

# BAGRAM NEWS EXPRESS

START RIGHT, FINISH STRONG | VOL. 4 ISSUE 4, JANUARY 22, 2010

## Understanding History



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Department of Defense civilian Douglas Beckstead, former Historian, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, conducts an Afghan culture class Jan. 7, 2010. Beckstead is from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**

**By: Staff Sgt. Richard Williams  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The word history has many definitions. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines history as “a chronological record of significant events (as affecting a nation or institution) often including an expansion of their cause.”

The understanding of history is something Douglas

Beckstead, former 455th Air Expeditionary Wing historian, has made a lifelong ambition.

He hoped to share the knowledge he has amassed during his deployment with Airmen at Bagram Airfield through a seven week course designed to enhance everyone’s knowledge on Afghanistan’s history and how the country has become the nation it is today.

**See, History next page**



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Army Maj. Vladimir Berkovich, 405th Civil Affairs, tells about his experiences serving in Afghanistan with the Soviet military to Airmen attending a joint service Afghan culture class on Bagram Airfield Jan. 7, 2010. Berkovich is a Reservist out of Jackson, N.J. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**

## History, cont.

“When I first arrived in Afghanistan I knew nothing about its geography or rich history,” said Beckstead during his week seven and final installation of the course. “I thought Afghanistan was north of India not northwest.”

As Beckstead began reading and exploring this vast history, he wanted to share the knowledge with others. “I spoke with the wing’s leadership and the commander had an idea to start a course and we took that idea and ran with it.”

When the course began Beckstead, a Department of Defense civilian deployed from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska., wasn’t sure how many people were even interested in the history course. He soon learned that there were many more people who were ready to learn.

“The first night of the course, I thought maybe five people would show and I really wasn’t even sure we would have another one,” said Beckstead. “To my surprise there were 15 people on the first night and it

really blossomed from there.”

During the course, Beckstead explored history beginning with the origination of many of the tribes and how their tradition has shaped the country. He also touched on Alexander the Great’s conquest of the area and his failures. The course taught about rich ethnic diversity and religious history and how war has shaped the country the world sees today.

“I think the one thing people need to understand is that Afghanistan is a real country with real concerns,” said Beckstead. “The people here want the same things we want, to take care of their families and live a peaceful life. The Afghans are a proud people with a rich heritage and history and it is important that we understand and respect their tradition.”

Through the previous six weeks, Beckstead had explained and understood Afghan history and culture with the help of local nationals who are employed to assist coalition forces and Muslim-American service-

**See, History next page**

## History, cont.

members serving in Afghanistan to give a perspective on the religious significance in the history of this ancient country.

The seventh week of the course led to discussion on the Soviet invasion on Dec. 31, 1979. During this lesson, Beckstead received assistance from someone who is not only serving in Afghanistan during current coalition operations, but who also served in the Soviet army during its Afghanistan campaign 30 years earlier.

"I was a soldier in the Soviet army as a truck driver during that time and it was very different here," said Maj. Vladimir Berkovich, a medical officer, U.S. Army 405th Civil Affairs Battalion. "I cannot speak much on the Soviet campaign but I can say that it was very different being a soldier in their army than it is in ours."

After completing his service in the Soviet army, Berkovich immigrated to the United States in 1981 and gained his citizenship. Berkovich, who said he joined the U.S. Army because he wanted to help after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, sees the job that he is doing here as a much more beneficial

trip than his previous one and he's pleased to assist.

"I have been able to see, interact and I think help the Afghan people by providing medical care," said Berkovich. "I think that is the most rewarding part of my deployment."

The primary mission of Berkovich's team here has been to go outside the wire and teach and assist Afghan doctors with medical care and render human aid to locals, and this has enabled him to experience what he refers to as "the real Afghanistan."

"I heard about the course from one of our sergeant majors, and he told me, 'We are having the course and we are beginning to discuss the Russia/Afghan War and you would probably fit perfectly into our discussion,'" said Berkovich, a native of Moscow, Russia who now lives in Jackson, N.J. "I really love history and this is the main reason I came."

Berkovich said that one of the most interesting aspects of the course was the interest shown by individuals who wanted to learn about the Afghan culture and the Islamic faith.

"This is a unique opportunity for all of us who come from different backgrounds to share our backgrounds and find a common ground," he said. "Once we do this, we can see the other side and we find out that there are many similarities between our cultures."



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# To command and control: Fitness

**By: Staff Sgt. Richard Williams  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan—Fitness should be the bedrock of a servicemember's lifestyle. Everyone knows about the Air Force's Fit to Fight program, the recent changes to Air Force Instruction 36-2905, Personnel Fitness Program, its implementation on July 1, 2010, and that fitness is everyone's responsibility.

For Airmen assigned to the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Command Post, fitness is more than a requirement, it has become a state of mind.

"I can tell you that from my personnel perspective, running even a half mile was a chore when I first got here," said Senior Master Sgt. David Abuya, 455th AEW command post superintendent. "I kind of fell into the trap of 'get it done once a year and be done with it.'"

Abuya, who is deployed from the 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center, Scott Air Force Base, Ill., admitted that it had been a while since he had

performed his last fitness evaluation and there was no doubt that he was not ready to take one. The reality to him was that neither he nor his team of six controllers was in the shape they needed to be.

"I got here about a month and a half after the team and when I got here I did a basic assessment of our fitness," said Lt. Col. Todd Berge, 455th AEW command post commander. "I averaged the scores from our Combat O and we averaged 65 percent, and that was with a few descent scores."

Berge, deployed from the 509th Bomb Wing, Whiteman AFB, Mo., decided that fitness levels in the command post must improve. He first asked everyone to send him their goals and one of their goals had to be to up their fitness level.

"I am a big believer in goals," he said. "I want people to write them down and repeat them to help them remember what they want to accomplish."

**See Fitness, next page**



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan—U.S. Air Force Airmen from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, Command Post, workout when they have a few minutes of downtime at Bagram Airfield Jan. 7, 2010. While deployed, Airmen in the Command Post lost a total of 130 lbs. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**

## Fitness, cont.

A major portion of the Air Force physical fitness test is the run. Berge, an avid runner, took the people out who wanted the help and ran with them, to critique and assist them with proper style and breathing techniques. "I went out and worked with them every week to help them improve and now they are almost all above an 80 percent on the Combat O evaluation and our office average is an 85 percent."

The improvement from an average of 64 percent to 85 percent was a significant change for the better, said Abuya and these scores increased in only three months.

"There were many avenues taken to improve our overall fitness, not just running," said Berge. "One issue I see with fitness is that we never get trained on proper fitness. We are trained on how to do our job, but we are just told we have to take the fitness test."

"I took my guys out and taught them the proper way to breathe when they were running or doing sit-ups," he said. "I also put them through interval training and participated in everything with them."

Abuya said the most difficult obstacle he had to overcome was the mental aspect of actually going out and sticking to his fitness plan. This was overcome by constant support from Berge and getting in a little bit of fitness whenever he could.

"Don't get down on yourself if your progress is slow," he said. "There will be times when you see no progress and there will be times when you regress but you have to press through it and keep your goal in mind."

"The fact is that there are peaks and valleys in fitness," said Berge. "Senior Master Sgt. Abuya got

really down on himself at one point because we went out to Combat O and he was a minute and a half slower than his original time. The next Combat O he shaved one and a half minutes off his time."

Berge said, "We are all working 12 hour shifts and we all have long days, the key is doing what you can when you can."

"One of the keys is teaching your people, not yelling at them," he said. "A little encouragement can go a long way to helping someone's confidence and pushing them through to the next fitness plateau."

The first purchase Berge made after helping people realize their goals was a set of push-up bars. "Even if you can only do 10 push-ups or sit-ups in the beginning, drop at work and do those 10 a few times a day and you will see results."

"Another key to my success is portion control during meals," said Abuya. "When I got here I was eating way more than I should have, but the food here is not bad at all."

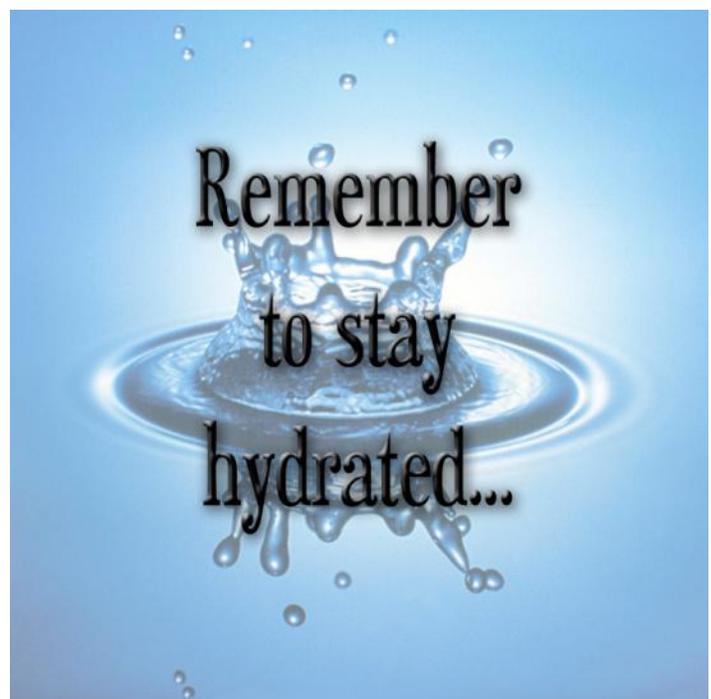
Berge advises to stay away from the cakes and cookies as much as possible. Eat more vegetables and if a cookie is on the meal plan try to eat all of the unhealthy foods in one day and not day after day.

"Success begets success, I guess," he said. "The more I run the better results I get, the more it makes me want to work out and continue what I am doing and it has become easier to do it. I ran five miles the other day, and I have never done that in my life!"

## See Fitness, next page

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**455th Public Affairs Office**  
@ DSN 431-2371  
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**455aew.publicaffairs@bagb.afcent.af.mil**



## Fitness, cont.

Abuya, who has lost 23 pounds since arriving, has improved his fitness so much in the past three months he is now training for the Aloha Run in February which is eight miles.

Collectively, the controllers of the command post have lost 130 pounds in a three month span; the key

to it has been setting realistic goals, said Abuya.

“A realistic goal is not to pass the Air Force Physical Fitness Test; that is the standard on which we are measured,” said Berge. “Don’t get discouraged because the guy beside you in the gym can do more sit-ups or knocks out more push-ups than you, look at them and say I want to be able to do X amount of push-ups or sit-ups and work and stay positive and you will reach your fitness goals.”



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dayne Sandrock (left), and Senior Master Sgt. David Abuya, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Command Post, look over events happening here Jan. 7, 2010. Sandrock is from Hazleton, Pa.; Abuya is from Milwaukee, Wis. Both are stationed at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**



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# Commentary: A Message From the Mayor

By: Chief Master Sgt. Bernadette Borders  
455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, Chief Enlisted Manager

**A**s Camp Mayor it is my responsibility to interface with the people and keep the leadership informed of the issues affecting Airmen's health and well being in Camp Cunningham and Camp Yeun. This is a challenging position because the Air Force is held to a higher standard.

As a Chief I have to help maintain these standards no matter where I am, but especially in the middle of Afghanistan.

As the Camp Mayor I worry about people not taking the time to clean their rooms and getting mold on the wall. I think about having to move people out of a building because the water has to be turned off. I'm

troubled about the number of night's people will have to go without heat because they failed to clean the filters on the "Chigo" heater.

I'm anxious about the smoke pits and common areas as I pass by and see the trash cans overflowing and 10 people standing there without a care in the world. I'm amazed by the lack of attention to making sure we take care of the things we have.

I know we have come a long way in the Air Force but not expecting to have people clean up after themselves is not a step forward. Each and every one of us has to do their part. Bottom line we have to take care of what we have and make sure we leave this place in good order for people to come. Please do your part.



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

Smoking is allowed:

- In your room
- Between the huts
- In a GOV
- None of the above

Smoking is **ONLY** authorized in designated areas.  
By order of the Wing Commander

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# Casino Night Comes to Bagram



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan—U.S. servicemembers enjoy the many games at "Casino Night" on Bagram Airfield, Jan. 18, 2010. Casino Night offered servicemembers a chance to break away from normal routines and win some prizes. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**

**By: Staff Sgt. Richard Williams  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan—The roulette wheel was spinning and servicemembers were winning during the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing's Casino Night held Jan. 18, 2009.

More than 70 people were in attendance to try their hand at Texas hold 'em, blackjack and roulette and enjoy free pizza during the event, which was hosted by the 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, with special guests The U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne band known as The Mighty Mighty Bragg Tones.

"Casino night is a collection of different games that we offer during the week," said Travis Luethe, 455th EFSS recreation and marketing manager. "We just want to give everyone an opportunity to come out, listen to some music, eat some free pizza and have a good time."

The way casino night works is pretty simple, said Luethe, a six year veteran of Morale, Welfare and

Recreation events. "At the beginning of the night everyone buys in, and with buying in I mean you sign your name to a piece of paper. Once you have done that, you get 500 dollars of play money and you play."

Luethe said, once the night is over the individual with the most money wins a grand prize which during this casino night was a gift card for 100 dollars. "We actually put a wrinkle in this casino night. We auctioned off additional prizes every half hour and the participants could use their play money to bid on these items."

Items that were auctioned ranged from a flashlight or a sports bottle to a 250 gigabyte hard drive. Luethe said that this gave the patrons who maybe didn't have a chance to be a big winner at the end of the night the opportunity to walk away with a prize.

Overall, Luethe and his team wanted to ensure that everyone had a good time and enjoyed the music,

**See Casino, next page**

## Casino, cont.

games and pizza.

"I think that these things are great," said Airman 1st Class Matthew Chavis, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. "I know that most of the people in my Squadron look forward to this event every time they hold one here."

Chavis, deployed from Travis Air Force Base, Calif. said, "I know guys that have a difficult time with the deployments here because they are away from their family and friends and it is important for us to be able to let loose a little bit and unwind."

Luethe said that one of the most important things about making this type of event a success is support from volunteers from around Bagram. "We always accept any help that people want to give us for events like these and it is important because the volunteers help us ensure that the troops have a good time and get a break from the daily grind."

### The big winners for the evening were:

- Tech. Sgt. Jeromy Cross, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs, won a mini flashlight
- Tech. Sgt. Xiomara Young, 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron Personnel, won a water bottle and teddy bear
- Master Sgt. Katherine Palmer, 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron Operations, won a Star Trek DVD and water bottle
- Martin Pannabecker, 455th EFSS, won a Transformers II DVD and mini flashlight
- Airman 1st Class Nicholas Babian, U.S. Air Force Task Force Medical, won a watch
- Senior Master Sgt. Ryan Alston, 455th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron Vehicle Maintenance, won a 250 gigabyte external hard drive
- Grand Prize Winner Airman 1st Class Ryan Christopher, 455th ESFS, won a 100 dollar gift card



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. servicemembers enjoy the many games at "Casino Night," Jan. 18, 2010. Casino Night offered servicemembers a chance to break away from normal routines and win some prizes. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**



# A HISTORY MINUTE: BAGRAM AIRFIELD

By: Tech. Sgt Scott Gaitley  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing, Historian

Bagram Airfield played a key role throughout the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. Bagram served as a base of operations for incoming troops and supplies and provided the preliminary staging point for the invading Soviet forces. 368th Assault Aviation Regiment, which flew Sukhoi SU-25's (Frogfoot), was based at Bagram and provided close air support for both Soviet and Afghan ground forces.

During their time at Bagram Airfield, the Soviets built three large bunkers, a control tower, and numerous support buildings and barracks.

Although the Soviets had a 10,000 foot runway, more than 32 acres of unused ramp space still existed. By 1989, the Soviets had five aircraft at their disposal, dispersal areas and 110 revetments.

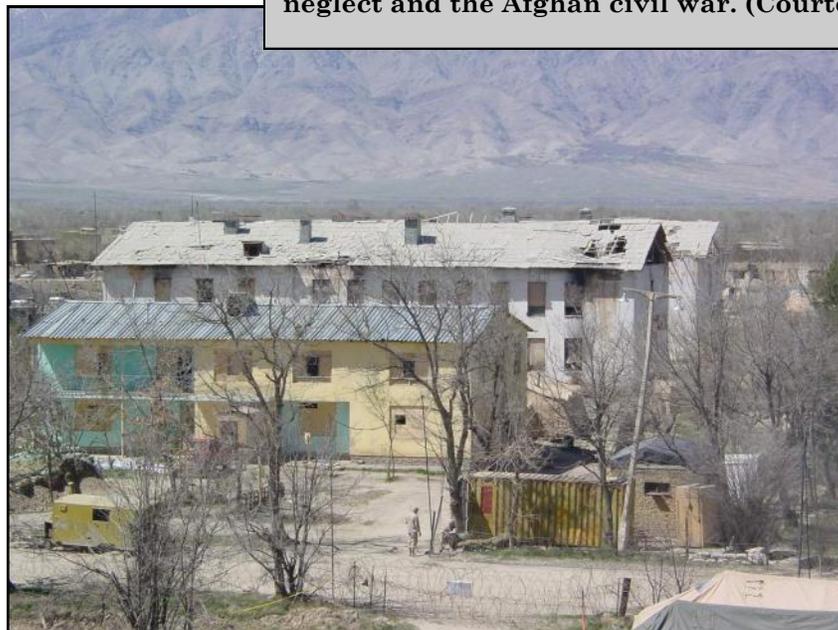
After the Soviet forces withdrew in February 1989, the airfield remained abandoned during the subsequent Afghan civil war. During the 1990's, most of the buildings on base were either neglected or destroyed by Afghan factions fighting for control of the airfield. What remained from the once mighty Soviet occupation was rusting vehicles, corroding aircraft, dilapidated buildings, and abundant mine fields.

During the liberation of Afghanistan, Bagram Airfield was secured in early December 2001, by 40 Royal Marine Commando's, based at Somerset, England. They were soon joined by U.S. forces that consisted of the 10th Mountain Army Division, Special Operations Forces from MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. and the 82nd Airborne from Fort Bragg, N.C.



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan—The old Soviet aircraft control tower days after coalition forces secured the airfield. (Courtesy photo)**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan— One of the old buildings close to the airfield. After the Soviet military occupation, many buildings fell into disrepair due to neglect and the Afghan civil war. (Courtesy photo)**



# 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 area of responsibility 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, visit PERSCO located in Bldg. 700 near the passenger terminal. Call 431-2070/4409 for more information.

**COMBAT O:** Combat Orientation is every Friday 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.

## 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  
Capt. Jose Milan  
DSN: 318-431-4060  
455aew.sarc@bgab.afcent.af.mil

### 455th AEW Legal Office offers free assistance with Federal Income Taxes

Now that the holidays are over, it's tax season. The deadline for filing federal income taxes is April 15; however, the IRS automatically extends this deadline for military personnel serving in combat zones for 180 days after your last day in the combat zone.

For additional details on this extension, please visit the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=101265,00.html>.

If you decide to file here at Bagram, the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Legal Office is here to help!

Beginning early February 2010, the 455th AEW Legal Office will offer free income tax preparation for military members (to include Guard and reservist personnel) by appointment. If you elect to use this service, simply bring the following to your tax appointment:

- **Social Security numbers and birthdates for the taxpayer, spouse, and dependents, if applicable**
- **Wage and earning statements (military personnel may obtain copies of their wage and earning W-2 form by logging on to the MyPay web site)**
- **Interest and mortgage statements from banks (1098 and 1099 forms)**
- **Bank account and routing numbers for direct deposit**
- **Total amount paid for day care and student loans, if applicable**
- **Day care providers identifying number (tax ID or SSN), if applicable**

Free "do-it-yourself" federal tax preparation and e-filing are also available through Military One Source, [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com). This website offers a free version of H&R Block software that provides a quick and easy way to complete and e-file federal returns without fees. State returns can also be accomplished and e-filed for a small fee at this site.

Due to limited resources, the Legal Office can only provide services for basic income tax returns. More complex returns will need to be completed at your home station legal office.

To make an appointment or more information, please contact the Base Legal Office at 431-3251.