

BAGRAM NEWS EXPRESS

START RIGHT, FINISH STRONG | VOL. 3 ISSUE 21, NOVEMBER 29, 2009

Celebrities thank troops at Thanksgiving concert



Lt. Dan Band rocks on at Bagram Airfield

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Gary Sinise and Kimo Williams met in 1997 while working together on a play called "A Streetcar Named Desire," in Chicago. They continued to meet and have jam sessions on the guitar and bass, gradually adding other musicians. The Lt. Dan Band did their first USO tour in 2004, visiting Korea, Singapore and Diego Garcia - since then they average 30-40 shows a year, with 75% of the profits going towards the USO and other charities. The band name was chosen because Mr. Sinise was constantly recognized by a character he played in the movie "Forrest Gump" called Lt. Dan. (U.S. Air Force photo/ Senior Airman Susan Tracy)

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

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Gary Sinise and the "Lt. Dan Band" made their first appearance in Afghanistan, Nov. 23, 2009, performing for hundreds of Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Coastguardsmen here.

This visit is one in a long line of entertainment and celebrity visits to boost morale of servicemembers who are away from home and their loved ones during the holidays, according to the Armed Forces Entertainment director, Col. Edward Shock.

That sentiment of thanking the troops during the holidays was echoed by the visitors.

"We understand and appreciate your sacrifice; we do not take you for granted," Mr. Sinise told the crowd. "We're grateful for you and your service and the sacrifice of your loved ones back home. Your families sacrifice so much, so often and we know they miss you. Thank you."

Mr. Sinise also visited a remote Army outpost near the Pakistan border where he met with

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LT. DAN

Soldiers and distributed humanitarian supplies to more than 50 Afghan children.

While Mr. Sinise visited the remote outpost, other actors visited Bagram's Craig Joint Theater Hospital to meet the staff and visit with patients.

"You all have a first-rate facility," said actor Mykelti Williamson, also known as "Bubba" from the "Forrest Gump" movie. "You're using equipment and techniques that we're not even seeing in the states.

"I am so grateful for their sacrifice," he continued. "I pray to God daily for the men and women who go through there."

Comedian Kevin Farley, actress Kristy Swanson and television personality LeeAnn Tweeden visited troops. The visit was a partnership between AFE, the USO and American Airlines.

"I think it's really good they're here supporting the troops," said Staff Sgt. Henrie Young, from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Safety office before a thunderous applause from a cover of the WHO's "Teenage Wasteland."

The Lt. Dan Band has traveled all over the world playing popular music and visiting service-members and families, including Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the Korean Demilitarized Zone and many other remote military bases.

Thanks for all you do for us



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Senior Army leaders from Combined Joint Task Force - 82 address a crowd of Airmen in front of the Crow's Nest, Nov. 23, 2009. Maj. Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, CJTF-82 commander, and Command Sgt. Major Thomas Capel thanked them for their contributions to the mission in Afghanistan. "We know your families miss you, but it's important for us to be here," General Scaparrotti said. "Soldiers and Marines on the ground know they can rely on Airmen to bring them air power when they need it." (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski)

Thanksgiving celebration with deployed family



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Master Sgt. Charles Free (right) slides a tray to Master Sgt. Matt Zahradka (left), Nov. 26, 2009. The 455th Air Expeditionary Wing leadership served meals on Thanksgiving as a way to boost the morale of the servicemen and women. Sergeants Free and Zahradka, both deployed from Scott Air Force Base, Ill., are first sergeants from the 455th AEW. Sergeant Free hails from Swansea, Ill. Sergeant Zahradka hails from St. Louis. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)



Thanksgiving celebration with deployed family



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Lt. Col. Thomas Goulter (right), the 755th Air Expeditionary Group deputy commander, serves an Airman dessert during a Thanksgiving Day celebration, Nov. 26, 2009. Air Force and Army leadership served meals on Thanksgiving as a way to boost the morale of the servicemen and women. Colonel Goulter is deployed from the Pentagon, and hails from Corpus Christi, Texas. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)



Bagram celebrates Thanksgiving with parade

By Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski
AFCENT Combat Camera Team

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Airmen witnessed a bunch of turkeys roaming around Bagram Thanksgiving Day. Also some kite flyers, a mock F-16 Fighting Falcon and even jolly ol' St. Nick.

The cast of characters were part of the first Thanksgiving Day Parade at Camp Cunningham, where the majority of Airmen stationed here live and work. Thirteen decorated vehicles stood in for the balloons and floats at the recreation of the famous annual New York City event.

The teams had four weeks to create their entry during their downtime. The 455th Air Expeditionary Wing has been breaking several mission-related records and needed a short break from the high operations tempo to "relax and recharge," said Travis Luethe, the recreation manager at Camp Cunningham.

"Everyone had a lot of fun and we had more people than we expected participate," Mr. Luethe said. "Basically, we just wanted to give everyone a little taste of home for the holiday. Looking around at all the smiles, you can see that for ten minutes, we all got to think about something other than being in a war zone."

The procession drove through the compound and briefly by the flightline so as many Airmen as possible could take a break from their day to enjoy the creativity and holiday spirit.

"While you're deployed, you really miss your family and it's easy to lose sight of the fun



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- An all-terrain vehicle decorated for Christmas was the last float as part of a Thanksgiving Day parade Nov. 26, 2009. The parade featured thirteen floats created during mission downtime as a recreation of the famous New York City event. The Christmas float, like the parade in New York, featured Santa Claus waving to the crowd, symbolically ushering in the holiday season. The float was created by the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing staff agencies. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski)

things in life," said Staff Sgt. Chrishana Dameron, who makes a point of watching the parade on television every year. "But we sometimes forget that we have a family here too. So this was about coming together

as a family and having a little bit of fun."

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PARADE

Sergeant Dameron, deployed from Scott Air Force Base, Ill., led the joint 455th Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility and Task Force Mountain Warrior team. Their float, an all-terrain vehicle decorated as a giant battlefield turkey complete with Kevlar helmet and camouflage gear, won first place in the judging portion of the event.

Mr. Luethe said they will try to have a similar event during the December holidays, but next time they'll invite the entire base to participate, if possible.

As with the parade in New York, the Bagram parade ended with Santa Claus on the final float, symbolically ushering in the holiday season. Mr. Claus was escorted by the 455th AEW staff agencies float and said he was happy to be in Afghanistan before headed to his appoint-

ment in the Big Apple

"As soon as we were done, I emailed my wife to tell her I haven't had this much fun in a while," Mr. Claus said. "I've never seen this many people this happy in an otherwise bad place, so it was my pleasure to bring a little bit of joy to the people here.

"Now if you'll excuse me," Mr. Claus continued, "I have some final list preparations to take care of."



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Bagram Thanksgiving Day Parade



Bagram Thanksgiving Day Parade



Photos by Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski and Tech. Sgt. Joseph Fleming

THE OLD RUSSIAN CONTROL TOWER

By Doug Beckstead
455th Air Expeditionary Wing
Historian

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Bagram Airfield has many interesting buildings on it. The most unique and readily recognized one is the old Russian control tower in Camp Cunningham. Many people mistakenly think that it was constructed during the Russian occupation from 1979 to 1989 but that is not the case.

Politics in Afghanistan has always been, shall we say, hard to understand. This is based in part because Afghanistan is a collection of independently thinking tribes and ethnic groups that tend to tolerate a centralized government when they have to.

By the 1970s Afghanistan had a government that was communist in all but its name. They welcomed Soviet assistance with building infrastructure in the country. At the same time, they also welcomed assistance from the United States -- both countries helped build roads, dams, schools and irrigation systems in an attempt to gain influence with the Afghans. It was all part of the Cold War mentality that the world lived with the 1950s through the 80s.

The Russians constructed Bagram in the mid-1970s while the United States built the airfield at Kandahar. The Russians built the tower at



Russian Tower, Bagram Airfield circa Summer 2002



Russian Tower, Bagram Airfield circa Fall 2009

Bagram in 1976.

The first description of the tower that I have been able to find comes from the leader of the CIA's JAWBREAKER team that entered Afghanistan two

weeks after the attacks on New York and Washington DC on 9/11.

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TOWER

To place his description in context, one has to remember that Bagram Airfield was where the major Soviet forces landed in 1979. They occupied the base for the next 10 years using it as one of their bases of operations. Within a few years after the Russians left, and the Taliban took over the government, the base fell into disrepair. Then, when the Northern Alliance formed to oppose the Taliban, the front lines of the conflict ran through Bagram. The Taliban controlled the southern end of the base while the NA controlled the north end. The front cut somewhere through the middle.

Arriving at Bagram on 23 October 2001, they expected to see a tall, slender structure like most control towers at major airports in the US, however, the JAWBREAKER team found instead a "two-story building with an observation room on top." The walls, inside and out, were pockmarked from bullets and shrapnel striking it. All of the windows and doors were missing. Climbing the narrow stairway leading into the tower they observed that the concrete roof above the stairwell had been cratered by a mortar round leaving mangled pieces of concrete hanging precariously above their heads by rusted pieces of re-bar.

The tower itself would be used as an observation post by members of the CIA team and the Army's ODA-555 team who had come down from the Pan-



Afghan carpenters, circa Fall 2002

jshir valley several days earlier. They used the tower to spot and map the Taliban defenses south of the base for planned air attacks. Within a few weeks, the US would unleash its might against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda striking targets these men identified and plotted.

Within a year, Bagram Airfield saw a marked increase in the number of troops stationed here. The old Russian control tower continued to serve as both an observation post and control tower.

The windows were replaced in the tower itself sometime in early 2002 and the rest of the building, including the roof, being renovated during the summer and fall by local Afghan craftsmen. Who knows, they may be the same men who built it 24 years earlier.

Over the years the building has housed a hospital, offices, and even the MWR facilities for

the base, including a barber-shop, in the bomb shelter below.

Today the Russian tower has been replaced by the new, modern control tower on the east side of the base. It now serves as a meeting and observation room with one fantastic view.

Now, the big question that remains is whether or not the stories are true about rooms in the basement used as torture chambers by the Russians and later the Taliban. So far I have found no documentation to prove this but I have heard tales of people here today who were here in the fall of 2001 and saw blood on the walls and rotting corpses in the rooms below the tower.

Are the stories true or not?
Does it matter?

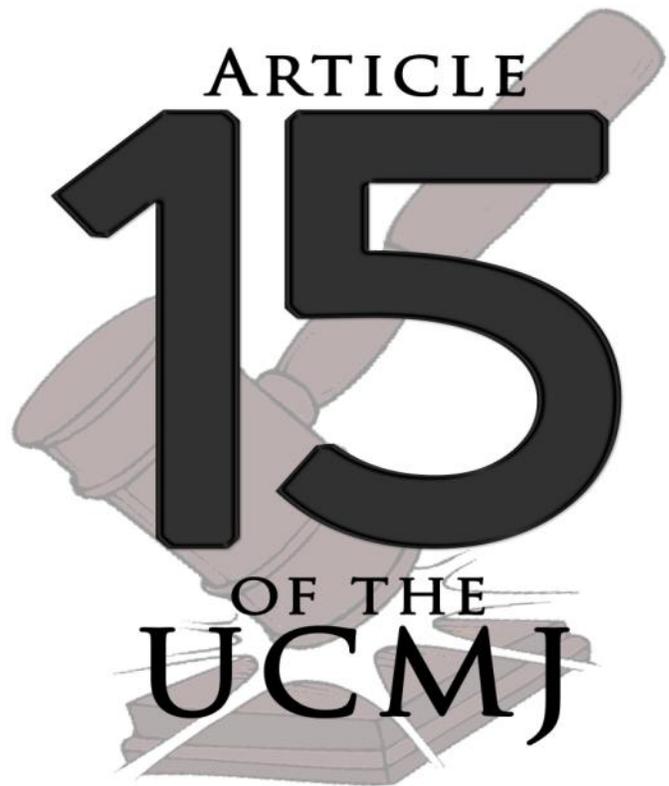
They are still part of the history of the old Russian control tower that sits quietly in Camp Cunningham with its stories and ghosts within its walls.

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.



Bagram Military Justice Report 14 – 27 Nov 2009

Non-Judicial Punishment

A staff sergeant from 455 EAMXS who failed to report to his place of duty on time received a suspended reduction to the rank of senior airman, forfeiture of \$300 pay for 2 months and a reprimand.

An airman first class from 455 ESFS who was found sleeping on post received a reduction to the rank of airman, forfeiture of \$500 pay for 2 months with 1 month suspended, 15 days extra duty and a reprimand.

An airman first class from 455 ESFS who was found sleeping on post received a reduction to the rank of airman, suspended forfeiture of \$834 pay for 2 months and a reprimand.

A senior airman from 455 ELRS who failed to report to his place of duty on time received a suspended reduction to the rank of airman first class, forfeiture of \$250 pay for 2 months and a reprimand.

NOTE: Punishments may vary from Airman to Airman. When deciding on an appropriate level of punishment, commanders take into consideration the member's oral and written presentation, the member's duty performance and past history of misconduct, the need for good order and discipline and the nature and circumstances of the offenses.



Bagram's policy for destruction of sensitive or classified material is "shred or burn." DO NOT take sensitive or classified information to the base burn pit and leave it unattended.

You must stay and ensure materials are delivered into the incinerator and destroyed. Do your part to keep information out of the hands of the enemy...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