and Germany met at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 to sign an armistice agreeing to temporarily end hostilities.

Because the armistice ended the fighting it is generally accepted as the end of what the world wanted to believe was the “war to end all wars.”

The following year, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed 11 November as Armistice Day which was to be “filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with gratitude for the victory.”

Seven years later, on 4 June 1926, Congress recognized the end of World War I by passing a resolution in both the House and Senate noting that “the



Vickers machine gun on trench

11th of November 1918, marked the cessation of the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals and the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never be severed again ...” They requested that the President issue a proclamation to have the flag flown on all government buildings on 11 November every year thereafter.

It took another twelve years until, on 13 May 1938, the 11th of November was finally made a legal holiday dedicated to the cause of world peace. The holiday was called “Armistice Day.”

Originally intended to honor the veterans of the “War to End All Wars,” after the world became embroiled in World War II, then the Korean War, on 1 June 1954, Congress amended the 1938 holiday taking out the word “Armistice” and replacing it with “Veterans” making it a day to honor all men and women who served in the military.

In 1968, Congress attempted to create four, three-day weekends for Federal employees by passing the Uniform Holiday Bill. It declared the celebration of Washington’s Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Columbus Day would be moved to either the closest Monday or Friday ensuring three days off.

The first Veterans Day following the new law was observed on 25 October 1971 with much confusion. It was quite apparent that the reason for even having the holiday in the first place was based in historic and patriotic significance, on 20 September 1975, President Gerald Ford signed a law moving the holiday back to 11 November.

So now we celebrate Veterans Day in honor of not only those who fought in World War I, but all who serve in the military. Yet the holiday still retains its roots to that historic moment when, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the world thought war had ended for good.



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FOX NFL Sunday at Bagram Airfield



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Photos by Senior Airman Felicia Juenke, Tech. Sgt. John Jung, 2nd Lt. Holly Hess and Army Capt. Michael Greenburger

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.

COMBAT O: Combat Orientation is Wednesday at 0130Z/0600L at the MWR Clamshell. Uniform is Air Force PT uniform for fitness assessment. 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.



Secure your vehicles when not in use! Unlocked vehicles are catalysts for terrorist activity within DoD.

When you leave your vehicle unsecured, you are not only inviting the criminal element access to military property, you are also giving a potential insider threat access to a platform to harm others and meet their objectives. Secure your vehicle, rooms, and belongings...

Report suspicious activity. Force protection is your business!

455 AEW AT/FP Office: 431-4207
Capt. Sprute - Antiterrorism Officer
MSgt. Holtzmann - Antiterrorism Superintendent

Force Protection is **your** business - **everyone** is a sensor

Air Force Equal Opportunity

"Zero Tolerance"

ACCOUNTABILITY

LEADERSHIP

Slurs

Discrimination

Sexual Harassment

Disparaging Comments

Race, Sex, Religious Jokes

E-mailing, Texting Offensive Material

Favoritism on "Protected" Basis

Derogatory Displays

Graffiti

WINGMAN

PROFESSIONALISM

Support Diversity

EO is Everyone's Business