

# BAGRAM NEWS EXPRESS

START RIGHT, FINISH STRONG | VOL. 4 ISSUE 5, JANUARY 29, 2010

## 455th AEW makes room for Airmen



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--An Airman from the 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, pulls the canvas of an Alaskan style tent over a frame during tent construction, Jan. 19, 2010. Several 455th Air Expeditionary Wing squadrons helped build the tent city which will open 200 much needed bed spaces for Airmen arriving here. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeremy K. Cross)

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

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Shelter is one amenity that everyone needs. After working long hours, in sometimes inhospitable conditions, service-members want to return to an area where they can relax, take off their boots and enjoy some down time before they do it all again on the next shift.

For Bagram residents, living space has been tight.

There is also the issue of working on one side of the base and commuting to the other side.

Members of the 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron with assistance from the 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron are taking steps to try to alleviate the tight living conditions, cut down the endless bus rides and help people get to their living areas a little easier.

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## Room, cont.

According to Staff Sgt. Blake Williams, 455th EFSS noncommissioned officer in charge of lodging, the issue of bed space, or the lack of, is priority number one.

“We are at about maximum capacity,” said Williams, deployed from Moody Air Force Base, Ga. “We have new arrivals daily and there just isn’t enough room to get people into a living area.”

One of the greatest obstacles lodging personnel had to overcome was the removal of transient tents the Air Force had been sharing with the Army. Williams said the loss of the tents along with their location made it difficult for personnel working on Camp Cunningham.

“One of the major issues was that we work, even after our replacements arrive, until the day we leave here,” he said. “It is difficult to commute from the east side to Camp Cunningham or from Cunningham or Camp Yuen to the east side. That is an additional hour and a half added to the duty day.”

The solution: build more bed space.

One site under construction is located on the east side area of Bagram and it contains 20 Alaskan tents, said Senior Airman Marvin Reyes, 455th ECES, structures. “We have put the tents together to assist our lodging needs and this will provide an additional 200 bed spaces for transient personnel and some personnel who work on the east side of Bagram.”

The tents were put together in about a week and a great deal of preparation has gone into preparing the site, said Reyes. “The biggest issue we face is the condition of the site when we find it. If the site is level, we may only have to pack the dirt and spread some gravel. This particular site was a little more challenging and we have been preparing it for about two months.”

“The crew we have been working with here has been great,” said Reyes, a native of Dallas, Texas. “For a



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Marcal Alexander, 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, ties the ends of a tent, Jan. 19, 2010. Sergeant Alexander is deployed from Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., and is from North Augusta, S.C. (U.S. Air Force photo by/Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas Claybrooks, 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, ties the ends of a tent together on Bagram Airfield, Jan. 19, 2010. Sergeant Claybrooks is deployed from Moody Air Force Base, Ga., and is from Nashville, Tenn. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)**

team that has been trained to set these tents up it takes about an hour and a half to put one tent up, and for the EFSS personnel and the volunteers from the maintenance group to come out here and get these tents together in a quick amount of time, it has been pretty awesome.”

Williams and the rest of the lodging team are grateful for the civil engineers’ support, although the primary ECES mission is to maintain the airfield.

Williams, a Las Vegas native, said it has been frustrating at times but the goal is to get everyone a comfortable area to sleep, where they can feel that their belongings are secure when they go to work.

“The bottom line is that bed space is very important,” he said. “It is very important to us (lodging). No one wants to sleep outside or in their office and that is what it was coming down to because we didn’t have

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## Room, cont.

the space. Getting the extra 200 bed spaces is a start and it is vital to the morale and comfort of out Airmen to ensure we are accomplishing the mission.”



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Jessica Jackson, 455th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron, throws a line over a frame while constructing tents on Bagram Airfield, Jan. 19, 2010. Airman Jackson is deployed from Moody Air Force Base, Ga., and is from Kenbridge, Va. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)

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# Ready on Day One, Always Ready



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--A pilot assigned to the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron launches his F-15E Strike Eagle from Bagram Airfield in support of Operation Enduring Freedom Jan. 23, 2010. The 494th EFS is deployed from Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England. (U.S. Air Force photo by/Staff Sgt. Richard Williams)**

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

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Leveraging months of preparation, hard work and top-quality training, Airmen of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, some with less than 24 hours in theater, suppressed a large enemy ambush recently thanks to the readiness of the entire unit.

Capt. Christopher Henderson, a pilot deployed from the 48th Fighter Wing at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, had just pinned on captain the day before and was preparing for his initial flight on his first deployment to Afghanistan.

“I had been in country for about 16 hours, and I hadn’t even gained my bearings as to where things were on base,” said Captain Henderson, an Indianapolis native and Weapons Systems Officer in the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing.

As Captain Henderson’s F-15E Strike Eagle was taxiing, the crew heard over the radio that a joint coalition force and Afghan national army patrol in the Kunduz Province was taking small arms fire, and that immediate air support was required. Since the flight was nearly ready for takeoff, the flight lead requested their mission be changed to support the time-critical tasking.

The Air Support Operations Center quickly approved, and “we launched out in support of the troops-in-contact situation,” Captain Henderson said.

After getting airborne en route to the location, he

made radio contact with coalition ground forces.

A joint tactical air controller embedded with the patrol directed the aircraft’s sensors to the approximate location of the enemy fighting positions. Using disciplined search procedures and with the assistance of video downlink, Captain Henderson positively identified the location of the enemy fighters in the vicinity of coalition forces.

With the positions of both the friendly forces and the enemy fighters identified, Captain Henderson and his wingman’s F-15 provided suppressive fire, ensuring ground forces were able to continue on patrol.

After about three hours providing air support, the Control and Reporting Center told the captain his F-15 replacement had arrived. The handoff went smoothly, just as rehearsed in the training scenarios flown at home station and at Exercise Green Flag at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

Being ready on Day One continued with the 494th EFS’ relief flight. The lead weapons systems officer, Capt. John Rabun of Atlanta was also on his first combat sortie less than 24 hours since arriving in Afghanistan.

“We took off for my initial familiarization sortie; we were going to look at a few areas of interest in southern Afghanistan,” Captain Rabun said.

Immediately after takeoff, his tasking changed.

**See Ready, next page**

## Ready, cont.

“We were diverted from our mission and tasked to flow north ‘as fast as we could’ to maintain constant support for the forces on the ground. Once we arrived on scene, we began communicating with the other aircraft to gain an understanding of the situation,” Captain Rabun said.

Using standard handoff procedures, Captain Henderson was able to quickly and accurately give Captain Rabun a mental picture of the battle space. Further, he directed the relief aircraft’s sensors to both the coalition forces and the enemy fighter positions.

With the handoff complete, Captain Rabun began talking with the JTAC on the ground and “took over the duties of neutralizing the enemy and providing cover for our ground forces.”

While no enemy gun fire was coming from the south, the JTAC asked Captain Rabun and his flight lead to look in that direction for any suspicious activity. He quickly spotted the enemy. As he was relaying the information to the JTAC, the enemy fighters detonated an improvised explosive device immediately in front of the coalition vehicles, and then opened up with heavy, coordinated fire from machine guns, small arms, rocket propelled grenades and mortars. Captain Rabun and his pilot, Capt. Michael Alfaro of San Antonio, “engaged the enemy forces at that point giving our (ground) forces the opportunity to pull back from the effective range of enemy weapons.”

The aircraft then executed multiple follow-up runs allowing the coalition and ANA patrol to continue its mission.

More than six hours after aircraft relieved Captain Henderson, both crews were back on the ground, assessing the Kunduz mission and preparing to fly again.

“Training exercises, operational readiness inspections, and coalition operations all lead to our pilots and ground crews being mission ready whenever called to action on behalf of our fellow U.S. service members and coalition partners,” said Col. Jay Silveria, 48th Fighter Wing commander. “Whether 18 hours in theater or during sustained operations, the Air Force has adapted its tactics, techniques and procedures throughout its history, allowing our folks to be ready to support whenever and wherever called upon.”

According to Captains Rabun and Henderson, the key to this mission’s success was preparation and



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- A pilot assigned to the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron taxis his F-15E Strike Eagle to a parking place on the close air support ramp at Bagram Airfield, Jan. 23, 2010. The 494th EFS is deployed from the 48th Fighter Wing, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England. (U.S. Air Force photo by/Staff Sgt. Richard Williams)**

training.

“The Air Force has taken the time to make sure our squadron’s pilots and weapons system officers are prepared to do our mission,” Captain Rabun said. “Our mindset is to be ready on day one. Our commanders have instilled that in us.”

“We have another advantage in the fact that we are stationed in Europe and we regularly coordinate with coalition forces during exercises,” Captain Henderson added. “This allows us to learn the terms and requirements of coalition JTACs, which helps us be more effective in an area where non-U.S. forces are operating on the ground.”

Mission success not only lies with the training and capabilities of the pilots and weapons system officers, it is dependent on the preparation and training of everyone involved.

“I can’t say enough about the teamwork involved in getting the fliers ready to go,” Captain Henderson said. “When we prepare to do our mission, the aircrew flight equipment section has to be there and our equipment has to be ready to go; intelligence personnel are standing by, ready to give us the information we need to have a successful flight; and the crew chiefs are ready for us when we step to the jet. They all make sure we have everything we need to be successful.”

In a job where a few seconds could mean life or death for combatants on the ground, Captain Henderson said all the operations must work like a well-oiled machine. “One of the best things when I return from a real world mission,” Henderson said “is telling the support crews that they helped save coalition lives.”

# 455th AEW Warrior of the Week

Senior Airman Christopher Alexander, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron

This week's 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Warrior of the Week is Senior Airman Christopher Alexander, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron.

Airman Alexander is a Joint Defense Operations Center controller deployed from the 9th SFS, Beale Air Force Base, Calif., who oversees outside the wire operations with the Army 82d Airborne Division as well as directs security for Bagram's 14 mile perimeter. He monitors defense systems along the perimeter and has directed forces to more than 8,000 alarms activations.

"It feels pretty good to be named Warrior of the Week," said Airman Alexander, a native of Inverness, Fla. "I have been here for about five months. I am not sitting in a tower providing first line defense for the base, but I make sure we have people in the place if something happens."

He said the key to his job is to monitor security situations as they arise and ensure personnel are in place should the need for a show of force arise.

Airman Alexander began his deployment as a tower guard, but due to his abilities, was chosen as a JDOC controller. He is the Lead Controller and has responded to several indirect fire attacks. Airman Alexander also coordinated ground security and recovery of downed UAVs.

Airman Alexander utilizes his off-duty time to enhance his education, completing six credit hours towards his Community College of the Air Force degree in Criminal Justice. He also volunteered 10 hours filling more than 700 bags of candy to send to remote Forward Operating Bases.



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



# Bagram Airman reaches 3,000 flight hours

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

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – A Bagram weapons systems officer assigned to the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing reached a major flying milestone Jan. 24, 2010, when he logged his 3,000th flying hour.

Lt. Col. John Bunnell, 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron commander, a weapons system officer deployed from Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, completed a four-hour combat mission to place him over the 3,000 hour mark.

“This is a nice milestone for me,” said Colonel Bunnell. “We get some recognition when we go over 1,000 or 2,000 flying hours and for some pilots who are lucky enough we receive enough flying assignments to reach the 3,000 hour mark.”

Colonel Bunnell, a Birmingham, Ala. native, said although he would love to fly in the F-15E Strike Eagle for the rest of his career, he knows that may not be practical due to assignments.

“I’m happy that I got to accomplish my 3,000th hour here in my last few months in command of the 494th EFS,” he said. “I’m expecting a permanent change of station at the end of the summer and I don’t know if I will move to a flying squadron.”

Colonel Bunnell said that the number of flying hours is not common for F-15 fighter pilots or weapons systems officers, but a few times a year some will reach the 3,000 mark and there are only a handful who are fortunate enough to get that chance and continue to fly.

The more than 3,000 flying hours completed in



**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. John Bunnell, 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron commander, stands below tail "320" after completing his 3,000th flight hour in the F-15E Strike Eagle Jan. 23, 2010. Lt. Col. Bunnell is a weapons system officer from Birmingham, Ala., and is deployed from the 48th Fighter Wing, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Air Force photo by/Staff Sgt. Richard Williams)**

Colonel Bunnell’s 19 years, beginning with his 1990 commission, has allowed him to complete 120 combat sorties and compile more than 370 combat flight hours.

Bunnell said, “I hope to pick up a few hundred more flight hours while I’m here and if I’m lucky enough I will get another great flying assignment, but I will have to see where the Air Force takes me.”

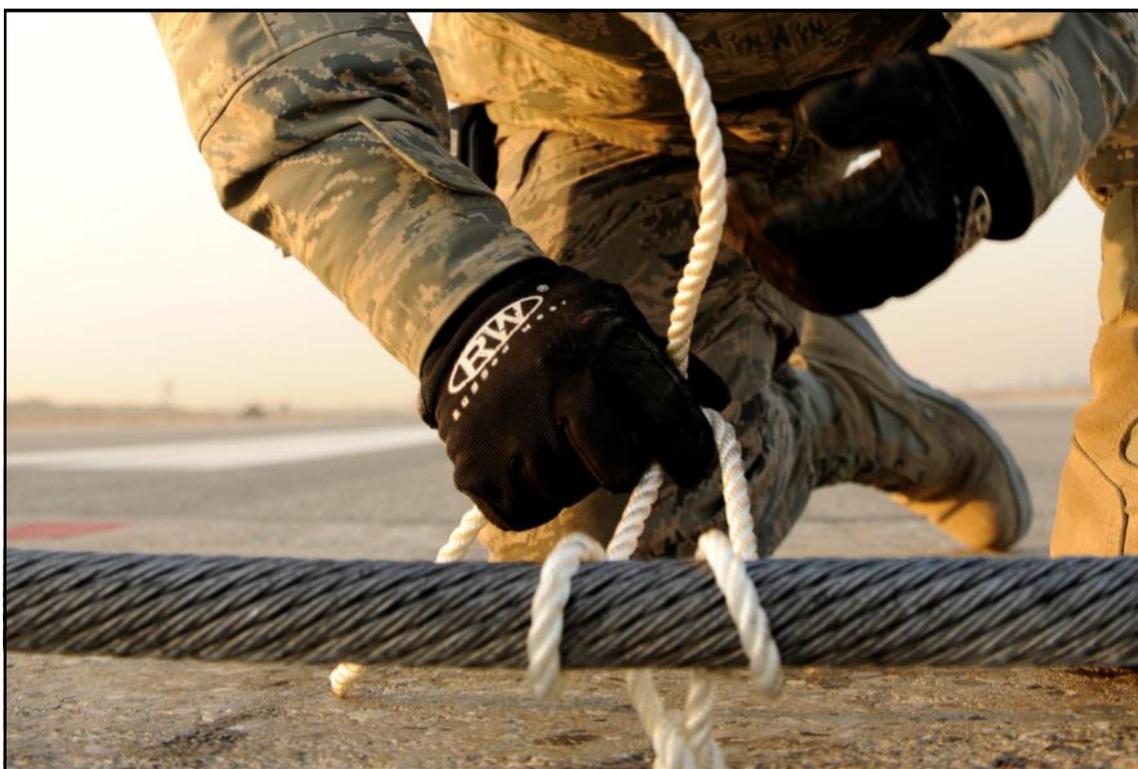
**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. John Bunnell, weapons system officer and 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron commander, and Capt. Christopher Collins, 494th EFS, land their F-15E Strike Eagle after completing a mission Jan. 23, 2010. Lt. Col. Bunnell, a 19-year WSO from Birmingham, Ala., recently accomplished 3,000 flight hours in the Strike Eagle. Lt. Col. Bunnell and Capt. Collins are deployed from Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England. (U.S. Air Force photo by/Staff Sgt. Richard Williams)**



# 455th ECES Preparing the Flightline



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--(Left) U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Mike Cole, 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, applies lubricant to an arresting cable at Bagram Airfield, Jan. 15, 2010. Sergeant Cole is a member of the Minnesota Air National Guard from Duluth, Minn. (Right) U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Eric Austin, 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, maintains an arresting cable at Bagram Airfield, Jan. 15, 2010. Sergeant Austin is a member of the Minnesota Air National Guard from Superior, Wis. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan--U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Dave Rink, 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, ties down an arresting cable at Bagram Airfield, Jan. 15, 2010. Sergeant Rink is a member of the Minnesota Air National Guard from Superior, Wis. (U.S. Air Force photo by: Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross)

# 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.

**NEW BAF MAIL INSTRUCTIONS:** BAF residents, please ensure individuals sending mail have your most current contact information. This alleviates any delays in you receiving your mail. Below is the current contact information required for individuals to receive mail.

**NAME - (Eg. Jane Doe; no rank)**  
**UNIT - (Eg. 455 ECS/SCXK)**  
**Bagram Airfield or BAF**  
**APO AE 09354**

## 455th AEW Safety tip of the week

Help everyone see at night. Please turn on all lights outside of b-huts, tents or buildings during the hours of darkness. If lights are burned out, replace them. By ensuring lights are on, Airmen significantly reduce the risk of injury and increase the personal safety of BAF residents. If you have questions, or safety concerns, please contact the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Safety Office at 431-4743.

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