



FLIGHT LINES

SERVING HOMESTEAD AIR RESERVE BASE AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY

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February 2006

The long road home



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Photo by Jake Shaw

Senior Master Sgt Michael Metzger, 482nd Maintenance Group, reunites with his wife, Connie, and his two daughters upon returning from Balad Air Base, Iraq on Friday evening, Jan. 20. About 40 HARB Reservists returned after spending up to 120 days supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. After leaving Iraq, they traveled through another Middle Eastern country before traveling through Germany, Iceland, and Boston, M.A. before arriving back at HARB.

Focus on the future, your people



Air Force Reserve photo

By Col. Randall G. Falcon
482nd Fighter Wing Commander

Over the next few months we'll be entering a new training cycle. We're already gearing up and preparing for our CHUMEX in February and Operational Readiness Exercise in

March.

The 482d Fighter Wing witnessed a very high operational tempo last year. Many wing members have recently returned from AEF deployment to Balad Air Base while many others of you deployed supporting the victims of last year's hurricane season. Each of you volunteered for these challenges, performing admirably and professionally.

Successful units never stop training and preparing for future operations. As military professionals, we hone our skill at every opportunity, remaining prepared for any contingency.

I expect great things from you during this period. I expect each of you to take initiative, looking to work smarter instead of harder. I also expect my senior NCOs to take the

time to train our junior troops. Train them well; just as other senior NCO's took the time to train you.

Challenging and mission oriented training is how we maintain our status as the preeminent aerospace force in the world. I know that each of you do your best and aggressively tackle the challenges of the upcoming year.

action.line@homestead.af.mil

Your direct link to the Wing Commander for questions, concerns and issues affecting Homestead ARB and its employees

Services Wants Your Input

Customer Feedback Survey Helps Drive Programs

By Air Force Services Agency
Public Affairs Office

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Ever wish someone would really listen to your wants and needs? Headquarters Air Force Services will. Every year, they conduct a customer feedback survey to assess customer satisfaction with Services programs. The responses from this survey help drive policy and program decisions.

If you were randomly chosen to

receive this survey, now's your chance to let your opinions be known. Air Force Services is committed to combat support and community service and offers many programs to improve quality of life for Air Force families. These surveys let Services know what they are doing right and where things can be improved.

The survey is an important customer feedback tool. Please take the time to fill it out and return it in the

envelope provided. Your responses will help make a difference in the programs Services offers to you, your family, and the entire Homestead ARB community.

This survey has been reviewed and approved for distribution by the Air Force Personnel Survey Branch at the Air Force Personnel Center. The survey control number is USAF SCN 05-100.

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Tips offered for tax season

By Army Sgt. Sara Wood
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — Tax season has once again arrived, and military personnel should know several things to make their returns easier and more beneficial, a military official said here Jan 19.

One of the most notable changes to the tax code this year is the addition of provisions for victims of hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, said Army Lt. Col. Janet Fenton, executive director of the Armed Forces Tax Council.

The provisions for hurricane victims are lengthy and complicated, so servicemembers who were affected by the hurricane should seek advice from their installation tax center or the Internal Revenue Service, Colonel Fenton said. The provisions can include extensions for tax filing and help for those who lost homes or property, she said.

Servicemembers who spent time deployed have important things to keep in mind when filing their taxes, Colonel Fenton said. For example, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo all qualify as combat zones where military income is tax exempt, she said. For enlisted servicemembers, all income earned in a combat zone is exempt, but for officers, income is excluded up to a certain limit. For 2005, the limit for officers' tax-exempt income was \$6,529 a month, she said.

Tax-exempt income is a great thing, but it has worked against some servicemembers by exempting them from important credits, Colonel Fenton said. Two credits that military members often qualify for — earned income credit and child tax credit — require earned income to be claimed, she said. Starting this year, servicemembers can elect to include their combat zone income to qualify for these credits, she said. She stressed that this income will not be taxed, but will allow servicemembers to receive credits for which they qualify.

"Just because you think you didn't have earned income due to your combat zone time, it's worth your effort to go to the tax center and find out if you do qualify for these two important credits," Colonel Fenton said.

Servicemembers in a combat zone during tax season get an automatic extension to file their taxes, Colonel Fenton said. Servicemembers have six months from the time they leave the combat zone to file, she said. Servicemembers who are stationed elsewhere overseas have a two-month extension to file.

The colonel said almost every military installation offers a tax center for military, retired military and family members. Volunteers at the center are trained by the IRS and military legal office and can provide advice or assistance in filing taxes. Returns filed

through the tax center are sent electronically, and people will receive their refunds within seven to 10 days, she said.

"The installations do serve a great benefit to the military member who wants to go and make sure that they've gotten the best information they can. They've filed it, not only accurately, but taken advantage of any of the deductions and credits that they do qualify for and they may not be aware of on their own," she said.

Each installation determines its tax center's operating hours and whether people need an appointment to come in, Colonel Fenton said.

Military personnel can also get help online with their taxes. The IRS provides a free file service on its Web site, which lists several tax preparation services, many of which provide free service to military members, she said. The Web site Military OneSource also provides free tax assistance to military members.

"The Internet's invaluable; it allows you to file your taxes from your own home, if you're comfortable enough to do that," Colonel Fenton said.

To prepare to file taxes, servicemembers should make sure they have their W-2 forms from the military and any other jobs they had in the past year, the colonel said. Servicemembers should also make sure they have Social Security cards for themselves and their dependents.



Promotions

To Senior Airman
Cristelle L. Gagne, 482nd MXS

To Staff Sgt.
Daniel P. Karsko, 482nd MXS
Kelly Stahl, 482nd MXS



Guard, Reserve benefit from 2006 defense authorization

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — The 2006 National Defense Authorization Act signed into law Jan. 6 provides new or enhanced benefits for National Guard and Reserve members, a senior defense official said.

President George W. Bush signed the legislation Jan. 6, providing a variety of benefits designed to bring reserve-component compensation more on par with what the active component receives, Chuck Witschonke, the DOD's deputy director for compensation, said.

The package provides other benefits that affect all forces, both active and reserve, including better overall compensation and improved quality of life, while promoting overall recruiting and retention, he said.

The law also provides a variety of benefits specifically targeting members of the reserve components.

Mr. Witschonke emphasized the new law does not guarantee that all

servicemembers will qualify for these pays and benefits, or that those who do will receive the highest amounts authorized. Rather, the law gives defense and service leaders the flexibility they need to tailor the force to meet operational, recruiting and retention goals.

One big change in the new law is a provision that shortens the duty time before a reserve-component member qualifies for the full housing allowance. Reserve and Guard members called to active duty for more than 30 days will now get the full allowance, just as active-component troops do, Mr. Witschonke said.

Another benefit, the critical-skills retention bonus, will be "a very good tool" in helping keep members with important experience and training in the force and in maintaining readiness in high-priority units, Mr. Witschonke said.

The 2006 authorization act also increases recruiting bonuses for the Reserve and Guard, Mr. Witschonke

said. The new law authorizes accession and affiliation bonuses of up to \$20,000, to be offered as needed by the services, he said.

For reserve-component members who experience pay cuts when called to active duty, the new provision for income replacement will help reduce the strain military service places on the family, he said.

"It can be difficult for a family that has been living on a certain income to now have less money, particularly at a time when they're stressed by a change in their lifestyle" due to a military deployment, Mr. Witschonke said.

The income-replacement program won't be instituted for six months, in accordance with the law. At that time, specific guidelines and qualifications will be issued, he said. This authority will end in December 2008.

These enhancements in reserve-component pay and benefits are particularly critical during the global war on terror, when members of the Guard and Reserve are playing a major role in U.S. national defense, he said.

New Air Force Reserve Benefits

Full housing allowance payments for reserve members called to active duty for more than 30 days, versus the previous 140-day requirement.

Income replacement benefits to help offset the pay loss some reservists and guardsmen experience when called to active duty, based on specific guidelines to be established within the next six months.

Accession and affiliation bonuses of up to \$20,000 for enlistment in the Selected Reserve, and an increase for officers for service in the Selected Reserve, from \$6,000 to \$10,000.

A bonus of up to \$100,000 for members with a designated critical skill or who volunteer to serve in a designated high-priority unit.

Extension of eligibility for a prior-service enlistment bonus to include Selected Reserve members who previously received one.

New Reserve Pay Chart

2006 Reserve Pay for Four Drills															
Years of Service															
	<2	2	3	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26
O-8	1,102.80	1,138.92	1,162.88	1,169.60	1,199.48	1,249.48	1,261.08	1,308.56	1,322.16	1,363.04	1,422.16	1,476.72	1,513.16	1,513.16	1,513.16
O-7	916.36	958.92	978.64	994.28	1,022.64	1,050.60	1,083.00	1,115.32	1,147.72	1,249.48	1,335.44	1,335.44	1,335.44	1,335.44	1,342.20
O-6	679.20	746.16	795.12	795.12	798.12	832.36	836.88	836.88	884.44	968.52	1,017.88	1,067.20	1,095.28	1,123.68	1,178.84
O-5	566.20	637.82	682.00	690.28	717.80	734.32	770.56	797.16	831.48	884.08	909.08	933.84	961.92	961.92	961.92
O-4	488.52	565.52	603.24	611.68	646.68	684.24	730.96	767.44	792.72	807.24	815.68	815.68	815.68	815.68	815.68
O-3	429.52	486.92	525.56	573.00	600.40	630.52	650.04	682.12	698.76	698.76	698.76	698.76	698.76	698.76	698.76
O-2	371.08	422.68	486.80	503.24	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60	513.60
O-1	322.16	335.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28	405.28
O-3E	-	-	-	573.00	600.40	630.52	650.04	682.12	709.12	724.60	745.72	745.72	745.72	745.72	745.72
O-2E	-	-	-	503.24	513.60	529.96	557.52	578.88	594.76	594.76	594.76	594.76	594.76	594.76	594.76
O-1E	-	-	-	405.28	432.84	448.80	465.16	481.24	503.24	503.24	503.24	503.24	503.24	503.24	503.24
E-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	536.28	548.44	563.76	581.80	599.92	629.04	653.64	679.60	719.20
E-8	-	-	-	-	-	439.00	458.44	470.44	484.84	500.44	528.60	542.88	567.16	580.64	613.80
E-7	305.16	333.08	345.84	362.76	375.92	398.60	411.32	424.04	446.72	458.08	468.84	475.44	497.68	512.08	548.48
E-6	263.96	290.40	303.24	315.68	328.68	358.00	369.40	382.04	393.16	397.08	399.80	399.80	399.80	399.80	399.80
E-5	241.88	258.04	270.48	283.28	303.16	320.28	332.88	336.88	336.88	336.88	336.88	336.88	336.88	336.88	336.88
E-4	221.72	233.08	245.68	258.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12	269.12
E-3	200.16	212.76	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60	225.60
E-2	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32	190.32
E-1	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80	169.80

E-1 with less than four months: \$157.08

MAC Annual Awards Banquet

The Military Affairs Committee is holding its annual awards banquet at the Falcon's Nest Club on Saturday, May 6. Tickets will be on sale during the March and April UTA weekends. The event will feature a DJ and dancing. The following are ticket prices based on the purchaser's grade.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Price</u>
E1-E5/GS1-GS-5 and guests	\$15 / person
E6-E8/O1-O2/GS6-GS8 and guests	\$20 / person
E9/O3/GS9-GS11 and guests	\$25 / person
O4 and above/GS-12 and up and guests	\$30 / person

New Homestead ARB Website

Homestead ARB now has a revamped Internet website. The look and usability of the site brings it into line with Air Force wide standards. Base personnel and the general public can find current base news and a photo gallery, base information, recruiting information, and much more.

www.homestead.afrc.af.mil

\$2 million communications project nears completion at Homestead ARB

*Story and photo by Jake Shaw
482nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs*

A \$2 million dollar project that will enhance communication and provide greater security for base-wide radio frequencies is scheduled to be completed Jan. 27 here at Homestead Air Reserve Base.

The Department of Defense mandated project, performed under contract by Motorola, will move the base from outdated wide-band frequencies to more secure narrow-band frequencies, according to Gary Scherer, Chief of Plans and Implementation, 482nd Communications Squadron.

The narrow-band frequencies can use new encryption technology, which means that scanners off base will no longer be able to pick up our conversations, said Vic Gran, Personal Wireless Communication Systems Manager, 482nd Communications Squadron.

The project, nearly two years in the works, includes the erection of a 165 foot communications tower, and a facility housing frequency repeaters that will boost the signals of radios on base.

As part of the project, all radio infrastructure is being replaced, including repeaters, mobile and base station radios, so everyone who uses a radio will be affected by this transition, said Gran.

Besides the more clear and secure communication capability, the centralized infrastructure for the radio systems will make it much easier to manage.

"When we've had problems with the frequencies in the past, we'd have to visit several buildings before we found the problem. Now we'll only have to visit one area to fix a problem when one occurs," said Leo Castellano, Assistant Personal



New communication tower at HARB: This new communication tower at Homestead ARB will improve the quality and security of radio transmissions at the base. The tower is the tallest structure at Homestead ARB, at over 200 feet tall (U.S. Air Force Reserve photo by Leo Castellano).

Wireless Communication Systems Manager, 482nd Communications Squadron.

Though the project is near completion now, there were some minor setbacks during the planning process.

"We had to get approval from the Federal Aviation Administration before the tower was erected," said Gran.

"Things happened throughout this project that we didn't expect, and that required quick responses from base agencies including the civil engineers, contracting and communications personnel as well as off-base agencies including the FAA, Florida Power and Light, and Motorola" he said.

The project also makes the infrastructure of the radio system self-sustaining, according to Gran.

"The facility that houses the frequency repeaters is completely self-sustained, so if the power is lost on base, our radios will continue working and the communication lines will remain open," he said.

Obviously, the details of the project are complex, but for the average radio user here at Homestead ARB, the outcome of the upgrade is simple, according to Castellano.

"This [system] will provide higher quality and more secure communications for your radio, and that's what makes this project important," he said.

The long road home

By Dan Galindo

482nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Forty-one Air Force Reservists from the 482nd Fighter Wing arrived at Homestead Air Reserve Base Jan. 20 after spending 120 days deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq.

For some reservists the trip home began more than a week earlier.

"Some troops left as early as 10 days ago from Balad. The remainder left on Jan. 18 to arrive back on Jan. 20. They had to spend time in [other Middle Eastern countries] before catching their flight home," said Tech. Sgt. Ryan Kaono, Contingency War Planner, 482nd Logistics Readiness Squadron.

However, one Airman had to make an unexpected stop at Norfolk International Airport, Va. on the last leg of the trip, adding a few days to his journey.

"I had a fever, was shaking, and had pain in my stomach. I thought it was an appendicitis, but it only turned out to be a kidney stone," said Tech. Sgt. Christopher Heinbaugh, F-16 crew chief.

Despite having to make an extra stop on an already long journey home,

no one seemed to mind, he said.

"There was not one person who was upset about it. We all stuck together in Iraq, and now that we were coming home, we were still sticking together," said Tech. Sgt. Heinbaugh. "It made me feel good."

For both family members and reservists, counting the days until their return was a rather difficult task.

"He's been gone for five very, very long months," said Connie Metzger, wife of Senior Master Sgt. Michael Metzger, 482nd Maintenance Squadron.

"It's always stressful when he has to leave," she said. "He's been in 18 years so he has had to go quite a bit. So, it's not his first time, but I'm just excited now."

This time around Mrs. Metzger found one thing that made the separation easier to bear.

"E-mail was just fantastic. It really made me feel like I could keep a connection with him while he was over there. It was really the best way that we could keep in touch," she said.

Senior Master Sgt. Huey Meei Hill made the return trip late last year. "Sure you fly through a lot of places



Photo by Jake Shaw

Families eagerly awaited the return of loved ones from Balad Air Base, Iraq. Reservists of the 482nd Fighter Wing spent several days "on the road" before landing at HARB, Jan. 20.

and it takes a while, but you're going home, so you're always excited," she said.

That sense of enthusiasm was noticeable this time around as well.

"The excitement was running high. We all talked about what we wanted to do when we got back. For me, it was to get a Wendy's triple. That's what I was looking forward to," Sgt. Heinbaugh said.

"The trip normally takes only about 26 hours," said Sgt. Kaono. "Our folks went from Iraq to [another Middle Eastern country] to Germany to Keflavic, Iceland before hitting Boston and then on to home."

The reservists completed Air Expeditionary Force cycle 7/8. More 482nd Fighter Wing Reservists are scheduled to provide expeditionary combat support during another deployment between May and September this year.

Reservists of the 482nd Fighter Wing, HARB, made about five stops before arriving home to their families. They completed a 120-day deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Photo by Jake Shaw

Helping airmen develop

The AFA provides opportunity, awareness and education

By Senior Airman Sandra Bueno
AFA Reserve Council Representative

The Air Force Association (AFA) promotes public awareness about the importance of aerospace power in National Defense.

As an independent, nonprofit, civilian organization, the AFA sponsors national conferences highlighting air and space technology and national defense issues while providing professional development opportunities to military members.

Along with workshops and conferences, all Air Force enlisted and officers, active duty, Guardsmen and Reservists, civilians, retirees, veterans, and industry representatives meet and network on a level not achieved anywhere else.

Through the AFA website, Air Force Magazine, the affiliate Aerospace Education Foundation, and its numerous outreach programs, the public and military members can become active participants in the AFA mission.

Aside from the public services provided by the AFA, military members have legislative representation via the AFA Reserve Advisory Council.

By identifying and prioritizing issues affecting Reservists' quality of life and quality of service, the Council

develops and recommends solutions that are provided to legislative representatives in Capitol Hill.

Through the Council, military members have a voice to positively affect changes in policy.

Calling all Airmen

The AFA Reserve Council is a 2-year commitment which requires TDY travel throughout the year. (Washington, DC, Los Angeles, CA, Orlando, FL). Individuals selected as council members are to complete "Talking Papers" (Top Issue Statements and Input) by deadlines set by the council chairman. Issue Papers are presented for review to SAF/LLP, Office of Legislative Liaison in Washington, DC. The "Top Issues" are presented in a comprehensive AFA Council Input Report that is used when communicating with Congress, the media, the American public and AFA leaders nationwide.

Please send your input regarding reserve members quality of life issues, particularly the MGIB, or your interest in becoming the next AFA Reserve Council Representative to Senior Airman Sandra Bueno by e-mail at Sandra.Bueno@homestead.af.mil. During UTA weekends, please stop by Bldg. 360, room 141.

AFA Top Issues for 2006:

- Resources for Defense
- The Global War on Terrorism
- Homeland Defense Mission
- Concern for Airmen
- Total Force Concerns
- Civilian Workforce Concerns
- Commitment to Veterans and Retirees
- Science and Technology Concerns
- Modernization
- C4ISR Spectrum
- Industrial Base Support

Source: www.afa.org/aboutus/policyissues.asp

AFA Reserve Top Ten Policy/Legislation Issues (Presently being drafted):

- Age 55 Retirement – Reduction in Age for Receipt
- Health Care/TRICARE- Enhance RC Access to Health Care
- Tax incentives for Employers of Reservists-
- Eliminate 1/30th Rule (ACIP/CEFIP/FLPP)- Equal Compensation for meeting mission readiness requirements as their active crewmember counterparts
- MGIB Eligibility-10-year term is expiring before usage
- MGIB-SR-Enhancements Expand Eligibility for Selective Reenlistment Bonus to 20 years
- Increase IDT Points (120 vs. 90)
- BAH Reform-Payment to Members on Equal Basis as Active Duty Personnel
- Last 6 Years in the Reserve for Retirement
- SBP Reform (Social Security)

Source: AFA Reserve Council Air & Space 2005 Conference

Retiree Appreciation Day Postponed

The 2006 Retiree Appreciation Day at the Falcon's Nest Club originally scheduled for 1pm Saturday, Feb. 18 has been postponed. Services regrets any inconveniences and will provide all information available once the event is rescheduled.

Nomination season open for top Guard and Reserve employer awards

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — Guard and Reserve members may now recommend their employers to be recognized for supporting their military service during the 2006 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Awards nomination season.

The nomination season lasts until Feb. 28.

Homestead Air Base Reservists may take advantage of the esgr.org website and fill out an electronic form to nominate their employers. Also, reservists can directly contact Bud Wallen, ESGR committee chairman for the Homestead area at dbwallen@covad.net.

“Many times employers just go ‘above and beyond,’” said Mr. Wallen. “I had one Airman’s boss who was so kind to her during her deployment to Afghanistan. He made of the difference in her pay while she was away. It’s just commendable.”

Mr. Wallen said that simply making a nomination will earn your employer a “Patriot” award certificate and lapel pin. State and local ESGR committees can help arrange a presentation, and committees will then review your nomination for higher level awards.

To make a recommendation, Guard and Reserve members must

answer 10 questions about support they receive from their employer. Questions target pay policies, benefits and leave policies, previous ESGR awards, supervisor training, ESGR advocacy, servicemember recognition, family support, deployed member support, hiring preferences and general military support, said ESGR spokesman Tom Bullock.

The 55 ESGR field committees will review all nominations and verify the employer information received through the Web site. The ESGR National Ombudsman Team will then investigate all the nominations to ensure employers comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Up to 15 2006 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Awards will be presented in Washington D.C. on Sept. 19, Mr. Bullock said.

The Freedom Award is the highest in a series of Defense Department employer awards that include the Patriot Award, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Above and Beyond Award and the Pro Patria Award.

Winners “set a high standard for all America’s private and public employers,” said David Janes, national chairman of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and

Reserve in July.

The companies were selected based on a variety of factors — from providing pay differentials to extending health care, dental and life insurance coverage during employees’ military mobilization, officials said. All have signed statements of support for the Guard and Reserve at the five-star level, which designates that they are strong advocates for the reserve components and role models for other companies.

“I cannot think of a better measure of the leadership and patriotism of a business organization than to be recognized for outstanding Employer Support to the Guard and Reserve,” said Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey, keynote speaker at the 2005 awards ceremony in October. “And even more telling is that since the nomination has to be initiated by a Guard or Reserve member or family member employed by the company, it is truly driven from the bottom up.”

The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award was initiated in 1996 to publicly recognize American employers who provide exceptional support to their employees who voluntarily serve the nation in the National Guard and Reserve who voluntarily answer the call to duty, Mr. Harvey said.

(Dan Galindo, 482nd FW Public Affairs contributed to this story.)

Falcon’s Nest Dining

The club will be hosting a Valentine’s Dinner at the Falcon’s Nest Club on Feb 14, 2006 6-8pm. The dinner includes: Salad bar, lobster parfait, chateau briand, twice baked potato, broccoli, brownie ala mode, 1/2 carafe of wine, and a rose for the special lady. Member’s price is \$49.95 per couple, while the non-member’s price is \$59.95 per couple.

RSVP: Call Tarin or Sheree to make reservations at 305-224-7167/6784. Dinner is by reservation only.

The club is now serving breakfast from 0530 to 0900 Mon-Fri. The hours have been extended for one hour due to many requests. This is a full buffet for dining in or take out. If you are a club member you can use your coupon that was mailed to you to receive a FREE buffet. Check it out and tell your friends!! The trial period for this program will run from 1 Jan – 31 March 06. After that it will continue indefinitely if it is well supported.

Civilian pay raises take effect

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) —

Defense Department civilian General Schedule employees received a 2.1 percent across-the-board pay raise as of the first pay period of 2006.

It also includes a range of locality pays that bring the overall pay hikes between 2.83 and 5.62 percent, an Office of Personnel Management spokesman said.

According to the GS locality pay schedules on the opm.gov website, the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Miami Beach area received an overall increase of 3.04 percent.

The 2006 federal pay raise went into effect with the first full pay period of the year, which for most DOD employees began Jan. 8, Mike Orenstein told the American Forces Press Service.

President George W. Bush signed

into law the legislation that provides for the federal pay raise on Nov. 30.

Pay charts on the OPM Web site show new annual and hourly rates for GS workers, DOD's white-collar work force and special geographically unique charts cover increases in 31 designated locality pay areas. Wage-grade or blue-collar workers, who make up a small percentage of the DOD work force, receive comparable increases for their areas, Mr. Orenstein said.

The GS workers not in a designated locality pay area come under the "rest of the United States" designation on the charts and receive a 2.83 percent pay increase, Mr. Orenstein said.

The exception are GS workers in Alaska, Hawaii and U.S. territories, who receive a non-foreign cost of living allowance that was first introduced in the mid-1940s to attract

workers, he said.

Locality pay areas to receive significant hikes this year are Raleigh-Durham-Cary, N.C., 5.6 percent; San Francisco-San Jose-Oakland, 3.95 percent; New York-Newark, 3.77 percent; Buffalo, 3.75 percent; Hartford, Conn., 3.62 percent; and the Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia region, 3.44 percent.

Locality pay is based not on the cost of living, but on the cost of labor in a particular area, Mr. Orenstein said. By offering locality pay to workers in those regions, government agencies can be more competitive in recruiting and retaining qualified workers, he said.

More information and pay chart information is provided on the OPM Web site at www.opm.gov. (Dan Galindo, 482nd FW Public Affairs contributed to this story.)

GTC billing date change

By Megan Orton

AETC Public Affairs

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AETCNS) — Air Force government travel card billing cycles will begin closing out on the 22nd of each month beginning in March for individually billed accounts. This applies to Reservists at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fl., too.

The current cycle ends the third of every month, so cardholders will experience a long cycle running Feb. 3 through March 22.

The change will help supervisors ensure Reservists do not have any discrepancies with split disbursement payments on government travel cards.

"The change was made because there is a higher delinquency rate among the reserves due to the unique way that we operate. They were also

hoping that this action will help the units to gain more control over their delinquent members," said Donna Stodard, Agency Program Coordinator at HARB.

The previous billing closeout date prevented units from receiving delinquency reports before Unit Training Assemblies, since most are held at the beginning of each month. Therefore, supervisors and commanders did not have an up-to-date list of service members who did not paid their accounts accurately. That is no longer the case.

"It is easier to counsel a member when you can reach out and touch them versus trying to catch them on the phone," said Mrs. Stodard.

She also reminds all cardholders that if you can't claim it on a travel voucher, don't put it on your

government travel card.

Bank of America will have customer service representatives available and prepared to handle all calls relating to the cycle date change.

Cardholders can also now self-register online for electronic account government ledger system user IDs and passwords using information found on your GTC statement. EAGLS allows cardholders to view current transactions and previous statement activity and maintain account information online.

To register, visit http://www.gcsuthd.bankofamerica.com/eagls_selfregistration/selfreg.aspx. EAGLS user IDs and passwords will be mailed to the address associated with your GTC. (Dan Galindo, 482nd FW Public Affairs contributed to this story.)



Hurricane Wilma damaged 11 buildings, with four suffering extensive wind and water damage. Contractors from Waco, TX are making significant progress on the repairs, such as those at the base fitness center (Left).

Photo by Henry Burgains

Post-hurricane repairs ongoing at HomesteadARB

Story and photo by Lisa Macias
482nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Three months after Hurricane Wilma struck South Florida, many buildings at Homestead Air Reserve Base are still undergoing major repairs.

“Nine buildings received extensive roof and water damage,” explained Henry Burgains, 482nd Contracting office. Out of the damaged structures, the gym, fire department, BX Mart and the wing headquarters building had the highest priority for repairs.

Thanks to contingency contracting plans set up for events of this nature, 482nd contracting was able to contract out a roofing company within three days after Wilma made landfall. Within seven days, they already had two crews working on the gym.

The crew, from Waco, Texas, had previously worked on other roofing projects at HARB, and those were the roofs which held up during Wilma.

Mr. Burgains estimates it will cost approximately 4 million dollars to repair all the damaged roofs. Similarly,

the BX Mart was in desperate need of a new roof for the past 2 years, and it significantly worsened after Wilma.

The new one will “help tremendously” said Mrs. Naomi Smith, BX Mart manager. “Not only will it make a big difference, but it will also change the appearance.”

Unlike the gym and the BX, repairs to the wing headquarters building “will be the hardest, most difficult and most time-consuming,” explained Mr. Burgains.

With half the structure blown away on the southwest side, the entire building will have to be redesigned to maintain strength and balance. It involves submitting new drawings and plans.

Not only was contracting involved in the repair process, but they also immediately acquired generators, batteries, emergency light-alls for the base and runway, and water and ice for base personnel.

Within 2-3 hours after the hurricane, a few of us were gathering

research while others were implementing plans. “It was a team effort,” said Mr. Burgains. “We all had the same goal.”

Fast Facts

Number of Damaged Buildings:
11

Estimated Repair Cost:
\$4 Million

Days Before Repair Crews Arrived:
7

The Culprit:
Hurricane Wima



Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray (right of center) stands with senior enlisted leaders at Homestead Air Reserve Base on Jan. 19. Chief Murray stopped at Special Operations Command South for a site visit and he spoke with members of the command about current issues involving the Air Force. (Photo by Sgt. Maj. Mike Novogradac)

Share the Air Force Reserve way of life

By Lt Col Robert Delgado
482nd Fighter Wing MEO

“Share the Passion” is an Human Resource Development Council initiative where both Air Reserve Technicians and Traditional Reservists have a golden opportunity to share with high school juniors, seniors, college students and young adults the tremendous opportunity they will have serving their country and have a rich, rewarding and challenging career in the Air Force Reserve. You can do this by bringing someone who you feel would like to know more about the Reserve program to the Saturday, May 6 UTA. They will see first-hand the many career fields that we have and will learn about the Air Reserve Technician civil service program and the Traditional Reserve program where they can have a civilian career and reserve career at the same time.

They’ll spend the entire Saturday of the UTA shadowing the member who invited them, receive briefings from outstanding role models from different areas of the Wing, eat a tasty lunch served by the Services Squadron, take a tour of our many outstanding work areas, have a question and answer period with our recruiters and fill out a lead card. At the end of the day, they can go home to think about what could be the best decision they could make in their lives by joining the Air Force Reserve.

Military members need to register the guest or student they wish to sponsor. Simply contact MSgt Tina Silver at 7359 or Lt Col Robert Delgado at 7821 and provide her or him with your name, squadron, phone number, and your guest’s name and grade. The military member will be responsible for paying for his or her guest’s lunch.

The deadline to register is Wednesday, May 3, and the space is limited to the first 40 guests registered.

Leadership seminar

The 482nd FW will be conducting a leadership seminar on Feb. 3, at 12:30 p.m., in building 360, room 131. This training is for NCO’s that have or will have leadership positions in the future. All interested Master Sgts, Tech Sgts and Staff Sgts, including current or prospective supervisors from any squadron may participate. Contact your First Sgt. with your intent to participate and with your Commanders approval, you will be on your way to improving your leadership abilities. The class will fill up quickly with accommodations for only 24 members.