



THE

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EXPEDITIONARY

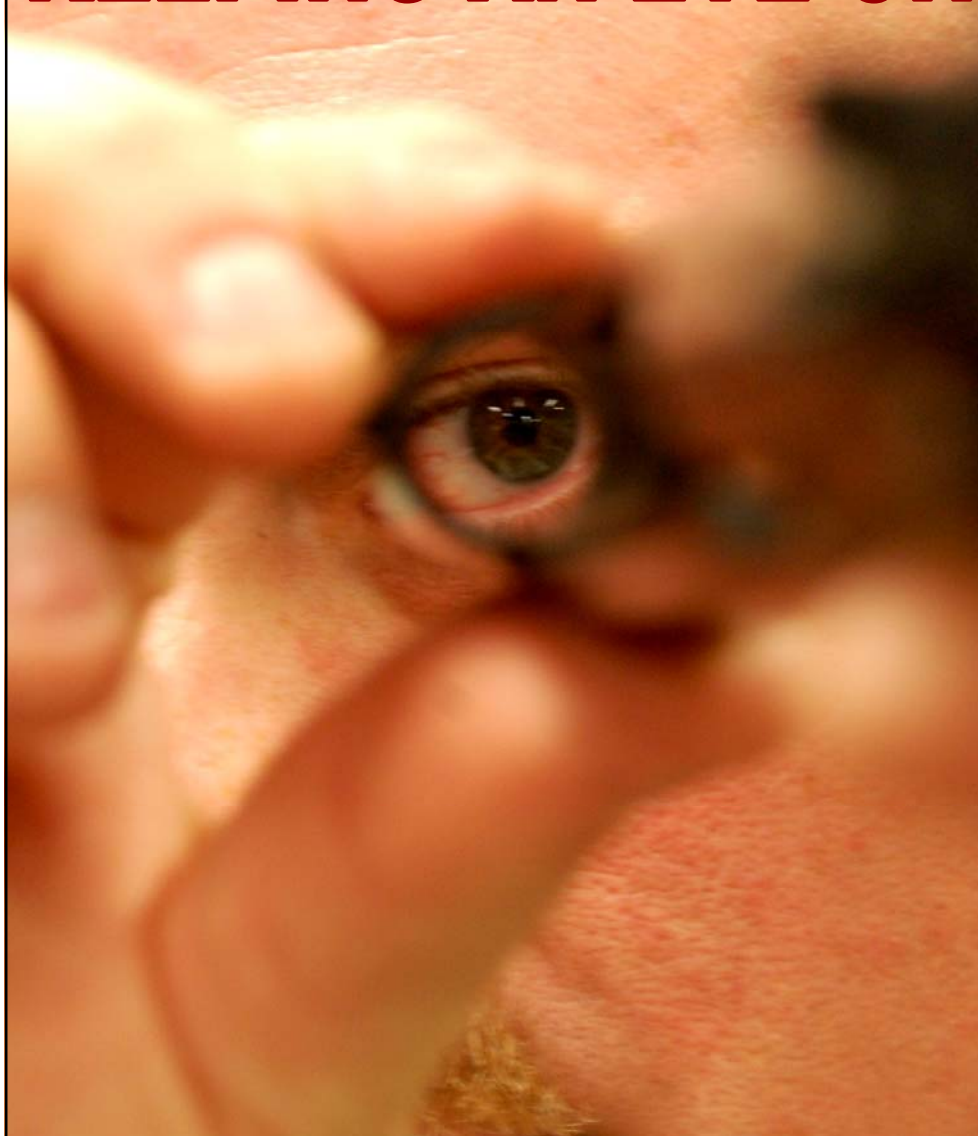


July to September 2008

AIRMAN

Official Publication of the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's "Eagles"

KEEPING AN EYE ON



TRAINING SUPPORT

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Tech. Sgt. Sean Heraty, U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center armory assistant non-commissioned officer in charge, inspects the forward assembly of an M-9 pistol while working in the armory on Fort Dix, N.J., Sept. 22, 2008. Sergeant Heraty and three other Airmen manage 48 different weapons systems and 153 different types of foreign weapons in the USAF EC armory which contains the most foreign weapons of any armory in the Air Force. To read more on the armory, see Pages 17-18.

BEHIND THE LINES



USAF EC commander talks airpower

Page 2

AMC vice visits USAF EC training venues



Pages 3-5



Air Mobility Battlelab deactivates

Page 6

Battlelab initiatives help AMC, Air Force



Pages 7-9



Family remembers Sergeant Kuntzman

Pages 19-20

Phoenix Warrior training action



Pages 24-27

From the commander...

'Airpower...From the Ground Up!' is more than a motto

By Maj. Gen. Kip L. Self
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Commander

"Airpower...From The Ground Up!": This is more than a motto for the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center "Eagles." It is the way we, the Air Force, are able to fly, fight and win in today's contingencies.

At the Expeditionary Center, we provide the education and training that ensures the success of AMC's mission and often the missions of our Joint partners. Due to the more than 70 advanced academic and field training courses taught at the center, Mobility Air Forces, or MAF, are faster and more precise.

Our advanced classes in unit deployment operations and cargo and passenger movement ensure the "varsity" is on the field when the Execute Order drops. Our command and control, or C2, experts teach the skills that bridge the globe by delivering the right expertise with the right Airman at the right time. Wings, theater air operations centers and our own 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center benefit from our C2 instruction and on-site expertise.

When it comes to Global Reach Laydown, or GRL, Air Mobility Command's en route system and contingency response wings ensure the "goods" are delivered from fort to foxhole. It is

the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's cadre who trains these professionals in the advanced skills necessary to operate and sometimes survive in the toughest environments.

When we think of AMC's mission to provide airlift, air refueling, aeromedical evacuation and expeditionary combat support, the Expeditionary Center "Eagles" can take pride in the fact that all this capability is predicated on what is taught by our seasoned and accredited cadre. In the future, we will have similar effect within the joint community as we provide essential C2 training to U.S. Transportation Command and advanced GRL in form of joint task force-port opening and counter improvised explosive device training.

Our most significant achievement may be the strides we are making to develop and disseminate formal tactics, techniques and procedures, or TTPs, throughout the expeditionary enterprise.

Similar to what the Air Force Warfare Center does for aircrew, we are leading the charge to ensure that our expeditionary combat support Airmen have the same understanding of the most recent TTPs necessary to succeed. The Expeditionary Center's ability to react to real-world needs and adapt

training will keep our Airmen safe no matter what the scenario.

We haven't forgotten the importance of leadership in any of our expeditionary operations. We develop leaders at all levels from E-1 to O-7. We provide expeditionary commanders pre-deployment training so they hit the ground fully prepared for their tour and can immediately focus on the mission. We do the same for the directors on the "Commander of Air Force Forces," or COMAFFOR, staff. General offi-



cers and select colonels receive Director of Mobility Forces training which gives them the essentials to advise the COMAFFOR on mobility operations across the spectrum of MAF missions.

In all, you are part of a growth industry whose stock is rising. Lots to be proud of as you make a difference daily. Still lots to do as there are more warriors out there who need our help delivering "Airpower...From the Ground Up!"

EAGLE 1

"We provide expeditionary commanders pre-deployment training so they hit the ground fully prepared for their tour and can immediately focus on the mission."

Editorial Staff

Maj. Gen. Kip L. Self
USAF Expeditionary Center Commander
Lt. Col. Christie L.S. Dragan
Director, USAF EC Public Affairs
Chief Master Sgt. Paula Paige
IMA to USAF EC Public Affairs
Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
NCO in Charge, USAF EC Public Affairs
Editor, *The Expeditionary Airman*
Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier
Photographer
Staff Sgt. Paul R. Evans,
Photographer/Contributor



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AMC vice calls Expeditionary Center 'transformational'

By Chief Master Sgt. Paula Paige
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

Lt. Gen. Vern "Rusty" Findley marks the passing of time not in hurried minutes or seconds, but in the lingering days of a paper calendar.

"Two thousand, five hundred and sixty-nine days is a long time," the vice commander of the Air Mobility Command said, counting the number of days since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. General Findley mentioned that number often during a Sept 22 to 23 show-and-tell tour of the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J., the service's elite training facility for deploying Airmen.

"It's something I do to help myself remember," the general said of why he tracks the days. "Those of us in the military will never forget, nor can we ever forget what's happened since that day and what we've been asked to do since then. It's a way for me to reinforce with myself and those I talk to. This has been a long war. It portends to continue to be a long war. It's a fresh reminder of the duties that we have signed up to do to defend our freedoms."

Accompanied by an entourage of his senior staff, General Findley, whose command is responsible for the bulk of the Air Force's strategic transportation assets and mission, including



Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier

Master Sgt. Troy Coville, from the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's Mobility Operations School Contingency Response Branch, shows Lt. Gen. Vern "Rusty" Findley, Air Mobility Command vice commander, some of the new equipment used for training during a tour of the USAF EC Sept. 22.

the Expeditionary Center's, marched across the training landscape, getting a macro view of the school's mission. Engaging and inquisitive, he peppered slide show presentations with questions and offered his continued gratitude to the Airmen he met at the Expeditionary Center.

During the first day of his two-day tour, General Findley focused on the academic side of the center. Among other things, he saw the Expeditionary Operations School's utilitarian living conditions of the dormitories that can occupy 694 students at any given time and in fiscal 2008 served more than 4,600 students. He also learned about the Mobility Operations School's air transportation courses that, through online courses alone, graduates more than 8,800 students a year.

"We get to show off what AMC funding has done for us," said Staff Sgt. Jonathan McClure, Mobile Command and Control Environmental Unit Course director, as he got ready to brief the general. Sergeant McClure highlighted the new concrete pad for the MOS mobile command and control training area; and pointed out the upgraded paving around the center's parking lot, where four years ago construction equipment used to get stuck in the mud. Sergeant McClure also painted a picture for the general of the soon-to-be built classroom with full audiovisual capability that would replace the current equipment lockers being used for walls.

On the second day of his tour, General Findley continued his march to nearby Naval

Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, the site for Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag which re-creates a deployed combat environment to train and test Airmen before they deploy. Meeting several food service workers in a field tent, he speculated about that evening's menu.

"What are you serving tonight? I saw the chocolate chips." General Findley said as he shook hands with several of the Airmen, telling them to "learn all you can."

Airman 1st Class Norman Marcus of Holloman AFB, N.M., said seeing the general show up in the mobile dining hall was inspiring: "It helps motivate us and shows that they (leadership) care."

"Instructors are military missionaries," said Lt. Col. Mitchell Monroe, commandant of the 421st Combat Training Skills Squadron, as he briefed General Findley and his staff on his school's responsibilities. "We train Airmen to go into harm's way. It doesn't matter whether you're a chaplain or security forces, you've got to know how to defend yourself and treat the wounded."

The USAF EC, with its various schools that teach everything from aviation records management to weapons training and combat self defense is reinforcing its role as the primary education site for Airmen who deploy utilizing a training budget of more than \$19 million.

More than 79 Airmen have died and 476 overall have been wounded in action, most in

See **Transformational**, Page 4



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
General Findley talks with Airmen from the 816th Contingency Response Group of McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., during a tour of Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 Sept. 23 at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, N.J.

Transformational, from Page 3
ground expeditionary roles, since operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom began, according to recent figures from the Department of Defense Casualty Reporting Office.

“It’s critical for leaders, like General Findley, who’ve just taken on new roles to see how Airmen train,” said Maj. Gen. Kip Self, the leader of 377 Airmen and civilians at the Expeditionary Center and its detachments across the country. “General Findley has just returned from Central Command in Iraq, so he brings the deployed perspective as he observes our training.”

For several members of General Findley’s staff, the visit to the center was enlightening. Chaplain (Col.) Brian Van Sickle is responsible for all the religious programs in AMC and the U.S. Transportation Command for the past two years. He said he was eager to understand the chaplain’s role in the Eagle Flag exercise, the Air Force’s only chief of staff-directed flag level exercise focusing on expeditionary combat support skills.

“I want our chaplains to learn deployment skills so they won’t be a burden and contribute to the mission,” Col. Van Sickle said, as his boots kicked up gravel at the Eagle Flag site. “This exercise is an education for the chaplains: What is their role? Where do they do confidential counseling in a combat environment? When and where do they hold services?”

Describing himself as the “chief geek of AMC,” Mr. Dave Merrill is the director of analysis assessments and “lessons learned” for AMC. “Our motto is ‘insight not numbers,’” said Mr. Merrill who noted he came to the Expeditionary Center to provide information for senior leaders for the “lessons learned” portion of his job description.

“Lessons learned is a growing enterprise,” Mr. Merrill said. “I’m here with General Findley to help the Air Force establish a lessons learned culture. In the past, lessons learned were bits of information gathered and archived and rarely used.

“Today, lessons learned does the same function but is much more operational. ...I’m pretty excited about what’s going on here,” Mr. Merrill added. “This is an environment rich with lessons learned, that not only applies to classes here at Eagle Flag, but we can push lessons learned to other services, forward into CENTCOM and hopefully prepare our warriors for what they’ll learn in the field.”

And lessons were learned. Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Hollis, the 95th Mission Support Group superintendent from Edwards AFB, Calif., was playing the role of command chief during the Eagle Flag exercise. He said he was most impressed by the authentic performances of the role players in the exercise, especially those acting as townspeople in the fictional village of Chimaera.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier

(Above) Lt. Gen. Vern “Rusty” Findley (left), Air Mobility Command vice commander, visits with students in the Phoenix Warrior Training Course during a tour of U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center training on a Fort Dix, N.J., range Sept. 23. **(Below)** General Findley talks with Airmen from the 816th Contingency Response Group of McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., during a tour of Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 Sept. 23 at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, N.J.



“When you interact with the Chimerans, you get the tingly feeling on the back of your neck that you are talking to a real Chimaeran,” Chief Hollis said. “They are always in character. The whole environment is much more real than expected. I epitomize the target audience. I haven’t deployed before.

“General Findley’s visit today is a testament to how valuable this training is,” the chief said. “We spend a lot of money to get people from all over. As leaders, we are stewards of Air Force money.”

Though used to the deference accorded a general’s rank, General Findley summed up his

visit with high praise for the center and its people, calling it “transformational.”

“It’s been a great two days for me to get out here and see where we’ve come,” he said. “Since I’ve been out of the command for a while, I’m quite impressed with what General Self and those before him have done to transform the training here; what they’ve done with Eagle Flag; and what they’re doing to prepare all of our great young men and women in the U.S. Air Force who are being tasked to go over and join all of our other partners in the Middle East in the Global War on Terrorism. It truly is transformational what we’ve done here.”

Observing with General Findley: ‘Expeditionary Center is doing its part’

By Chief Master Sgt. Paula Paige
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

If there’s a tale to be told about how Lt. Gen Vern “Rusty” Findley got his nickname, he wasn’t sharing it. “That’s classified,” he said with a laugh.

Instead, the vice commander of Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., was the one asking probing questions during his two-day tour from Sept 22-23 of the U.S. Air Force’s Expeditionary Center headquarters on Fort Dix and Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst.

“How many of you have been in firefights?” he asked the instructors during a tour of the firing range.

“I was in Kirkuk, (Iraq),” an Airman responded.

“How did it start?” General Findley queried.

Then he followed up: “How’d the Iraqis do?”

When he got an opportunity to try out an AK-47 rifle, he asked, “How many rounds does an average student get to fire?”

A volley of questions answered, including the AK-47 answer which is 20 rounds for students, he expressed his gratitude for the instructors’ service — a gesture repeated over and over during his two-day tour.

“The reason I was asking questions is, No. 1, I’ve been out of the command and I’ve been over there,” General Findley said.

“I want to learn what we’re doing to prepare our folks to be over there because we are right



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Lt. Gen. Verne “Rusty” Findley, Air Mobility Command vice commander, talks with Airmen from the 816th Contingency Response Group of McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., during a tour of Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 Sept. 23 at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, N.J.

in the middle of this thing.”

Getting a bird’s eye view of how Airmen train before deployment was especially important to General Findley. Not only is the Expeditionary Center among the assets owned by AMC, but the vice commander recently returned from a yearlong tour at Central Command in Baghdad and brings fresh insights to the training environment.

“I wish I was going to tell you that this thing (the Global War on Terrorism) was going to end tomorrow,” he told a group of Airmen during the Eagle Flag exercise. “It’s going to be a long war. ...The next time you need (this training) you’ll probably be over there.”

Col. Darrell Riggs, the 95th Mission Support Group commander at Edwards AFB, Calif., who was playing the role of camp commander for Eagle Flag said, “It’s great for the troops to see him and for him to see what we do. It’s good for senior leadership to come through.”

Stopping by the tent that housed the camp’s communications equipment and staff, General Findley told the Airmen their mission was vital. “We’re here to defend our nation,” he said. “What I see here in this camp and CENTCOM are great young Americans who signed up to serve our country. I’m convinced that what we’re doing there has prevented another attack on our country. This (communications) is the backbone. If COMM goes down, chaos reigns.”

Senior Airman Anthony Tran’s first experienced Eagle Flag as a student. Now a more seasoned Iraqi war veteran, the explosive ordnance technician has returned as a “role player,”

donning a sister service’s uniform to play an Army soldier in the fictional town of Chimaera. After demonstrating an explosion, Airman Tran discussed the significance of General Findley’s visit to the training environment.

“This gives him insight into what students will encounter and how the cadre is running the village,” Airman Tran said, “how important training is for Airmen and how we’re prepared for Iraq.”

One of General Findley’s last stops at the center was the obstacle course portion of the Phoenix Warrior Training Course, a grueling test of everything the students have learned over the two-week course.

“The obstacle course was pretty impressive, pretty intense,” General Findley said. “I’ve been over there — a lot. The physical piece of it is certainly something they need to be prepared for. What I was most impressed with was the training that tries to bond them as a team — where they become 13 people fighting as one; helping each other out not, leaving anybody behind. That was impressive teamwork.”

“I leave here after two days feeling very, very comfortable and happy that the Expeditionary Center is doing its part in making sure these great young men and women that we are sending to war are as ready as we can make them, before they get over there,” General Findley said. “They’ll never be completely ready, but we’re doing a darn good job in making sure we give them the skills, the knowledge and, frankly, the experience they need to contribute to the joint war fight.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier

Mr. Rudy Becker, Mobility Operations School director, shows General Findley some of the areas of the Expeditionary Center during a tour Sept. 22.

Air Mobility Battlelab deactivates after 10 years

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center Public Affairs

At 2 p.m. on Sept. 24, the Air Mobility Battlelab was added to the annals of Air Force history.

In front of the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's commander, Maj. Gen. Kip Self, and the Battlelab's last commander, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Lathrop, the unit's flag was rolled up and ceremoniously put away forever during the battlelab's deactivation ceremony in the center's Grace Peterson Hall on Fort Dix, N.J.

The Air Mobility Battlelab, or AMB, stood up provisionally in the then Air Mobility Warfare Center on May 4, 1998. Its mission was to "make innovation in air mobility practical by exploring high payoff operational, logistical, and informational concepts, technologies, and tactics to advance the Air Force core competency of rapid global mobility."

It wasn't until Jan. 4, 2001, that the battlelab was officially sanctioned by the Air Force. All that said, in more than 10 years, the battlelab has left a mark of excellence for the Air Force to remember, Colonel Lathrop said.

"During its existence, the AMB completed 78 concept demonstrations," Colonel Lathrop said. "Of those, 28 concepts were fielded or incorporated into on-going acquisition or research and development efforts, and 18 others are still at Air Mobility Command headquarters awaiting funding or a fielding decision."

Colonel Lathrop added that much of AMB's work has contributed to safer and better items for aeromedical evacuation, or AE, such as a man-portable litter rack that enables crews to quickly configure virtually any Air Force aircraft for AE missions, and a portable fuel cell capable of traveling with the patient to provide uninterrupted electrical power from field hospital to stateside medical center.

Other notable initiatives include an automated in-flight balancing system for C-130 aircraft propellers that reduces aircraft noise and vibration while eliminating the need for mechanics to manually balance the propellers on the ground; and a battery-powered LED-based floodlight that's one-fiftieth the size of the Air Force's current light carts and provides infra-red light for covert operations as well as visible light.

Or, how about the KC-10 bunk quick release and cargo net initiatives



Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier
Lt. Col. Jeffrey Lathrop, the last commander of the Air Mobility Battlelab, pulls the covering over the flag of the battlelab with the help of Tech. Sgt. Joe Jones during a deactivation ceremony in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's Grace Peterson Hall on Sept. 24.

that promise to save time and man-hours for tanker aircrews? And recently, there is the KC-135 cooling sock initiative that offers a safer way to cool the flight decks of the planes.

"Completing 78 initiatives is very impressive considering the battlelab was only at full strength for around five years," Colonel Lathrop said. "And the fact such a high percentage of the concepts we demonstrated lived on after we transitioned them indicates we did a good job selecting ideas that met critical needs."

Battlelab members are looking to move forward from this point, but they say the innovative work has made a difference.

"We were able to demonstrate technologies at low cost, giving AMC options to streamline operations and bring efficiency to the warfighter in a timely manner," said Senior Master Sgt. Dominic Perino, AMB superintendent who now moves on to Dover Air Force Base, Del., after three years with the AMB. "Individual units will now have to tackle innovation with their own manpower and money. With tight budgets, it is understandable why the battlelabs were closed, but in the future, similar organizations will be developed to tackle 'innovation to warfighting.'"

Master Sgt. Michael Harris, the AMB's loadmaster concepts manager for the past three and a half years, added that he believes the people who worked in the battlelab represented all of the Airmen "who are working hard to fulfill the AMC and Air Force mission."

"We attempted to expedite the fielding of mature and emerging technologies to those Airmen so they could accomplish the missions faster, safer, cheaper, and, in some cases, more accurately," Sergeant Harris said. "I feel that I succeeded in my mission to aid the warfighter. From this experience, I will take away satisfaction knowing that my efforts will be felt not only in AMC, but Department of Defense-wide."

During the deactivation ceremony, Colonel Lathrop said "AMC is losing a capability to capitalize on innovative concepts and ideas when it needs it most." But, he also noted the success of the Air Force has always been the Airman's way to be "smart and innovative."

"We are losing a capability — that has been understood here for more than a year now," Colonel Lathrop said. "But I leave you with the knowledge that we aren't closing because we weren't successful — we were. I can only tell you that Airmen will be Airmen and they will always find ways to make our Air Force better. For 10 years, the Air Mobility Battlelab did just that — make our Air Force better."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier
Colonel Lathrop provides remarks to the audience in attendance at the Air Mobility Battlelab's deactivation ceremony Sept. 24.

Expeditionary Skills Summit aids in streamlining training for Airmen

By Chief Master Sgt. Paula Paige
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

The evolving Global War on Terrorism has made Col. Jenny Pickett's personal mission of "keeping Airmen alive" more challenging these days.

The commandant of the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Operations School, which trains Airmen for deployment, says inconsistencies in where and how troops gain war-fighting proficiency are not serving our Airmen well. The classic example, she said, is an Airmen facing terroristic threats from insurgents and having insufficient training to defend themselves and their wingmen.

To help tame this inconsistency, Colonel Pickett helped organize the Expeditionary Skills Summit held from Sept. 3 to 5 at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix where her school is based. The event, attended by more than 60 key leaders representing government civilians, active-duty Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, focused on a common understanding of the expeditionary process, identified gaps and overlaps in skills training and charted the way ahead.

"This summit is very important," Colonel Pickett said. "In addition to developing a common understanding of what it means to be an expeditionary Airmen, we will address overarching training requirements to prepare Airmen to do their deployed jobs safely and to return home with their wingmen."

Summit participants acknowledged that the evolving post 9/11 environment had changed the mission of average deploying Airmen, moving them from support roles to more dangerous ones where their combat environments require skills that previously were allotted to security forces.

For all Airmen, the first of four "tiers" of training begins in basic training, with foundational instruction in areas, such as rifle firing and chemical warfare. Follow-on training in Tiers 2, 3 and 4, builds on an Airman's combat survival skills. By Tiers 3 and 4, those Airmen facing the greatest threats are able to hone their special skills required to support combat operations.

The Expeditionary Center is one of several training sites where Airmen beef up their combat skills before deployment. The others are Camp Bullis, a nearly 28,000-acre facility in North San Antonio, where many expeditionary combat skills training courses are conducted;



Photo by Staff Sgt. Paul R. Evans

Attendees to the Expeditionary Skills Summit at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J., discuss training initiatives Sept. 4.

and Camp Guernsey in rural southeast Wyoming, near F.E. Warren AFB. At Camp Guernsey, Airmen become skilled at convoy operations security, forward operating base security and learn how to clear buildings and villages of potential threats.

Meanwhile, in a corner classroom of the Expeditionary Center, an animated summit presenter urged attendees to unite on changes for the more than 500,000 members of the Total Air Force.

"We're moving to a place where every Airman is in combat arms," said Col. Scott Bethel, deputy director of operations for technical training from the Air Education and Training Command at Randolph AFB, Texas. "We've been inconsistent on (training)...Is this going to be an enduring mission or is it GWOT focused? Who will do the training? What will we do as an Air Force to ensure our Airmen are ready (to go to war)? We need to figure out what to do better to get the expeditionary Airman trained."

"This isn't about 'who moved my cheese?'" Colonel Bethel said, referring to the best-selling business book on embracing personal and organizational change. "The 'cheese' moved. ...We've got a bag of feathers hoping a duck appears."

Beyond dairy tales and fowl play, the Expeditionary Center's leader focused on more somber reasons for the summit.

"Our casualties on the ground far exceed our losses in the air over the past seven years," said Maj. Gen Kip Self, who hosted the summit and spent much of his time interacting with participants. "Zero combat losses is my goal. This

summit is similar to Training Review Boards conducted among aircrew to discuss tactics, techniques and procedures. This is an initial attempt to do the same for our expeditionary combat support (ECS) warriors. Training venues like the Expeditionary Center are making a difference in preparing today's warriors. We must train our ECS forces with the same vigor we do our aircrews."

About 78 Airmen have died and 476 were wounded in action since Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom began, according to recent figures from the Department of Defense Casualty Reporting Office.

Since Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom began, about 80,000 Airmen have deployed annually to support the wartime effort, Colonel Bethel said, adding that that number is even higher when you include support for missions in Bosnia. About 35,000 of those Airmen get advanced skills training in areas such as emergency medical field training, he said. "Somewhere in there, there is a gap."

Col. Stephen Shea's job as deputy director of global combat support at the Pentagon puts him in an influential position for training the Airmen who deploy. At the end of the summit, he expressed relief that several key issues were being resolved.

"With AETC taking the lead command and the 'memorandum of understanding' clarifying the Expeditionary Center's role as expeditionary skills training provider, that's helped in the synchronization process," Colonel Shea said.

SUMMING UP THE SUMMIT

How will the decisions made at the Expeditionary Skills Summit affect the Air Force rank and file? Here's what you need to know:

What: More than 60 senior leaders from all branches of the Air Force are attending the Expeditionary Skills Summit on Fort Dix.

Why: Inconsistencies in training — from weapons qualifications to where Airmen perform training before they deploy — led to a call for formal guidelines.

How this affects you: Airmen should have a better idea of what training is required and why before they deploy. Airmen will gain the same skills, regardless of which training site they attend. The results of this conference and the pending guidance offered to senior leaders will determine the amount and significance of any changes for Airmen.

KC-135 night vision initiative sheds light on refueling ops improvements

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

Teaming with the Air Force Research Laboratory's Night Vision Center of Excellence of Mesa, Ariz., the Air Mobility Battlelab saw a way to aid Stratotanker aircrews to see in the dark through the KC-135 Exterior Night Vision Imaging System-compatible Lighting initiative.

"The tanker's exterior lighting is not currently compatible with night vision goggle operations which limits the receiver's ability to use their night vision systems during air refueling operations," said Master Sgt. Chris Sidoli, the AMB's project manager for the initiative and a career boom operator in both the KC-135 and the KC-10 Extender. "Our solution is simple — modify tanker aircraft with night vision-friendly exterior lighting and night vision-compatible interior lighting for the boom pod. This can have an immediate impact for our tanker forces in the deployed theater."

In working with AFRL's Night Vision Center, a light-emitting diode, or LED-based system was designed to replace the KC-135's wing and tail navigation lights, boom nozzle light, upper and lower strobes and pilot director lights without any internal aircraft wiring changes. Inside the boom operator compartment at the tail of the plane, night vision-friendly LED flood lights were added and some cockpit and boom pod switches were replaced to facilitate multi-mode operations.

"The idea is to make air refueling at night safer," Sergeant Sidoli said. "Right now, during night-time air refueling operations in 'black-out' conditions, pilots in aircraft receiving fuel have to remove their night vision goggles prior to an air refueling to prevent required visual references from being 'washed out' or obscured in the night vision goggle image. Also, current external lighting on the aircraft is easily detected by ground threats using the unaided eye. Correcting these deficiencies has a direct impact on mission accomplishment and safety in flight."

A demonstration with the modifications on a KC-135 was held in August 2007 out of Phoenix Sky International Airport, Ariz., with KC-135s from the 161st Air Refueling Wing of the Arizona Air National Guard.

"In setting this up, we looked for low cost, commercial and government off-the-shelf lighting technology to make the KC-135 exterior and boom pod interior lighting selectively night vision-compatible yet undetectable to the unaided eye," Sergeant Sidoli said. "Then the AFRL stepped in and designed and installed the lighting solutions. To save time and cost, and to decrease risk, lighting luminance assessments were done in a controlled laboratory environ-



Air Force Photo

This view through night vision goggles shows how the specialized lighting aids in improved vision inside a KC-135R Stratotanker. The demonstration was at Phoenix Sky International Airport, Ariz., for the Air Mobility Battlelab's KC-135 Exterior Night Vision Imaging System-compatible Lighting initiative Aug. 23, 2007. The initiative has been recommended by the AMB for fielding by Air Mobility Command.

ment prior to hardware installation on the KC-135 used for the demonstration."

Once the aircraft was configured with applicable lighting for each phase of the demonstration, Sergeant Sidoli said lighting luminance assessments were conducted in a light-tightened hangar that was as fully darkened as conditions would allow and served as a controlled environment.

Throughout the demonstration, they completed objectives on lighting for the pilot director indicator and boom nozzle, boom pod interior, wing tip and navigation lights and upper and lower strobe lights.

"Overall, the demonstration proved the changes could work," Sergeant Sidoli said. "This initiative showed that a low-cost night vision lighting alternative is out there and is feasible."

"We found that a night vision lighting system can eliminate the time necessary for receiver pilots to don or doff their night vision equipment while performing night-time air refueling

operations," Sergeant Sidoli said. "This is an improved capability when compared to the current operations in the field."

Further flight testing of the equipment that was designed and developed by AFRL may be required, however Lt. Col. Jeffrey Lathrop, AMB commander, has recommended this initiative for fielding.

"The National Guard Bureau and other agencies are pursuing funding to accomplish flight and environmental testing on the night vision lighting system," Colonel Lathrop said. "It is AMB's recommendation this initiative be considered for fielding by Air Mobility Command as resources allow and requirements dictate."

The Air Mobility Battlelab, located in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, was officially established in 2001 to identify and demonstrate the utility of innovative concepts with potential to enhance Mobility Air Force capabilities.

The AMB deactivated Sept. 24 as part of an Air Force cost-savings initiative.

Battlelab initiative demonstrates safer way to cool down KC-135 flight deck

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

Aircrews operating KC-135 Stratotankers in hot climates may soon have a safer way to keep their flight decks cool thanks to the Air Mobility Battlelab's KC-135 Hot Weather Cooling Sock initiative.

"This initiative addresses a current problem where aircraft maintainers use a standard flexible duct connected to an air conditioning cart to cool the KC-135 flight deck while the aircraft is on the ground in hot climates," said Master Sgt. Eric Allain, the Air Mobility Battlelab, or AMB, project manager for the initiative. The AMB is located in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J. "The duct runs through the same opening aircrew and maintenance personnel use to enter and exit the aircraft, which impairs quick egress in emergency situations. In addition, the duct prevents closure of a hatch in the flight deck floor, which creates a fall hazard for personnel working in the cockpit."

Enter the 161st Air Refueling Wing at Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix, who came up with a proposed solution — a lightweight, flexible, canvas tube, or "sock," small enough to run behind the aircraft's crew entry ladder. This keeps it out of the way of personnel entering and exiting the aircraft during ground cooling operations, Sergeant Allain said. "This installation will also allow the crew entry gate to fully close, eliminating potential tripping hazards and other safety concerns," he said.

The AMB learned of the 161st's idea, and decided to conduct a formal demonstration to get the concept in front of Air Mobility Command leadership and other KC-135 units.

"The 161st ARW parachute shop took a commercially made canvas acrylic fabric and sewed it into a cylindrical hose approximately 15- to 16-feet long with an air sealing web nylon cinch belt," Sergeant Allain said. "There are buckle tie-downs on one end of the sock connecting it to a standard flexible duct and four strap webbings with a spring buckle on the other end to tie it down to the ladder. When the sock is completely rolled up, it's approximately the size of a small sleeping bag."

The shop fabricated the cooling sock at a cost of \$78 in parts and four and a half hours of labor, Sergeant Allain said.

"We then went to work on assessing how well it would cool a flight deck down in the Arizona sun," Sergeant Allain said.

During the demonstration held in June, they



Air Force Photos

These photos show a fabricated cooling sock as it is attached behind the crew entry ladder to the flight deck of a KC-135R Stratotanker at Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix, Ariz., in June 2008, where the demonstration for the Air Mobility Battlelab's KC-135 Hot Weather Cooling Sock initiative took place. The use of the cooling sock has been recommended for fielding to Air Mobility Command by the AMB, which is located at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J.

completed five objectives. First, they determined if the cooling sock could cool the flight deck during ground operations to a level comparable to the standard duct. Next, they verified the cooling sock allowed obstruction-free entry and egress and complete closure of the flight deck crew entry hatch during ground cooling operations. And, lastly, they checked to see if the cooling sock material met relevant specifications and assessed whether the sock would impart excessive forces on the crew access ladder mounting hardware.

"The cooling sock met all of our objectives, and I commend the 161st parachute shop for building a great end product," Sergeant Allain said. "The idea for a sock like this has implications for heating operations in a cold weather climate as well, but we'll have to look into using a different material for heating. Overall, it was a very successful demonstration."

The air temperature on the ramp at Phoenix was 110 degrees Fahrenheit the day of the demonstration, and the temperature in the cockpit was over 126 degrees before air conditioning was applied. The cooling sock was able to bring the average cockpit temperature down to 84 degrees during the demonstration.

In his recommendation to Air Mobility Command, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Lathrop, AMB commander, urged the command to explore finding a suitable material for both heating and cooling, and then field the sock for the Air Force's KC-135 fleet.

"Cooling the cockpit is not just a crew comfort item; it's vital for the proper operation and longevity of sensitive electronics in the flight deck," Colonel Lathrop said. "The 161st came up with a great design that gets the job done while eliminating multiple safety hazards. It has implications across the KC 135 tanker fleet."

Initiative offers portable landing system for airbase opening forces

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

The Air Mobility Battlelab, or AMB, recently joined forces with the Air Force's Electronic Systems Center to show how cutting edge aircraft approach and landing technology can shrink the footprint of the airbase opening forces.

"Many austere airfields don't have the necessary equipment to enable aircraft to land in bad weather," said Master Sgt. Eric Allain, project manager for the battlelab's Contingency Landing System initiative, "so Air Force Contingency Response Groups have to take instrument approach ground stations with them when they're establishing a new base. Our current deployable landing systems are bulky, however, and require extensive time and manpower to set up. That's where we came in to help — to find something that is easier to move and set up in the deployed environment."

The initiative called for a lot of teamwork, Sergeant Allain said. The AMB, located in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J., worked with Air Mobility Command's Airspace and Airfield Operations Directorate, or AMC/A3A, as well as the Air Force Flight Standards Agency. They also coordinated with the Air Force Research Laboratory, other Department of Defense agencies and industry partners to see if current technology could provide a more deployment-friendly contingency landing system, or CLS, that would meet AMC's requirements.

"Our solution had to be a CLS that could bridge the gap between current precision landing systems and a future, fully automated, on-board, autonomous landing capability for our military aircraft," Sergeant Allain said. "This system had to be able to be easily deployed to austere airfields and meet contingency response group performance requirements."

The goal for the initiative was to find a system that was "man-portable" and could be set up by two people, Sergeant Allain said. The Department of Defense does plan to eventually field a man-portable version of the Joint Precision Approach and Landing System, or JPALS, that it is developing for all the services, but fielding of a "Man-Pack" JPALS capability is many years away.

So the battlelab, in an effort to see what could be fielded today, sent out a request for proposals to civilian industry seeking to lease hardware for a concept demonstration. No existing commercial-based systems were found that met AMC's requirements, however.

Enter the 641st Electronic Systems Squadron from the Electronic Systems Center, or ESC, at



Air Force Photo

Two Airmen from the Electronic Systems Center of Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass., put together a portable contingency landing system that's carried in backpacks during Air Mobility Battlelab's Portable Contingency Landing System Initiative concept demonstration at Duke Field, Fla., in July.

Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass.

"While conducting our research, we learned the ESC's 641st had used JPALS hardware to construct a man-portable technology demonstrator to prove the feasibility of a backpack-sized CLS," Sergeant Allain said. "Their demonstrator showed potential to meet most of AMC's needs today and, in a short time, we coordinated with the 641st to conduct a concept demonstration for Air Mobility Command leadership."

The demonstration system continually measures the errors inherent in Global Positioning System, or GPS, navigation systems, and automatically broadcasts this information to aircraft flying in the area so these errors can be eliminated. The result is a navigation system capable of supporting 'Category 1' precision approaches when the cloud ceiling is as low as 200 feet above the runway and visibility is as low as one-half mile.

"The amazing thing about the system, though, is its size," Sergeant Allain said. "All ground station components, with the exception of a portable generator and a small datalink radio, fit into two small backpacks."

The demonstration took place in July on Duke Field at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., using the 641st's JPALS Man-Pack CLS Demonstration System and a specially instrumented Air Force C-21 aircraft. The objectives of the demonstration included assessing the physical size of the system and its ability to meet Contingency Response Group operational requirements, including a setup time of two hours or less using only two people.

"The results were very positive," Sergeant Allain said. "The system met both physical and operational requirements, and two Airmen from the 641st were able to set it up in less than 30 minutes."

A small pallet of special electronic equipment was installed on the C-21 aircraft for the demonstration, but this requirement will be eliminated once Air Force aircraft are equipped with JPALS equipment in the future as planned. The Air Force could also create an interim capability if desired by constructing portable JPALS receivers that could be moved from aircraft to aircraft as mission requirements dictate.

The AMB's conclusion is the JPALS system "met or exceeded" the performance, set up and size objectives of the demonstration.

"Another great feature of the JPALS technology is that, unlike current systems that can only support landings in one direction on one runway, this system can provide up to 48 customized approaches to multiple runways at multiple airfields, as well as helipads and drop zones, within a five-to 10-mile radius of the ground station," Sergeant Allain said.

In recommending the system for "expedited development and fielding," Lt. Col. Jeffrey Lathrop, Air Mobility Battlelab commander, said the system has a lot of potential.

"We've recommended that AMC/A3A work with the ESC and the U.S. Navy, the current lead service for JPALS, to advocate for expedited fielding of a man-portable JPALS capability because it can do so much for the warfighter," Colonel Lathrop said. "We've also recommended AMC look at the cost and fuel savings of implementing JPALS at stateside AMC bases."

"Approach and landing corridors could be optimized for the fuel savings, and one system could replace the multiple precision approaches now servicing all of the runways at a particular base. This could result in significant cost savings to the Air Force on precision approach maintenance."

Expeditionary Center lieutenant earns Bronze Star

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

For most of 2007, 1st Lt. Eric Snelgrove was deployed to Iraq, but not just any part of Iraq. He was in northern Iraq as the fusion cell officer in charge at a U.S. Army forward operating base.

His work there with special forces was significant and the Army noticed by awarding him the Bronze Star. Lieutenant Snelgrove was officially awarded the medal in a special ceremony Sept. 24 in the Expeditionary Center's Grace Peterson Hall by Maj. Gen. Kip Self, center commander.

"It's a huge honor," said Lieutenant Snelgrove, the 421st Combat Training Squadron's intelligence flight commander at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J. "I was fortunate enough to have worked with some of the best Army special operations forces in the world, and when you work with the best, they challenge you to be the best.

"Our special operations forces operate in the shadows and fight day-in, day-out, achieving enormous victories that will never make the newspaper," Lieutenant Snelgrove said. "They wouldn't want it any other way. It was a privilege to work along side those warriors."

He was deployed from May to November 2007. The citation for the Bronze Star highlights the Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran's achievements.

"Lieutenant Snelgrove's leadership, technical and analytical skills allowed him to flawlessly support the task force for signals intelligence targeting and exploitation operations during sustained combat operations," the citation reads. "His contributions ensured the success of a series of ground combat operations of national significance."

Lieutenant Snelgrove brings that deployed experience to work at the Expeditionary Center — a place he says is on "the cutting edge."

"Operating in a joint environment, and going outside the wire, you learn a lot about the warrior mentality," Lieutenant Snelgrove said. "And that is really what we are trying to teach the students who come through the Expeditionary Center. We are giving them the tools so that they aren't a liability to their fellow Airmen and Soldiers in the battlefield. The things I learned in Iraq cannot easily be incorporated into any Air Force unit, but that is what makes the EC so cutting edge, and so necessary right now."

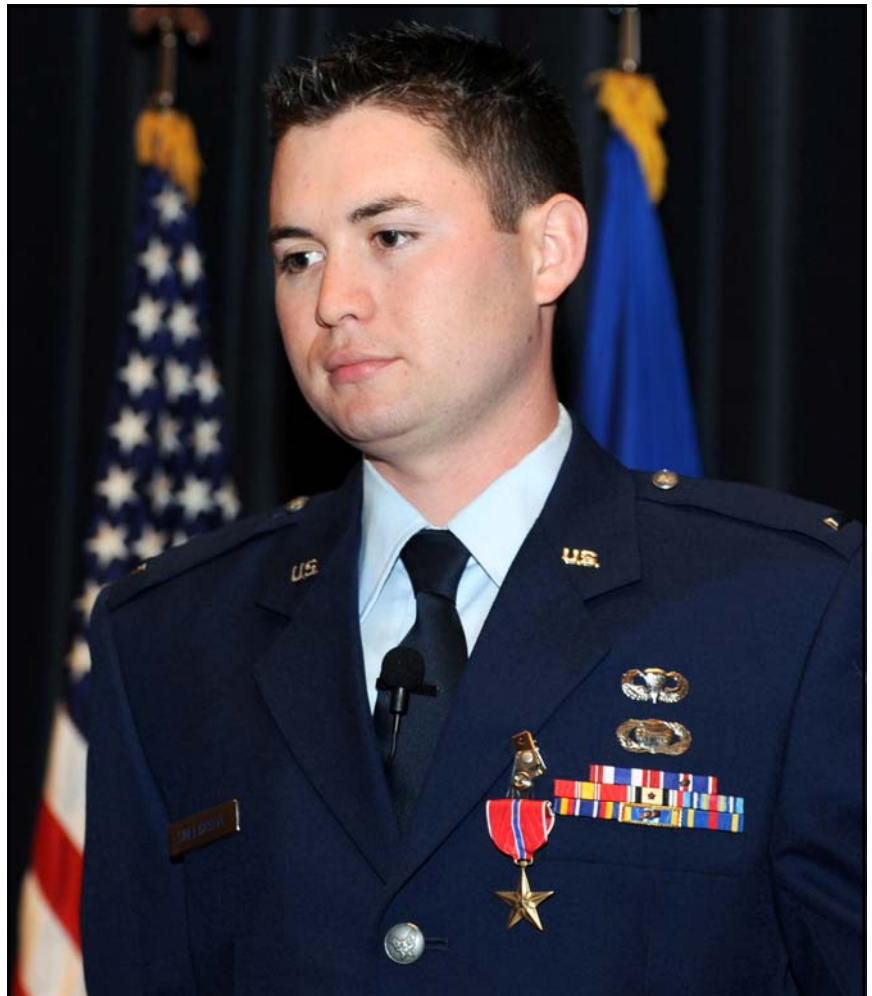
The Bronze Star is awarded to personnel in any branch of the military service who distinguished themselves by heroic or meritorious achievement or service, not involving participation in aerial flight, in connection with military operations against an armed enemy, according to an Air Force fact sheet.

"The award recognizes acts of heroism performed in ground combat if they are of lesser degree than that required for the Silver Star," the fact sheet shows. "It also recognizes single acts of merit and meritorious service if the achievement or service is of a lesser degree than that deemed worthy of the Legion of Merit; but such service must have been accomplished with distinction."



Photos by Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier

(Above) Maj. Gen. Kip Self, U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center commander, pins a Bronze Star on 1st Lt. Eric Snelgrove from the 421st Combat Training Squadron. (Below) Lieutenant Snelgrove reflects on receiving the Bronze Star.



Expeditionary Center students save a life

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Milton Cobo and Senior Airman Nestor Rivas were studying with their classmates and enjoying an evening by the hotel pool. The last thing they expected to interrupt them was to save someone from drowning on the deep end of the pool.

On July 30, Sergeant Cobo and Airman Rivas, both security forces Airmen with the 108th Security Forces Squadron at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., went to study class material with fellow students in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's Contingency Response Mission Orientation Course at a hotel in Bordentown, N.J. Just after 6 p.m., a frightened call came from a concerned spouse.

"We were there as part of a study group," Sergeant Cobo said. "We were sitting in the corner near the pool when we heard a woman yell, 'Help! Help!' At first it didn't sound like a frantic yell, but this all happened in seconds, so we responded."

Sergeant Cobo said he and Airman Rivas along with others saw the woman's husband in the water, and he looked like he was drowning. Their response was immediate.

"I jumped in and Nestor followed," Sergeant Cobo said. "I got there first, and when I got to him, he was kind of drowning me, too. I got down under the water and pushed up on him while Nestor pulled him toward the shallow end of the pool."

"The man was at the shallow end of the pool when he was still panicking and kicking and punching," Sergeant Cobo said. "It was at this point, that Nestor said, 'You can stand up now.'"

"When this all started, I was just sitting there looking at my books," Airman Rivas said. "When we jumped in, Sergeant Cobo was pushing him up on his left knee and I pulled him by the waist to the shallow area. What I found amazing after the man stood up in the shallow area was that he was nearly two feet taller than me. We were both saying, 'Wow!'"

After the incident occurred, Airman Rivas said the man's wife came to them several times and said, "Thank you." Meanwhile, the man who nearly drowned sat down for what Airman Rivas said was "a long time."

"I think it was stunned silence," Airman Rivas said. "When he and his family went back in, he did wave and say 'thank you.' I think he may have been embarrassed, but I do know he was happy nothing worse happened."

Earlier this year, Sergeant Cobo and Airman Rivas returned from a deployment to Iraq where, during the whole time they were there,



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Staff Sgt. Milton Cobo (left) and Senior Airman Nestor Rivas, both security forces Airmen from the 108th Security Forces Squadron and soon to be assigned to the 108th Contingency Response Group at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., helped save the life of a man July 30 drowning in the pool at a hotel in Bordentown, N.J. Though they are Air National Guardsmen and local residents, they were at the hotel as part of a study group for the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's Contingency Response Mission Orientation Course, which is taught at the center on Fort Dix, N.J.

they didn't have to save a life in this respect.

Their participation in the Expeditionary Center course is in preparation for the eventual creation of the first Air National Guard contingency response group — the 108th CRG — at McGuire. However, like they both said, it's sometimes a matter of being "in the right place at the right time."

"It was totally unexpected — a total adrenaline rush," Sergeant Cobo said. "It was scary in the beginning because I've done this before, but not to this extent. The first thing I thought about after we finished was the man's two young daughters who were also in the pool. I can only imagine what could have happened if we weren't there and how devastating that would have been to those two girls."

Airman Rivas said he found out a day later the family was retired military, but neither he nor Sergeant Cobo ever learned their names. He was just glad no one got hurt.

"It's one of those things you can feel good about and know that you helped someone," Airman Rivas said. "When someone calls for help, you respond. As security forces members, that's what we know to do."

Sergeant Cobo said it also emphasizes the importance of knowing your limitations.

"He was probably swimming where he shouldn't have been because he didn't know how to swim," Sergeant Cobo said. "I think he may now consider getting swimming lessons so it doesn't happen again. That aside, I'm just happy we were there to help."

'Eagles' attend McGuire senior NCO induction



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Master Sgt. Timothy Wasut, U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center first sergeant (left) from Fort Dix, N.J., and Master Sgt. Joseph Bailey, McGuire Air Force Base, serve as em-ceeds during the McGuire Senior NCO Induction Ceremony July 25 in the McGuire Club. The ceremony honored technical sergeants who were selected for promotion to master sergeant in 2008 at both McGuire and area Air Force units, including the Expeditionary Center.

Among the USAF EC attendees were:



Tech. Sgt. Kelly Tabor



Tech. Sgt. Chris Sherman



Tech. Sgt. Phil Griffin



Tech. Sgts. Todd and April Cooper



Tech. Sgt. Duane and Elizabeth Rowles



Tech. Sgt. Joseph and Michelle Neubauer



Chief Master Sgt. John Gillette, 305th Air Mobility Wing command chief master sergeant, leads more than 40 technical sergeants in reciting "The Airman's Creed" at the end of the ceremony.

MOS course teaches CRG mission, capabilities to Airmen

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

Originally started in January 2007 under a different name, the Mobility Operations School's Contingency Response Mission Orientation Course has grown into a training venue where more than 500 Airmen have learned their roles in a contingency response unit.

"Our first class, then called the Contingency Response Group Formal Training Unit, had about 30 students and we were just building up the curriculum," said Master Sgt. David Oliver, a CRMOC instructor and one of the original cadre when the course began. "Now, we are flowing and have a good core of instructors and curriculum that's really helping Airmen new to these kind of units."

Sergeant Oliver said the core curriculum accentuates the initial air base opening mission, but it also reflects other CRG mission areas — expeditionary air mobility support and Joint Task Force-Port Opening, or JTF-PO. "JTF-PO is the wave of the future," he said.

Sergeant Oliver added the evolution of JTF-PO started with lessons learned from Air Force CRG humanitarian response Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005.

"Those operations put the spotlight on the need for JTF-PO," Sergeant Oliver said. "In a CRG, and even before that with the air mobility operations group, the units were successful in opening air bases for strategic movement of cargo and personnel. What we learned from Katrina and the Pakistan earthquake response was we could get a lot of stuff into the air field, but we couldn't get it out to other areas where it is really needed.

"That spawned JTF-PO," Sergeant Oliver said, "and now we join up with the Army who can bring in the trucks and the logistical capability to move the supplies forward."

Besides teaching the evolving doctrinal concepts of JTF-PO, Sergeant Oliver said the course helps students learn some of the basics of expeditionary life — such as building tents or driving a high-mobility, multi-wheeled vehicle, or HMMWV.

"In this course, we stress first they need to be experts in their field," Sergeant Oliver said, "but equally important, we stress they need to work as a team, to get out and do things beyond their normal functional duties to support the overall mission."

Sergeant Oliver said being a "team" is the most critical aspect of a successful contingency response unit and that's why we place a lot of emphasis on the CRG "team" during the two weeks of CRMOC training.

"We stress teamwork in our whole course,"



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
Tech. Sgt. Christopher Leonard, an instructor in the Contingency Response Mission Orientation Course, shows course students the engine compartment of a HMMWV on a Fort Dix, N.J., range Aug. 6.

Sergeant Oliver said. "We don't stand up and say, 'aerial porters be aerial porters,' or, 'security forces be security forces,' we tell them to work to be a successful CRG — be that successful team."

If you ask Staff Sgt. Milton Cobo and Senior Airman Nestor Rivas, both members of the newly formed 108th Contingency Response Group on McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., and students in CRMOC 2008-E, they'll tell you it will be teamwork and training in courses like CRMOC that will help their unit achieve its initial operating capability.

"One of the reasons I wanted to be in the CRG was because I like the concept of everybody working together," Sergeant Cobo said. "I like the idea of working with and helping everybody out. The CRMOC helped me understand a lot more about types of equipment and career fields I knew nothing about.

"For example, the maintenance or aerial porters in a CRG might not know as much about weapons as security forces like me, and likewise, we don't know about a lot about their equipment," Sergeant Cobo said. "It's about the shared knowledge we get from each other that helps and this course builds on that."

Airman Rivas said CRMOC is not only about the teamwork, but also learning the basics of a CRG unit — kind of like "CRG 101."

"The course is very informative," Airman

Rivas said. "When I was first asked to join the CRG, we were in Iraq and I said, 'Sure, I'll do it.' But the fact was, when we first came into the CRG, we really didn't know much of what the CRG was about except that we were going to be training and learning each other's jobs. Until we got here for the training, we didn't know exactly what the mission was. Now, thanks to the course, we have a greater understanding to move forward."

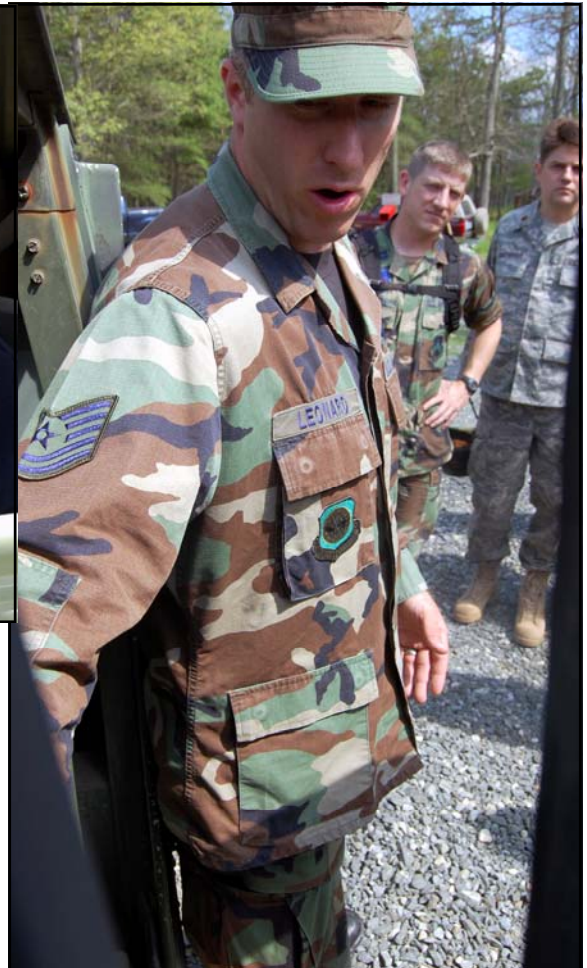
Sergeant Oliver said the CRMOC, along with related, advanced versions of this kind of training is completed in the MOS's Contingency Response Branch — now less than a year old. He said this course, and the others, will keep evolving.

"Our instructors are great and have a lot of experience," Sergeant Oliver said. "Over time this course has gotten better but we have a long way to go to where we want it to be. Since we're the only place in the Air Force that teaches CRG-specific training, we want to make it better for the sake of preparing our Airmen for the unique and tough work it takes to be in a contingency response unit. It can only get better from here."

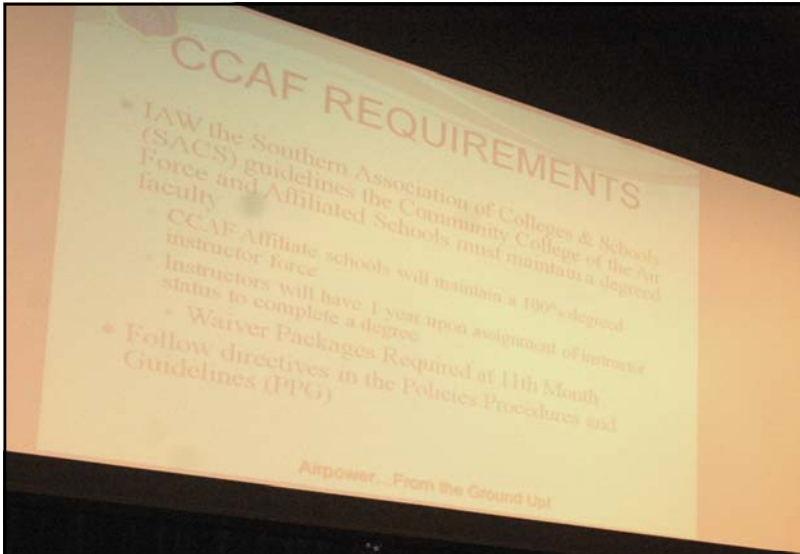
To learn more about the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center and courses like this, go online to <http://www.expeditionarycenter.af.mil> or to the USAF EC Home Page on the Air Force Portal.



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol



(Top) Students in the Mobility Operations School's Contingency Response Mission Orientation Course practice driving a high-mobility, multi-wheeled vehicle, or HMMWV, on a Fort Dix, N.J., range Aug. 6. (Right) Tech. Sgt. Chris Leonard, CRMOC instructor, shows students the basic make-up of a HMMWV during training Aug. 6. HMMWV training is one of the classes taught in several U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center courses helping Airmen be prepared for their deployments. In the CRMOC, students are trained to be part of contingency response units. Most recently, the course has been training Airmen in the Air National Guard's first contingency response groups — the 123rd CRG of the Kentucky Air National Guard and the 108th CRG now forming at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

(Above) Tech. Sgt. Kendrick Ross, from the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's Mobility Operations School Curriculum and Instructor Development Division, teaches an in-service training seminar in the Center's Grace Peterson Hall July 29 to Airmen from the 421st Combat Training Squadron (inset). (Left) Mr. Philip Mohasci, chief of the Curriculum and Instructor Development Division, leads off an in-service training session on Community College of the Air Force policies, procedures and guidance.

Every week in the USAF EC, IST seminars are held for the center's instructors to stay qualified in teaching their college accredited courses. During a summertime visit by CCAF personnel for a compliance inspection, Mr. Mohascii said there were positive results. They found that none of the center's 200-plus instructors were lacking in the necessary credentials. That is all thanks in part to IST seminars as shown here.

Expeditionary Center armory fires up training for Airmen

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

Aided by having the largest store of foreign weapons in the service, the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's armory and its staff help Airmen get more "bang for their buck" with pre-deployment training.

"In any 30-day span, we've had from 50 to more than 800 weapons out at any given time," said Tech. Sgt. Sean Heraty, the assistant noncommissioned officer in charge at the armory, located at Fort Dix, N.J. "The number of students we arm up fluctuates month-to-month because of course schedules."

On a slow month, the armory arms 270 students, while a busy one can see the armory arming close to 650 students — numbers that don't even include people who help out as opposing forces for training, Sergeant Heraty said.

The armory supports many courses including Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag, Advanced Contingency Skills Training, Air Advisor, Phoenix Warrior, Phoenix Raven and Contingency Response Mission Orientation. These courses train more than 7,000 students every year.

The armory also coordinates weapons qualification training for many unit Airmen. However, it mainly supports instructors in the center's 421st Combat Training Squadron.

"Unfortunately, though we are combat arms instructors, we are limited to the amount of qualification training we can support due to current course requirements placed on the sec-



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Tech. Sgt. Sean Heraty, U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center armory assistant non-commissioned officer in charge, inspects an AK-47 while working in the armory on Fort Dix, N.J., Sept. 22.

tion," said Tech. Sgt. Charles Glunt, the NCO in charge of the armory. "Quite often, we work with the 305th Security Forces Squadron's combat arms section at McGuire (Air Force Base, N.J.) to get qualification training completed. For the 421st, however, we're required to maintain their qualifications on the weapons needed to conduct their various courses. With-

out the armory keeping the 421st qualified on their respected weapons, the cadre could not instruct the courses they teach."

There is no doubt the armory's caretakers are busy. However, they know they are providing a "great" service for their fellow Airmen to include an ever increasing amount of live-fire training not available in many other training venues in the Air Force.

"The incorporation of live fire came with the Center's Phoenix Warrior course for deploying security forces in August 2006," Sergeant Glunt said. "It was determined that standard security forces members needed advanced firearms training beyond that of Air Force qualifications courses so the armory and its combat arms section developed an advanced combat rifle and pistol course designed to fill that gap. From there it has only grown."

To meet all of their requirements for students, courses and cadre, the armory is equipped with enough weapons to support a small army.

"Our armory has 48 different weapons systems," Sergeant Glunt said. "The inventory includes U.S. weapons systems such as M-4 and M-16A2 rifles, M-9 pistol, MK-19 automatic grenade launcher, M-2 .50-caliber machine gun and more."

Sergeant Glunt said the armory holds 153 different types of foreign and non-standard weapons such as the AK-47, AK-74 and MAK-90 automatic rifles. It's because they have those weapons that the armory Airmen were able to



Staff Sgt. Raymar Webb, combat arms instructor, reviews the inventory of M-9 pistols while working in the armory.

See **Armory**, Page 18

Armory, from Page 17
develop more live-fire courses earlier this year for the Air Adviser and Advanced Contingency Skills Training Courses.

“Those courses now include live-fire with an M-16 or M-4, M-9 and the AK-47,” Sergeant Glunt said. “Designing a course suitable for each course was not the only challenge, but getting the ammunition to support the courses was also a significant hurdle. In the time I have been here, the munitions account has grown from a mere 1.2 million rounds to 5.2 million and is expected to continue to increase due to the need of getting more Airmen trained.”

Prior to the Global War on Terrorism, Sergeant Heraty said the only course of fire an Airman would learn from would be the Air Force Qualification Course using an M-16 or an M-9.

“Every Airman knows what’s involved there — you shoot at a paper target and get qualified every couple of years,” Sergeant Heraty said. “That’s it. Under some circumstances, security forces were the only personnel who got the opportunity to shoot any kind of advanced weapon’s firing courses.”

Now, at least for many students who come through the Expeditionary Center for training, they learn a number of advanced shooting tactics, techniques and procedures.

“Many of these courses now involve shooting on the move such as aggressing to and regressing from your paper target, shooting multiple targets side-to-side, or transitioning to your side arm should your primary weapons falter,” Sergeant Heraty said. “Students also learn about shooting at full distances — sometimes as far as out as 300 meters.”

With ACST, for example, Sergeant Glunt said they are allowing “the masses” to fire on the Army’s full distance pop-up course. “We tailored an Army qualification course to best suit our students needs,” he said.

Sergeants Glunt and Heraty have a combined 38 years worth of experience in Air Force com-



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Staff Sgt. Ryan Marcotte, combat arms instructor, inspects a T-65 rifle while working in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center armory Sept. 22.

bat arms training between them. They both agree their job isn’t just about maintaining the large inventory of foreign and U.S. weapons —

it’s about training, which could save an Airman’s life.

“We are often looked at as just another security forces armory, but when it comes down to it, we’re an armory, mobility weapons vault and a combat arms section managing a weapons account of more than 1,560 weapons and 5.2 millions rounds of ammunition,” Sergeant Glunt said. “We do all of that with a staff of four Airmen where at a regular base this would be done by 10 to 12 Airmen. We’re busy, but we are also dedicated to helping Airmen succeed on the battlefield through our support for training. Many people don’t realize we were behind the development of the center’s advanced courses of firing which is benefitting deploying Airmen across the board. Our work has hopefully helped some deployed Airman who’s being attacked know what an enemy’s gun sounds like, and in turn, know how to take his own weapon and defend himself. If he’s learned that, then we’ve done our job.”



Tech. Sgt. Charles Glunt, U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center armory noncommissioned officer in charge, inspects the forward assembly of foreign-made machine gun while working in the armory.

EXPEDITIONARY CENTER HISTORY:

Family members recall the man behind the award — Reynolds A. Kuntzman

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center Public Affairs

Fourteen years ago, Tech. Sgt. Reynolds A. Kuntzman came to Fort Dix to a brand new organization — the Air Mobility Warfare Center. He was among the 50 initial cadre of Airmen moving from Little Rock Air



Photo courtesy of the Kuntzman family

The late Tech. Sgt. Reynolds A. Kuntzman is all ready with warrior paint while working in the field as a member of the then-Air Mobility Warfare Center's 421st Ground Combat Readiness Squadron in 1995 on a Fort Dix, N.J., range. Sergeant Kuntzman died on June 9, 1995. After his death, the center's leadership created the Reynolds A. Kuntzman Duty Performance Award given annually to an Airman in the grades of E-1 through E-6 recognizing superior duty performance in support of the center's mission and community.

Force Base, Ark., who would make up the 421st Ground Combat Readiness Squadron.

With nearly 16 years of security forces experience at the time, Sergeant Kuntzman helped lay the groundwork for what is now the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center, and his former squadron now named the 421st Combat Training Squadron.

Less than a year into his new assignment teaching air base ground defense in the Phoenix Ace Combat Readiness Exercise and Evaluation Course, he died. The date was June 9, 1995, and it came as a shock to his family, unit and many others.

"It was a hard time for all of us," said his wife Valerie Kuntzman, 55, who visited the center in August along with Sergeant Kuntzman's mother and youngest son. "It was something we didn't see coming."

Nicknamed "Pappy," Sergeant Kuntzman was, as his wife described, a "caring and hard-working Airman." Those values were recognized by the center's leadership who created an award in his honor — the Reynolds A. Kuntzman Duty Performance Award. The award is given annually to an Expeditionary Center Airman in the grades of E-1 through E-6, recognizing superior duty performance in support of the center's mission and community.

"My husband got his nickname in England," Valerie Kuntzman said, "because he was one of the older guys and had four children. He was also

See **Kuntzman**, Page 20



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Valerie (spouse), Jeremy (son), and Helen Kuntzman (mother) stop for a photo with the plaque bearing the name of the late Tech. Sgt. Reynolds A. Kuntzman, during a visit to the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center Aug. 21.

Kuntzman, from Page 19

the guy who loved to take care of Airmen in his unit.”

His mother, Helen Kuntzman, 87, said her son was always a hard-worker and great to be around. Born in De Graff, Ohio, in July 1952, Sergeant Kuntzman later moved with his family to Ansonia, Ohio, and graduated from Ansonia High School in 1970. “He was very active in school and after graduating he left for a factory job,” she said.

Sergeant Kuntzman worked at that factory job until 1979 and then decided to join the Air Force. “He went into the Air Force because the job security wasn’t good,” Mrs. Kuntzman said. “He wanted something steady because he had a family to care for.”

Once in the Air Force, he joined the security forces career field and moved on from there. From 1980 to 1983, he was stationed at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. Then, from 1983 to 1989 he served at RAF Upper Heyford, England. After England, he moved to Little Rock AFB, and was there from 1989 to 1994, before moving to Fort Dix in October 1994.

“He enjoyed his work,” Mrs. Kuntzman said. “I mean he absolutely loved it. He actually started in the air base ground defense type of work over in England. And then when he found out about Little Rock he put in for that assignment. It’s just always been the fact that he absolutely loved what he did. He liked getting out in the field, going out with the guys, and, there were many days where we had a house full of Airmen.”

Sergeant Kuntzman’s dedication to his country, family and fellow Airmen came as no surprise to his mother. She said he was always willing to go the extra mile because “he loved people.”

“His grandfather, Karl Albert Kuntzman, was signed up to go overseas at the end of World War I for the Army, but never went because the war ended,” Helen Kuntzman said. “His willingness to serve was there in our family history. He also was someone who always cared about people - he was always willing to help someone.”

The Kuntzman Award was first given out in 1997 to Tech. Sgt. Kenneth Glover. For 2007, it was awarded to Master Sgt. Jennifer Mastan of the center’s Mobility Operations School.

“It was certainly an honor and a privilege to win that award because it recognizes hard work and performance,” said Sergeant Mastan, who was stationed at Little Rock for part of the same time Sergeant Kuntzman was there. “When you learn about who Sergeant Kuntzman was, it makes getting that award even more special.”

Jeremy Kuntzman, 29, and the youngest of Sergeant Kuntzman’s four children, said his father was his and his siblings’ inspiration to serve in the military. He completed an eight-year enlistment in the Navy and his brothers, Navy Chief Petty Officer Gabriel Kuntzman and Air Force Capt. Joshua Kuntzman, are still serving.

“Up until I joined, the military was all I ever knew,” Jeremy Kuntzman said. “Joining was something I wanted to do and learn a trade for the future.”

Looking back, Jeremy Kuntzman said he has nothing but the best memories of his father. “He was definitely a great man and a role model that anybody could look up to,” he said.

For Valerie Kuntzman, her husband was someone who not only inspired her and their children, but someone who was an inspiration to all. “He cared for his family and his country,” Mrs. Kuntzman said. “He had a strong belief in God and believed in working hard and being responsible. And, most of all, he cared about people. Isn’t that what we want every Airman to be about?”

The next Kuntzman Award will be given to an Expeditionary Center Airman befitting of the values of the award description. For Helen, Valerie and Jeremy Kuntzman, that is a tall order to fill.

“One of us will be here when the next award is given,” Mrs. Kuntzman said. “We are very proud to have this award named after him. Those who win it in the future, and who’ve won it in the past should stand proud. He made us proud and they should be as well.”



Photos courtesy of the Kuntzman family
(Above) Airman Basic Reynolds A. Kuntzman after he graduated basic training in 1980.
(Below) A family portrait from the mid-1980s with then Sgt. Kuntzman.



Phoenix Raven training highlights capabilities of security forces Airmen

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

For Staff Sgt. Ian Martin, number 1709 is the beginning of a new life.

Number 1709 means the staff sergeant, who is from the 121st Security Forces Squadron at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base, Ohio, is the 1,709th person to become a Raven.

Air Force security forces Ravens are a select group of specially trained volunteers who've reached, maintained high standards during their military careers, and are dedicated to providing top-notch security for Air Mobility Command assets and en route aircraft around the world.

The program was started in the late 1990s by then-AMC commander, Gen. Walter Cross, to better protect military aircraft in an expeditionary environment. It was implemented under the direction of former AMC security forces director, Col. Lawrence "Rocky" Lane.

"The success of the mission of the Raven program is that it speaks for itself," said Colonel Lane, who was the first Raven student to graduate the course, achieving Raven patch No. 1 — a patch he is proud to own. "Of all the thousands of missions that have been flown by AMC and other commands throughout the world that have had Ravens with it, we haven't lost a single aircraft. We also haven't had a single aircrew member killed or wounded or anything, that's been in the care and protection of a Raven or a Raven team."

Earning the title isn't easy. Before a security forces member can become a Raven, he or she must complete the rigorous Phoenix Raven course at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J.

The course, taught by the 421st Combat Training Squadron, is an intense 18-day training program that covers cross-cultural awareness, embassy operations, airfield survey techniques, explosive ordnance awareness, aircraft searches and unarmed self-defense techniques.

"Ravens are put in a stressful environment to handle situations professionally and tactfully," said Tech. Sgt. Ryan Thompson, Raven course director. "The training we provide reflects those situations they could face."

As part of this training, students are exposed



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Students in the Air Force Phoenix Raven Training Course fight back an "attacker" Aug. 20 during an evaluation session in the course on a Fort Dix, N.J., range.

to more than 70 use-of-force scenarios that simulate real-world situations.

"Everything we've been taught can be implemented in real life," said Airman 1st Class Nicole Yarak, from the 60th SFS at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., and holder of Raven No. 1726. "I found the verbal judo and combat-ives the most useful. Verbal judo, for example, takes you out of that 'cop mentality' and teaches you to empathize with others. It helps you solve conflicts with your words and to watch your nonverbal actions which made me realize you can leave a lasting impression on someone." The goal is to teach the students that their rifles and

hands aren't their only weapons. Their best weapon is in their heads.

"It's their mind," Sergeant Thompson said. "Their discipline, fortitude, and ability to think quickly will ensure their success in providing force protection anywhere ... at any time. Despite numerous hours spent perfecting unarmed hand-to-hand combat techniques, the Raven graduate understands their most powerful asset is their mind."

Upon graduation, the students are given a

number — a number no other person will hold and that marks them among the chosen ranks of this elite group.

"It's special to know you are part of such a small group in one of the Air Force's largest career fields," Sergeant Martin said. "It's great to know that no person will ever be given the Raven number you worked so hard to earn. I am glad it's done though. This course forced us to come out of our comfort zones and push our abilities to the limit, but it also made us grow together as a team."

The Raven combatives training also affected some of the students.

"Raven combatives instruction was top notch," said Tech. Sgt. Allyn Uebel, 934th SFS at Minneapolis Air Reserve Station, Minn., who holds Raven No. 1723. "It was easily the most beneficial combatives program I have ever taken. As a former Marine, I can honestly say this is one of the top three courses I have ever taken."

And being a Raven is an honor that does not go unnoticed by those who achieve the title.

"It is an awesome responsibility to have," said Airman 1st Class Kailen Smith, of the 316th SFS at Andrews AFB, Md., and Raven No. 1718. "I know that what I do from now on not only reflects on myself and the Air Force, but also my fellow Raven brothers and sisters. I have to do right by all of them."



RAVEN TRAINING ACTION



Photos by Tech. Sgts. Scott Mueller and Scott T. Sturkol



(Clockwise from top left) Students in the Phoenix Raven Training Course subdue an "attacker" during training on a Fort Dix, N.J., range Aug. 20. Tech. Sgt. Matthew Butler, Raven instructor from the 421st Combat Training Squadron, engages a student in a scenario. Students take down Sergeant Butler in another scenario. Staff Sgt. James Chubb, also a Raven instructor, provides feedback during an evaluation. Sergeant Butler takes aim during another scenario for evaluation.



Expeditionary Center instructor shares rigors of security forces Raven training

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

An aerospace ground equipment craftsman, Tech. Sgt. David Balista had no reason to train as a security forces Airman. That is, until now.

"I wanted some training that would help me improve as an instructor," he said.

Sergeant Balista became only the 10th non-security forces Airman to graduate the Air Force Phoenix Raven Training Course 08-D at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J., from Aug. 5 to 22. The course, taught by the USAF EC's 421st Combat Training Squadron where Balista serves as a contingency skills training instructor, has been a mainstay in the USAF EC for more than 11 years.

"As the only non-security forces Raven in this past class, it made things a little more difficult for me," Sergeant Balista said. "In many instances, I was learning things for the first time."

Much of the training Sergeant Balista learned is not easy, said Tech. Sgt. Ryan Thompson, Raven course director at the 421st.

"Ravens are put in a stressful environment to handle situations professionally and tactfully," Sergeant Thompson said. "The extensive training includes unarmed defense tactics, application of the force continuum, less-than-lethal-force weapons, anti-hijacking and firearms training."

Overall, Sergeant Balista received nearly 130 hours of instruction. That included more than 50 hours of classroom academics along with anti-terrorism, combatives, collapsible baton, weapons and scenario training. In addition, he had to pass a rigorous physical training regimen.

"I now have a different perspective on physical fitness, thanks to Raven. And, my fellow cadre at the 421st will learn the difference of what they can do for physical training," Sergeant Balista said referring to his unit physical training leader duties.

Sergeant Balista also has newfound respect for his fellow cadre.

"I work with the Raven instructors on a daily basis for other courses within the 421st," Sergeant Balista said.

"We all work hard and play hard, but now I am also very impressed with their knowledge and skill."

Sergeant Balista wasn't required to take the training but, and the end of three weeks, he graduated with 41 others. It is unclear, however, if he will get a Raven number assigned to him as they are generally assigned to security forces only.

"I do not know if I will get a Raven number," Sergeant Balista said referring to the possibility. "But, I hope to be able to so I can help my fel-



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott Mueller

Tech. Sgt. David Balista, a student in the Air Force Phoenix Raven Training Course 08-D and also an instructor from the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's 421st Combat Training Squadron, uses "verbal judo" to de-escalate the temperament of an "aggressor" Aug. 20 during an evaluation session for the Raven course on a Fort Dix, N.J., range.

low Airmen."

In another way, however, Sergeant Balista said he will be able help his fellow Airmen — the Airmen he trains in the Advanced Contingency Skills Training Course and his fellow cadre in the 421st CTS.

"I know this training has made me a better Airman," Sergeant Balista said. "I also know it's made my abilities better as an instructor. The people who will benefit the most from this

training besides me, will be my students."

According to Sergeant Thompson, the definition of a Raven is "an Airman, Sailor, or Soldier who has readily accepted the responsibility to ensure the success of our force protection mission. They are all volunteers and are prepared to travel at a moment's notice anywhere around the world to protect Department of Defense assets for as long as it takes to complete the mission."

PHOENIX WARRIOR: OPERATING IN URBAN TERRAIN



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

Students in the Air Force Phoenix Warrior Training Course learn close quarters combat tactics during a “tape drills” class session in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Sept. 22 on Fort Dix, N.J. Phoenix Warrior, taught by the center’s 421st Combat Training Squadron, is a security forces functional pre-deployment training course focusing on tactics, techniques and procedures unique to the deployed environment. The “tape drills” refers to tape placed on the floor by instructors simulating walls, doors and windows of a structure for military operations in urban terrain.



Staff Sgt. Tommy Carpino, security forces instructor from the 421st Combat Training Squadron, teaches Phoenix Warrior students their close quarters combat tactics session.



Phoenix Warrior students line up while learning close quarters combat tactics.

AIR FORCE WARRIORS: Military working dog team clicking; wrapping up successful deployment

(Editor's note: This is the third in a series of three stories following a military working dog team from training in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's Phoenix Warrior Training Course through a deployment.)

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

Their adventures in Afghanistan will soon be over, but their final success will be defined in how well they have bonded as a team and a weapons system — a human and canine spear. “The deployment has been good,” said Staff Sgt. Christopher Dion about his six-month tour for Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom with his military working dog. Dena is an explosives detection canine and has helped Afghan and American special forces units return to their deployment bases casualty-free for more than 25 combat missions.

“I have many fond memories of all who helped prepare me for this experience,” Sergeant Dion said. “I’ve learned many things and have a new understanding and respect for the great people of Afghanistan. This has truly been the best deployment I have ever been on.”

After half a year and thousands of miles away from their home on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Sergeant Dion remains positive.

He and Dena have endured numerous combat missions, high-level explosive detection sweeps, and the ever-present possibility of danger just around the bend. For some, that might be a bad deployment.

“It has been about the opportunities and the reasons we are here — to save lives and help the Afghans build on their freedom,” said Sergeant Dion who arrived in country with Dena in early May. “We knew about the dangers coming in.”

Those “opportunities” have included training Afghan “Kandak” commandos (their version of special forces) in combat tactics, K-9 employment and other military skills.

“I have also worked with regular Afghan army soldiers doing random vehicle searches at their main gate and setting up and coordinating K-9 demos for them,” Sergeant Dion said. “I have trained with U.S. special forces on employment of 60-, 80-, and 120-millimeter mortars, sniper weapon systems, small arms, heavy weapons and foreign weapon systems and tactics. Ever since I left Fort Dix, the training has never stopped, but is required to keep up with the latest tactics, techniques and procedures. It’s



Air Force Photo
Military working dog Dena, a 6-year-old German shepherd, and her handler, Staff Sgt. Christopher Dion, perform a sweep while out on a combat mission Sept. 26 in Afghanistan. The MWD team has been in Afghanistan since May and have been supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. Before deployment, they both trained in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's Phoenix Warrior Training Course at Fort Dix, N.J. Both Sergeant Dion and Dena are deployed from MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

because of the training that we are seeing success.”

When referring to Fort Dix, Sergeant Dion is talking about his participation in the Air Force Phoenix Warrior Training Course in February taught by the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's 421st Combat Training Squadron.

In the two-week course, he and Dena went through live-fire, explosives detection and numerous other types of training regimen to be deployment ready. He followed that with continuous training with fellow MWD handlers at MacDill which he now says really aided in their ability to “hit the ground running.”

“I believe the trainers in Phoenix Warrior and the Airmen at the MacDill kennels have shown through the training they provided and in their availability to me throughout this deployment, they truly care for their craft and for those who perform it,” Sergeant Dion said. “They all sought out ways to create and conduct training and scenarios that were as close to reality as possible. They’ve accepted suggestions and lessons of experience offered by their students as well.”

Sergeant Dion added, looking back, the Phoenix Warrior and MacDill instructors passed on a vast amount of “pride in their work.”

“For all those whom Dena and I trained with, it was more than just training,” Sergeant Dion said. “They looked at being a handler and a MWD team a genuine craft. The pride they gave to their students like me has been useful in dealing with a group of military men and women who likewise take great pride in their title and abilities — namely Army special forces.”

Although the barren, rocky terrain of the Afghan mountains is far from the pine barren forest of the Fort Dix ranges, the training received in those woods has been invaluable, Sergeant Dion said. The live fire training in Phoenix Warrior accurately prepared him and Dena for the sounds of combat in the Afghan mountains. The preparations he received by Phoenix Warrior and MacDill trainers still reverberates in his mind every day.

“It’s all come together to make for a successful deployment,” Sergeant Dion said. “I’m most

See **Warriors**, Page 26

Warrior, from Page 25

proud of Dena. She has learned so much and has been a superstar. Although not the most aggressive dog in the Air Force, she has a nose that can't be beat."

In their deployed location, they are approximately 7,500 feet above sea level and that has been just one more factor to deal with but Sergeant Dion said Dena has been up to the task because of daily training. "Many places we go for missions are higher than that, so the air makes cardio a little more challenging," he said.

Every day, he said he and Dena get out and walk or run between three and six miles. "We also practice a lot of centerline drills which has her basically doing sprints chasing a ball," Sergeant Dion said. "In addition, we also participate and assist in training the commandos. All of this maintains and improves our bond as well as maintaining familiarity with the sounds and motions of combat."

And they have seen combat. According to Bronze Star citations submitted by their deployed unit for both Sergeant Dion and Dena, there is proof of frontline action.

An excerpt from Sergeant Dion's citation says, "During Operation Commando Strike in the vicinity of Sheyghan, Logar province, upon entering the objective Sergeant Dion with Dena began conducting a search for explosives and weapon caches. Sergeant Dion continued to conduct searches and move between qalats while under direct enemy small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire. Once the search was completed, Sergeant Dion coordinated and controlled the security of detained personnel within the objective."

"Sergeant Dion was among the last to leave the site for exfiltration, covering the movements of the commandos and his fellow teammates, and ensuring no one was left behind while continuing to engage enemy combatants."

The narrative also says Sergeant Dion's "expertise, skill, and ingenuity allowed the detachment to successfully complete every combat patrol during the deployment..."

"Sergeant Dion and Dena are living proof that training leads to success," said Tech. Sgt.

"We've been blessed to get through this deployment relatively unscathed and we've built a wealth of knowledge that I hope will help others who were like me — deploying as an MWD handler for the first time."

Staff Sgt. Christopher Dion
Military working dog handler for
MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.



Air Force Photo

Military working dog Dena, a 6-year-old German Shepherd, and her handler, Staff Sgt. Christopher Dion, perform a sweep while out on a combat mission in Afghanistan Sept. 26. (Below) Sergeant Dion and Dena train in a class for Phoenix Warrior Feb. 14 on a Fort Dix, N.J., range.

Jeffrey Dean, who recently passed on the course director reins of the Phoenix Warrior K-9 track to Staff Sgt. Luke Plemons. "From

what we've learned from some of Sergeant Dion's after-action reports are there are updates we can put into our K-9 training here with Phoenix Warrior. From the frontlines of the Global War on Terrorism to our classroom, we want to give our students the best information possible."

As for Sergeant Dion and Dena, they should be home for the holidays.

"Sure, the deployment's been good and the best I've ever been on, but I am looking forward to getting home to my wife Mary Lu," Sergeant Dion said. "We've been blessed to get through this deployment relatively unscathed and we've built a wealth of knowledge that I hope will help

others who were like me — deploying as an MWD handler for the first time."



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

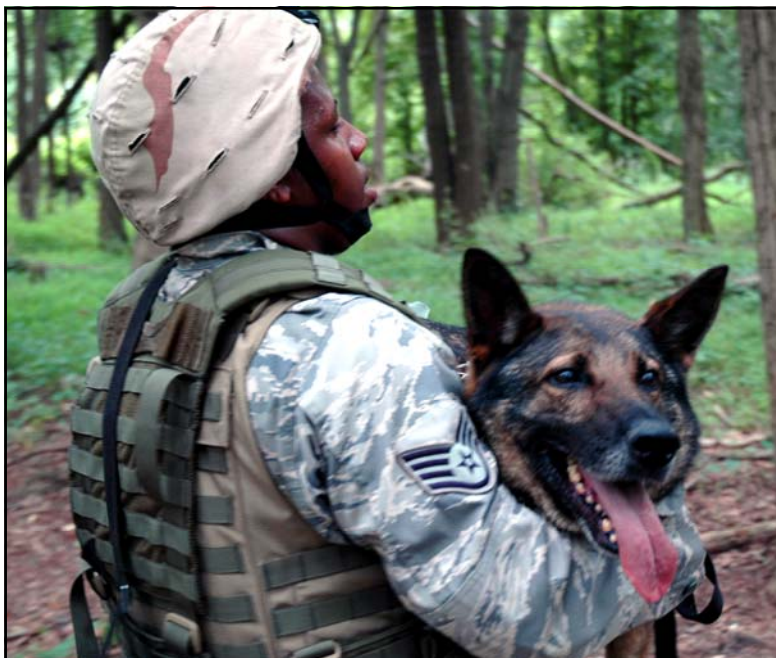
PHOENIX WARRIOR
IS
'GRRRRR'EAT
TRAINING



Photos by Staff Sgt. Paul R. Evans

(Above) Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Dean (left), instructor for the Air Force Phoenix Warrior Training Course's canine track, shows Staff Sgt. Matthew Hernandez where to lead his military working dog Grant during detection training for Phoenix Warrior on July 10 on a Fort Dix, N.J., range. Both Sergeant Hernandez and Grant, from the 48th Security Forces Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, England, attended training in Phoenix Warrior in preparation for an upcoming deployment. Phoenix Warrior is taught by the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's 421st Combat Training Squadron.

(Top right and right) Phoenix Warrior students practice flying on an Army Blackhawk helicopter during training on Fort Dix on July 8 including Staff Sgt. David McClain and his military working dog Bak from the 43rd Security Forces Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. (Below) Staff Sgt. Greg Mobley and his military working dog Charlie, both from the 1st Security Forces Squadron at Langley AFB, Va., go through the combat first aid course on Fort Dix on July 9.



Eagle Flag 08-6's deployed leadership recalls completing successful exercise

By Senior Airman
Julius Delos Reyes
95th Air Base Wing Public Affairs
Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

More than 400 Airmen from across the Air Force deployed to participate and support Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, N.J., from mid- to late-September.

Their mission was to build the fictional 421st Air Expeditionary Group and provide close-air support operations in support of the Global War on Terrorism as well as airlift for humanitarian relief operations to a tsunami-stricken nation known as Chimaera.

Eagle Flag, managed by the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's 421st Combat Training Squadron at Fort Dix, N.J., tests and trains Airmen in expeditionary combat support skills. It also requires a deployed commander to create a cohesive team of Airmen who mostly have never worked together before and at the same time react to a number of scenarios.

"Our mission was open an air base quickly, establish a command and control structure for launching 24-hour, day and night air operations," said Col. Darrell Riggs, 95th Mission Support Group commander. "We had to set up communications and build a tent city while establishing relationships with the host nation, including the local military and citizens."

For five years, since October 2003, Eagle Flag has been designed as an air base-opening exercise designed to train Air Force expeditionary combat support elements to plan and execute air and space power anywhere on the globe. "More specifically, it is for a bare-base environment," Colonel Riggs added.

Maj. Gen. Kip Self, Expeditionary Center commander, said Eagle Flag is an opportunity to "prepare today's Airman for tomorrow's fight."

"During the exercise, we have more than 400 expeditionary combat support Airmen who prepare for what may come as a contingency in the United States or overseas," General Self said. "We prepare them for both options. It's an opportunity to take everyone who comes to Eagle Flag, give them the basic skills they need to do contingency operations and win."

Throughout the exercise, Colonel Riggs said cadre from the 421st CTS injected numerous scenarios that tested their capabilities.

"The scenarios were designed to throw you off balance," Colonel Riggs said. "It's about being innovative and being able to adapt to constantly changing circumstances. It was set



Photo by Senior Airman Julius Delos Reyes
Col. Darryl Riggs (left), commander of the 95th Mission Support Group at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., greets the "village chieftain" Sept. 19 during a scenario for Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, N.J.

up to test every element of the group — leadership and the day-to-day activities."

Setting up the deployed team of 400-plus Airmen packed its own brand of challenges, said Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Hollis, 95th MSG superintendent and deployed command chief for the exercise.

"We had to move fast, however, we wanted to set the right tone for everybody," Chief Hollis said. "We knew we had to quickly come together and act as a team to get the mission done. We went there assuming the experts knew how to do their jobs, and that assumption was correct. Leadership focus was on our team's mindset."

Chief Hollis added the team's success was achieved through effective communication, teamwork and leadership.

"We, as leadership, let our expectations be known early on," he said. "Colonel Riggs and I took personal responsibility for everyone being enthusiastic and having a positive attitude. We would not tolerate anything less."

"We also made sure our people were focused

and prepared to get out of their comfort zone and make the necessary adjustments," Chief Hollis said. "We were consistent in making sure our team's mindset was in the right frame."

Colonel Riggs said teamwork was the most critical component to achieve success of their final mission objectives for the exercise.

"We took Airmen from multiple wings across the Air Force who had never worked together before," Colonel Riggs said. "They came to a no-kidding austere environment to perform a time-sensitive mission. The only way we successfully accomplished it was by coming together as a team and recognizing everyone's contributions, strengths and weaknesses."

(Editor's note: Eagle Flag was first established in 2003 as the first Air Force chief of staff-directed exercise to test and train Airmen in expeditionary combat support skills. Over the course of five years, it has formed one of the foundation blocks for training in the Expeditionary Center coinciding with its motto, "Airpower ... From the Ground Up!")

SCENES FROM EAGLE FLAG 08-6



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(1) Staff Sgt. Billy Smith-Shelley, from the 816th Contingency Response Group, McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., peers through a scope during a scenario for Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 on Sept. 19 at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, N.J.

(2) Staff Sgt. Desiree Palacios, a photographer from the Air Force News Agency at San Antonio, waits for a scenario to start during Eagle Flag on Sept. 19.

(3) An Eagle Flag student uses an extreme terrain forklift to move cargo Sept. 20.

(4) Airman 1st Class Jeremy Smith, from the 314th Medical Group, Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., plays the role of a host nation army "conscript" during a scenario Sept. 19.

(5) Chief Master Sgt. Lerone Brown, from the 75th Force Support Squadron, Hill AFB, Utah, participates in a media interview while other students in Air Force Exercise Eagle Flag 08-6 build a tent Sept. 20.

(6) A C-17 Globemaster III from McGuire AFB flies over Lakehurst during a scenario Sept. 22.

(7) Eagle Flag students build a tent Sept. 21.



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Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

(Above) Staff Sgt. Paul Evans, contingency skills training instructor from the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's 421st Combat Training Squadron, reviews tactics and patrolling procedures with students in the Advanced Contingency Skills Training Course on Aug. 12 on a Fort Dix, N.J., range. (Right) ACST students practice patrolling basics for a fire squad. (Lower right) Tech. Sgt. Vincent Schyler, also a CST instructor from the 421st, provides direction to his squad of students. (Below) An ACST student learns to "get down" during a simulated firefight. ACST is one of the USAF EC's main courses preparing Airmen for upcoming deployments.



Civil Air Patrol: A foundation for leadership, education

By Staff Sgt. Paul R. Evans
421st Combat Training Squadron

Finishing my duty one recent August day, I could hear the echo of enthusiastic chants from the cadets of the New Jersey Civil Air Patrol encampment hosted by the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center.

Their chants recalled my own memories as a CAP cadet and senior member from years past. It also got me thinking about how important CAP is to not only those young cadets, but the U.S. Air Force and military as well.

I started in the Civil Air Patrol as a freshman in high school in the Waukegan Composite Squadron of the Illinois Wing. There, I received my indoctrination in aerospace history and technology, military customs and courtesies, flying powered aircraft, radio communications and search and rescue missions.

Having taken advantage of this program as a high school student, I was able to enter the Air Force as an E-3. After entering the Air Force, I learned that there is a significant lack of knowledge about this excellent alternative to the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.

As a 100 percent volunteer, nonprofit auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, it boasts 57,000-plus volunteers nationwide, according to the CAP Web site, <http://www.cap.gov>.

Its primary missions are to develop its cadets, educate Americans on the importance of aviation and space, and perform life-saving humanitarian missions. To develop its cadets, the Civil Air Patrol teaches leadership, followership, physical fitness and character building.

The cadet program is for children ages 12 to 18. Cadets wear uniforms that are similar to the Air Force, but with distinct differences. They advance in rank by taking tests that measure their leadership and aerospace knowledge. The enlisted rank structure is similar to the Air Force; including first sergeant and command chief.

From my own experience, I can tell you cadets also have the opportunity to advance into officer ranks as well. The first of these is Cadet Flight Officer. When a cadet earns this rank, he or she receives the General Billy Mitchell Award that acknowledges the cadet's achievements in the cadet enlisted ranks.

Currently, the Air Force awards these recipients the pay grade of E-3 upon enlistment into the Air Force and after completion of basic military training. Sister services offer E-2 to the recruit.

Cadets receive orientation flights in powered aircraft and are given the opportunity to learn how to fly and solo in both glider and powered aircraft.

If the cadet is interested in foreign exchange



Photo by Staff Sgt. Paul R. Evans

Civil Air Patrol cadets from the New Jersey Civil Air Patrol Wing participate in a retreat ceremony July 29 marking the end of their duty day at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J. The New Jersey CAP held their encampment at the center for the second straight year.

program, the Civil Air Patrol offers its International Air Cadet Exchange Program. The aerospace education program teaches the cadet aerospace history, concepts and technology in an attempt to stimulate the cadet's creativity and interest in aviation and space.

Thus, many cadets aspire to be accepted into the U.S. Air Force Academy. In fact, approximately 10 percent of each freshman class comprises former Civil Air Patrol cadets.

The Civil Air Patrol has a rich history dating back to World War II. New Jersey aviation advocate, Gill Robb Wilson, conceived the idea of a civil air defense in the late 1930s. On Dec. 1, 1941, just days before Pearl Harbor, the Civil Air Patrol was established with the help of New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

Armed with bombs and depth charges, the CAP flew more than 24 million miles during World War II. Finding 173 German U-boats, they attacked 57, hit 10, and sunk two. This paved the way for a Presidential Executive Order making the CAP an auxiliary of the Army Air Force. After the war, a German commander confirmed that U-boat operations were withdrawn against the U.S. coast was because of "those damn little red and yellow airplanes."

A year after the creation of the U.S. Air

Force, the Civil Air Patrol became the official auxiliary.

Since World War II, the mission of Civil Air Patrol has evolved to meet today's challenges. They fly 90 percent of all federal inland search and rescue missions as directed by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., and the Joint Rescue Coordination Centers in Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. Logging more than 100,000 flying hours, they save approximately 75 lives each year.

Missions also include disaster relief, communications, counter-drug, homeland security, and emergency medical supply transport.

When you see the Civil Air Patrol, don't laugh or poke fun. They aren't around to "play G.I. Joe." They actually have a mission, a mission far greater than most realize, and one I've personally experienced.

You may think CAP cadets aren't "real Airmen," but they are dedicated, smart and keen in learning and promoting aerospace education.

They could also use your help as a mentor and leader. These cadets are the future leaders of the Air Force and other sister services. They are always vigilant.

For more information or how to join go to <http://www.cap.gov>.

Marching among heroes

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

“Left. Left. Left-right-left.”

It was the first time I wore a flag harness and I didn’t quite realize how much the heat would affect me as I marched in my Airman Battle Uniform.

Marching in temperatures of 85 degrees Fahrenheit with high humidity is somewhat unusual for this area of the Upper Midwest of the United States, but not unheard of. It was July after all.

Being just before 1 p.m. on July 4, our march was going to begin soon. I also didn’t initially realize what an honor it would be for me to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 9084, Color Guard for the Independence Day parade in my hometown of Wakefield, Mich.

Soon, though, I was flushed with pride.

I stood in the third row — just behind a former Army Ranger and in front of a U.S. Navy veteran. In all, there were probably 20 of us forming the color guard. I was to carry one of three POW/MIA flags. Next to carrying the U.S. flag or my service flag, which were in front of me, I found this duty to be most honorable.

Besides flag bearers, we also had rifle bearers. Each carried a vintage M-1 Garand — the rifle of choice during World War II, the Korean War, and to some extent, the Vietnam War. It’s a rifle that revolutionized the U.S. military when it was introduced in 1936. According to official history on the rifle, it was the first semi-automatic rifle to be delivered to light infantry in any nation.

With the flags, the M-1s and the veterans, I felt as if I were in a time machine. In my mind, I could recall the many parades and color guards I witnessed as a child on the very same streets I was about to march on. I could also see each of the veterans around me in their element while they were active service members.

Whether it was in WW II, Korea, Vietnam or today’s Global War on Terrorism, I could also see how we each were remembering the gift we received from our forefathers on July 4, 1776. The gift we chose as service members to defend with our lives — the gift of freedom.

Then the parade started. In my hometown, the color guard leads the parade. That’s the way it has always been because displaying and honoring the American flag on Independence Day is the proper way to recognize America’s birthday. This year it was birthday number 232.

Calling cadence and marching orders for the color guard was Marine turned Army Soldier John “Chummy” Ozzello. Chummy is well versed in the skill of military drill. He can trace his experience as far back as 1958 when he was an Army drill instructor at Fort Dix, N.J.

He told me a story of when he became a drill



Photo by Bobbi Sturkol

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9084 Color Guard march down Main Street of Wakefield, Mich., leading the Independence Day Parade July 4.

instructor and his supervising noncommissioned officer said to “not march them like Marines,” which was what he knew at the time.

I laughed when I heard that.

To the tune of Chummy calling “left-right-left ... yooooour left-right-left,” we all marched in unison. Through my peripheral vision, I saw people stand as we approached. The people who stood were not only the young, but also senior citizens in wheelchairs. In a way, after seeing this, I almost felt like I wasn’t worthy.

Then I heard something that I won’t soon forget. It sounded like a grandmother scolding a grandchild as we were approaching. I heard her say, “Stand up! Can’t you see that is the American flag? Stand up right now!” She said it so loudly it nearly brought Chummy out of his cadence call.

It also marked for me the importance of families passing on patriotic pride and a family’s role in supporting the warfighter from the home front. That American flag the grandmother was describing to the grandchild has always been a reminder to me how families play a vital role in the success of our military and defending freedom.

The thought made me gleeful for a second as I recalled my family and their tremendous support for my military career.

More specifically it made me think of my wife, Bobbi, and what she and my children have endured every time I deployed for an operation.

I saw and experienced this before we even got to Main Street where the majority of the parade watchers were gathered. As we approached Main

Street, we stopped for a quick rest and a reaffirmation of our instructions from Chummy. Then we returned to our state of attention and marched on.

About a half-mile later, Chummy called the color guard to a halt and a left face, where we turned and executed a “present arms,” or salute, with the flags and the ceremonial guns. Local students then took the lead in reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

When they finished, Chummy thanked them, called us all back to attention, and we continued down Main Street, right past my family and extended family. I heard one of my granddaughters say, “Look! There’s Grampa!” I cracked a smile when I heard it.

By the time the parade ended and the color guard was dismissed, I stopped for a minute to get my bearings. I wondered if perhaps a child who saw me and the color guard would consider military service as I once did as a youngster.

Or, I speculated if the display of flags and veterans moved someone in the crowd to feel pride in their country. Maybe someone even shed a tear for those veterans who are no longer with us and will not march again.

To me, I was marching among heroes — both present and past. I was marching among the families of heroes as well — those who watched us move down the street. It’s a march I wish everyone could experience and learn from as I did. Hometown heroes and patriots are what drive me to be my best. To be among them is an experience I will never forget.

“Left. Left. Left-right-left.”

Back from Iraq: An EOD technician discusses training, deploying and coming home

By Staff Sgt. Jason Kreider
421st Combat Training Squadron

I am proud of the work I do at the United States Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J., as an instructor.

My position affords me the opportunity to share my knowledge and experience with deploying Airmen. I'll share some of that with you, too.

As an Air Force explosive ordnance disposal technician, I work alongside fellow EOD technicians from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Our deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have us working for, and alongside, Army Soldiers in the counter improvised explosive device, or IED, mission.

I was fortunate enough to serve on a six-month deployment to Balad Air Base, Iraq, earlier this year. However, my training began well before my departure. As part of my pre-deployment training, I attended the Global Anti-Terrorism Operation Readiness Course at Redstone Arsenal, Ala. This course, known as GATOR, prepares EOD technicians for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The highly trained staff, consisting of active duty Army and civilian contractors, provides updates to theater tactics, techniques, and procedures. The first week of the two-week course, consisted of classroom training. The training we received prepared us for the second week, where we were able to utilize our skills in a training scenario. The scenarios are developed from actual incidents that had been run in theater, and are updated frequently to adjust for the ever evolving TTPs in theater.

Upon completion of GATOR training, I was able to return home to spend a couple more weeks with my wife. After that I departed for contingency skills training at Fort Lewis, Wash., with other Air Force EOD technicians who are performing in-lieu-of taskings for the Army, and, are required to attend Army training in preparation for deployment.

We were able to work together as a team, as we were all coming together from different units. These courses were the first time for many of us to meet and develop friendships.

This was vital to the success of our deployment, as you must rely on the person to your left and right to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you.

Again, I was able to spend a little over a week with my wife after completing CST training. It gave us one last opportunity to say our goodbyes before I departed for Iraq. The day had finally arrived, and I met with a few of my teammates for the long flight over. The remainder of our team would join us a few days later.

Upon arriving in country, we were met by some old friends and new faces as the outgoing team began preparing to return home after completing

their mission. One of the important elements of any successful deployment is the overlapping time with the outgoing unit. We were provided with updated briefings on what the teams there had seen.

We interacted with the outgoing teams as we conducted a left-seat/right-seat. This afforded us an opportunity to see how the teams had been operating. To find out what worked for them operating out of the Joint Explosive Rapid Response Vehicle, or JERRV. It also allowed us to work out of the vehicle for the first time, as a team, and we developed our own techniques. With our exchange complete, we said goodbye to the outgoing crew, and began charging forward.

During our time there, we conducted various missions in support of the Global War on Terrorism. One of these missions was route clearance patrols.

We joined Army combat engineers traveling the supply routes in an attempt to locate IEDs planted on the routes, waiting for an unsuspecting convoy to pass. We would press out in our convoy and travel at a slow rate of speed, scanning the sides of the roads for indicators of possible IEDs.

During our time in theater, we cleared more than 23,000 kilometers of roadway ensuring the safe passage of convoys throughout our area of responsibility.

Another mission was the quick reaction force, or QRF. We rapidly responded to IEDs discovered by convoys to mitigate the threat. Unfortunately, not all IEDs were able to be spotted prior to detonation. In the event of damage to vehicles or injury to personnel, we would conduct post blast analysis of the site to capture and collect vital intelligence. This intelligence drew a picture of the events that had taken place and insight to the tactics, techniques, and procedures of insurgent cells in the area.

Throughout our time in Iraq, we frequently received rocket and mortar attacks. Often the rockets and mortars would fail to function upon impact. This created a hazard for the base populace, and we once again would spring into action. We often responded to the Air Force Theater Hospital to recover grenades attached to the gear of our injured heroes.

As we traveled throughout our area of responsibility, we often had the opportunity to interact with the locals as they worked to take control of

their country.

Several times we were stopped by a local villager who reported an IED in the area. They simply wanted to protect their families from the danger. We always carried some type of candy to pass out to the local children as we traveled through the local villages.

As our convoy passed, the local children would come running to the side of the road to wave. Throughout our area, local Iraqi men have volunteered to assist in thwarting and reducing insurgent attacks on locals and U.S. troops. Several checkpoints have been built on the various routes manned by concerned local citizens, Sons of Iraq.

These checkpoints hamper insurgent movement, forcing them to concentrate their attacks in one small area. This containment allowed us to track their activity and work to locate their hideouts. It often led to their capture by U.S. and Iraqi forces.

I was also fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the Iraqi army. They are truly working to protect their country. We often conducted raids on suspected insurgent build-

ings. Many times there were Iraqi Army personnel working alongside us. They sought the same objectives as us, to rid Iraq of the insurgency, restore stability, and allow Iraq to press forward and begin flourishing.

Not all of our time in Iraq was work. We would often relax during our downtime watching movies or chatting around the fire pit. You would often find us during our downtime playing cards or video games. These moments of relaxation allowed us to wind down from the day's missions.

In April, tragedy struck our team with the loss of a friend, brother, and teammate. While doing the job he loved so dearly, Tech. Sgt. Anthony Capra was killed while attempting to defuse an IED. His loss was a huge blow to us.

In true EOD fashion, we banded together as brothers to mourn the loss of our friend and cope with the huge hole left in our hearts. Our mission had to continue, and we pressed forward with a new passion, honoring his memory.

To sum it up, our team excelled during our six months in Iraq. We conducted more than 900 missions during our time ensuring the safety of the personnel at Balad Air Base.

Thirteen Bronze Stars, 22 Army Commendation Medals, and 15 Army Achievement Medals will be awarded to an amazing group of individuals. These are individuals I will always call friends and brothers.

“Many times there were Iraqi Army personnel working alongside us. They sought the same objectives as us, to rid Iraq of the insurgency, restore stability, and allow Iraq to press forward and begin flourishing.”

Remember why you're a patriot

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center
Public Affairs

I stepped outside my home one recent August evening to catch some cool night air. Suddenly, the melancholy notes of "Taps" filled the air.

I had forgotten that at 10 p.m. every day at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., as in most military installations at nondeployed locations, the lone bugler or trumpet signals "lights out."

With no shoes on, I could feel the dew seeping into my socks as I stood at attention with my hand over my heart as the music hit its waning notes. As the last note faded, I heard the hum of jet engines from a KC-10 as it flew over my home.

"Here's to you and all you've done," I thought as the stillness returned to the evening. I was saluting all the men and women, the consummate patriots of this great land of ours, who died for America's freedom.

The emotionally textured "Taps," combined with the aircraft flyover provided that strong reminder. I forgot about my wet feet as I thought of those patriots and why I'm one.

I made my way to the cement step leading to the back door of my house and sat down.

Being a patriot isn't easy. It takes commitment to believe so strongly in your country that you're willing to lay down your life for it. That is what it takes to serve in the military — the definition is actually one who loves his or her country and supports its authority and interests.

I was nearly in tears.

How lucky am I to be in America enjoying this cool beautiful night while my comrades are off in some foreign land helping others gain their own freedom.

What did I do to deserve to be born, grow up and live in what I consider the greatest country in the world?

That's my personal belief but that's also why I'm a patriot.

A breeze whipped up all of the sudden and sent a chill down my back. The chill made me think of a childhood friend I'd almost lost to a heart attack weeks earlier — a friend who's supported me all these years.

I've known him since I was 4 years old when, as neighbors, we'd swap tricycles while out playing some 35 years ago.

We'd gone to school together in my hometown in Michigan.

We went hunting, fishing, skiing, snowshoeing and played a few thousand games of basketball against each other.

I was there with him when he battled cancer, and won, nearly 20 years ago. When I joined



Photo illustration by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, are remembered around the world. At the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J., six American flags flew at half-staff in honor of the nearly 3,000 victims from that fateful day. The USAF EC, in a sense, now gets its name from what happened on Sept. 11 because as a response to the terrorism that caused the attack the United States began the Global War on Terrorism soon after. The USAF EC, on a daily basis, trains Airmen who are deploying to fight in that global war. And it is because of that expeditionary training the USAF EC went from the Air Mobility Warfare Center to the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center in 2007.

the military and was heading off for basic training more than 16 years ago, he organized a going-away party in my honor. He was also the best man at my wedding. He's the best friend I'll ever have.

It's because of people like him that I serve, that I'm a patriot. He's always supported me, been there when I needed him, and whenever I see and talk to him, it's like we've never been away from each other.

A half hour has passed, and I'm getting colder. There's another blast of wind, yet I'm not chilly any more as my thoughts shift from my friend to my family.

I've often taken for granted how well my family treats me. My wife, for example, has been through deployments, long work hours and a load of other things during our marriage and my military career, yet she stands beside me as we move forward in life.

She gives me strength and provides that "reality check" whenever I need it. I love her more every day we're together. She is my copatriot.

There are also my children and grandchild-

dren. Whenever I look into their eyes, I see the patriots of the future. I see people who also love their country, and what it means to be a patriot.

I can add in my parents, brothers, sister and extended family. They are all reasons why I want to be in the United States Air Force and why I'm a patriot. They inspire my patriotism.

By now I figured it was time to call it a night and head indoors. I felt better for some reason after hearing the music, seeing the plane fly over and thinking about family and friends.

"I'm so lucky," that's all I could say to myself.

I'm so lucky to have the opportunities I do and lucky to have the life of being a patriot of this country affords me.

On Patriot Day, Sept. 11, I remembered the people who became heroes on Sept. 11, 2001. I also remembered their friends and families who supported them because that is why we are all patriots.

I encourage everyone, on Patriot Day and every day, to remember what makes you a patriot.

421st CTS Airmen represent Expeditionary Center in NYC's 'Tunnel to the Towers' run, walk



Tech. Sgt. Sean Graves (left), from the 421st Combat Training Squadron, switched hats with a New York City firefighter for a photo opportunity.

A formation of 21 cadre members from the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center's 421st Combat Training Squadron, Fort Dix, N.J., led by guidon bearer Tech. Sgt. Rudolph Stuart, march with 55-pound ruck sacks to the starting area of the Tunnel to Towers 5-kilometer run/walk in New York City on Sept 28. The Tunnel to Towers is a fundraiser in tribute to Stephen Siller — a New York City firefighter who gave his life on Sept. 11, 2001. Siller ran from his vehicle in full firefighter gear from the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel to the World Trade Center when he heard of the disaster over his scanner.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Paul R. Evans



Airmen from the 421st CTS salute as the national anthem is played before the start of the race.



The 421st Combat Training Squadron team crosses the finish line marching in the same formation they started.



Staff Sgt. Anthony Richards from the 421st CTS is interviewed by Ms. Katie McGee of New York City's WCBS Channel 2 prior to the beginning of the race.

'Eagles' gather for annual picnic



Maj. Gen. Kip Self speaks to picnic-goers and lined up the picnic's organizers to thank them for doing a great job.



Picnic-goers enjoyed food, beverages and each other's company for the mid-summer fest.

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
Maj. Gen. Kip Self, U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center commander, falls into the dunk booth for the first time during the center's annual picnic on Fort Dix on July 11. More than 200 people attended the picnic.



Chief Master Sgt. Jeffrey Helm, former Expeditionary Center command chief, stands up in the dunk booth after being dunked yet again. Participation in the dunk booth helped raise money for the Expeditionary Center Association.



Peter Evans, son of Staff Sgt. Paul and Hillary Evans of the 421st Combat Training Squadron, cools off in a pool during the picnic.

U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center Phoenix Spouse



Mrs. Bobbi Sturkol

Contact information

Phone: (609) 723-0061

E-mail: bobbisturkol@yahoo.com

About the Phoenix Spouse program

The program provides military families with someone who can assist them in channeling information for events and opportunities directly from the commander to the family member.

Upcoming calendar events

Oct. 25: U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center "Trunk or Treat" Fall Festival starting at 4:30 p.m. in the Center.

Oct. 31: Expeditionary Center Promotion Ceremony at 3 p.m.

Oct. 31: Halloween. Trick or treat times in military family housing both on McGuire Air Force Base and Fort Dix will be from 6 to 9 p.m.

Nov. 4: Federal and State Election Day. Get out and vote for your candidate of choice.

Nov. 6-9: Airlift/Tanker Association Convention in Anaheim, Calif. A team of Expeditionary Center "Eagles" will be attending the convention.

Nov. 11: Veterans Day holiday.

Nov. 21: Expeditionary Center Hall Party. Come enjoy a center-wide potluck of food and drink in time for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Nov. 26: Expeditionary Center Promotion Ceremony at 3 p.m.

Nov. 27: Thanksgiving holiday.

Nov. 28: Air Mobility Command Family Day.

Dec. 6: Expeditionary Center Children's Christmas Party will take place inside the Center. All children of Center members are invited to attend.

Dec. 13: Expeditionary Center Christmas Party will take place at McGuire Air Force Base Community Center beginning at 6 p.m.

Dec. 25: Christmas holiday.

Dec. 26: Air Mobility Command Family Day.

Dec. 31: Expeditionary Center Promotion Ceremony at 3 p.m.

Jan. 1: New Years holiday.

Jan. 2: Air Mobility Command Family Day.

Morale, welfare and recreation

To find out more about what events and opportunities are taking place on McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., visit the 305th Services Squadron Web site at: <http://www.305services.com>.

For events and opportunities on Fort Dix, visit its Web site at: <http://www.dixmwr.com/>.

U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center First Sergeant



Master Sgt. Timothy Wasut

Contact information

Phone: (609) 754-7029

E-mail: timothy.wasut@us.af.mil

About the first sergeant

The first sergeant is your connection for help and support throughout the Expeditionary Center.

EAGLES MEET EAGLES



Eight U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center "Eagles" stop for a photo with Philadelphia Eagles kicker David Akers during a visit to the Eagles training camp in Lehigh, Pa., Aug. 5. The visit was part of "Military Day" sponsored by the Eagles and the United Services Organization.

U.S. AIR FORCE EXPEDITIONARY CENTER



PUTTING THE
'EXPEDITIONARY' ...

IN EXPEDITIONARY AIRMAN

Photo by Tech Sgt. Scott Tr. Sturka