

The

Spring 2011

Eagle's Eye

Florida Air National Guard

Volume 11 Issue 1

INTEGRITY FIRST EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO SERVICE BEFORE SELF

I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.
MY MISSION IS TO FLY, FIGHT, AND WIN.
I AM FAITHFUL TO A PROUD HERITAGE,
A TRADITION OF HONOR,
AND A LEGACY OF VALOR.

I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN,
GUARDIAN OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE,
MY NATION'S SWORD AND SHIELD,
ITS SENTRY AND AVENGER.

I DEFEND MY COUNTRY WITH MY LIFE

I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN:
WINGMAN, LEADER, WARRIOR.
I NEVER LEAVE AN AIRMAN BEHIND.

I WILL NEVER FALTER,

AND I WILL NOT FAIL.

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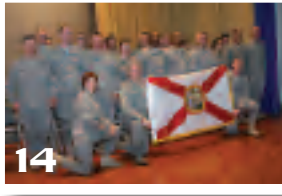
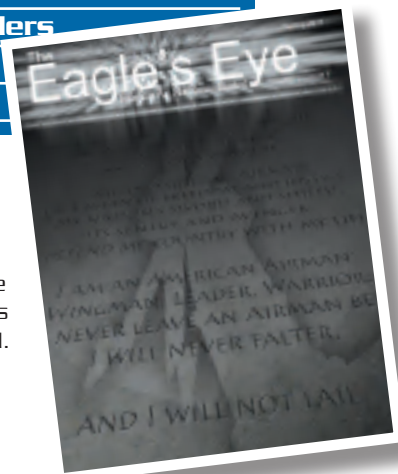
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*By Brig. Gen. Joseph G. Balskus
Assistant Adjutant General for Air
Commander, Florida Air National Guard*

Core Values need to be lived; we must breathe them in each day and let them tap on our shoulder constantly.

This past month we celebrated Memorial Day as a nation. Since May 30, 1868, we have taken time as a nation to pay tribute to those who raised their hand to support and defend and in 1971 Memorial Day was made an official national holiday to be celebrated on the last Monday in the month of May. I feel there are a few tools to assist us in being mindful of our obligations to set a standard for all to emulate, and to help us remain true to our core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do.

Our Oath of Office certainly speaks to the heart of why we even wear the uniform. Written by the hand of General George Washington himself when he was in his first year of his Presidency in 1789, Washington was careful to select words. The Oath of Office does not state we will support and defend a man, woman or idol. Washington stated that he was just an ordinary common man, and was blessed to be in a position of service to our new nation. He carefully penned the words, "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States." The document that established the bedrock for our country begins with "WE, the people

of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Washington knew that supporting the Constitution was the key. Men and women would come and go, but our nation would last if we always defended the document that established us as a nation. Remarkably, since the signing of the Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787, the document has been amended only 36 times and today, 223 years later, it still defines us. We, as a military service, are strengthened by our Oath of Office and we as an Air Force are strengthened by our Core Values. If we ever forget why we serve as the oath states, we will falter, and if we as a service fail in our adherence to our core values, we will weaken.

Unfortunately, there have been some who have faltered and the violations were significant and frequent enough that Lt. Gen. Bud Wyatt, director of the Air National Guard, felt he had to leave Washington,

D.C., and hold regional meetings with ANG representatives from the 54 states and territories face-to-face to challenge them to not forget how important it is to stay true to the core values. "We must always be on guard and put up a wall of protection against making poor decisions to ensure we remember Integrity is first," he said. "We must put our service before our own selfish desires and have a continual standard of excellence each and every day."

Our core values, like our commitment to the Oath of Office, need to be lived; we must breathe them in each day and let them tap on our shoulder constantly. This issue of the Eagle's Eye is dedicated to a re-emphasis on our core values. As well as we've done and as proud as I am that with have had only a few violations in the past six years, it is always important to remind ourselves how important they are, so we do not falter. Enjoy this edition of the Eagle's Eye and my special thanks to Capt. Caitlin Brown and her team for bringing all the stories together for this issue.

*By Chief Master Sgt. Charles W. Wisniewski
State Command Chief Master Sergeant*

On Feb. 11, the Florida Air National Guard (FLANG) recognized its 2011 Outstanding Airmen of the Year (AOY) nominees and winners during a banquet at the Renaissance Resort Hotel in St. Augustine, Fla. The event was attended by more than 230 Airmen and their families, marking the largest turn out in the event's history. All the nominees received the Florida Commendation Medal and the six AOY winners received the Florida Distinguished Service Medal. The AOY winners also received cash awards and presentations from Air Force Association Falcon Chapter and companies including Geico, USAA and Wiley-X Eyewear.

On Feb. 12, our Airmen also attended the Senior Leaders Conference and a casual social hosted by our state Chief Council at the World Golf Hall of Fame, and on Feb. 13 they had a private session with Brig. Gen. Joseph Balskus, commander of the FLANG. During their private meeting, they talked about their goals and aspirations, and afterward they and their families were given a tour of Saint Francis Barracks, our museum and surrounding area by retired Lt. Col. Greg Moore, our state historian.

At the social Feb. 12, I told our Airmen that this AOY weekend would be my last as my retirement

draws near. I told them that the AOY program, the awards weekend and having the opportunity to meet all of them are the things I will miss most and what I enjoyed the most in my time as state command chief. These young Airmen are amazing in what they have already accomplished in their careers and education, and their dedication and patriotism is evident in how they do their jobs and serve their country. As I have said many times, when you get to know these outstanding young Airmen you know that our FLANG has a bright future with Airmen of this caliber coming up through the ranks!

★ NEWS FROM HQ

New FLANG Recruiting Process

*By Master Sgt. Thomas Kielbasa
FLNG Public Affairs*

In an era of evolving requirements, diverse mission sets and constrained budgets, the Florida Air National Guard (FLANG) faces an ever increasing set of manpower challenges. Our goal is to have all FLANG units 100 percent manned with mission-ready Airmen prepared to deploy on a moment's notice. To achieve this goal, we have developed a new "targeted recruiting" process that will fine-tune the FLANG recruiting machine to a high degree of efficiency. Using the tools of Continual Process Improvement (CPI), Lt. Col. Dave Thomas and Lt. Col. Bob Wetzel recently lead a Rapid Improvement Event that focused on the pressure points to affect increased process effectiveness as quickly as possible.

Conditions for success were first set by an initiative to scrub unit manning documents for accuracy. This allowed the team to get a true picture of overgrade and excess manning issues that needed attention. The entire recruiting and accession process was then carefully mapped out in great detail. Because the CPI team consisted of members who touched the process from begin-

ning to end, the group had visibility of key steps that were highlighted for elimination or improvement. The result is a greatly improved flow that matches high-value vacant positions with well-qualified recruits.

The CPI-derived process begins with each FLANG unit commander forecasting gains and losses and mission requirements. They then forward a menu-driven "recruiting request" form to the 125th Force Support Squadron (FSS) for analysis. The FSS scrubs the request, validates the vacancy and associated training requirements, then forwards it to the recruiting team for action. A process feedback loop serves to reinforce positive outcomes and identify deficiencies to be addressed. The system is currently set for a recurring 90-day data refresh which will be assessed to determine if a faster refresh cycle is needed to get optimum results.

The first evolution of this new process has just begun, and we are confident that it will meet our goal of improving readiness and the FLANG's "go to war capability."

Knowledge, Wisdom and Courage; *An Argument for Strategic Planning and Improvement*

*By Lt. Col. Robert Wetzel
F-15C pilot, 125th FW*

Short-term happiness may come from comfort but long-term success results from progress. Progress develops from the application of wisdom to solve problems and from the courage to act. Wisdom is gained through the accumulation of knowledge and experience. Wisdom enables judgment in problem solving whereas courage is required to overcome the fear of an unknown future state. Even the best solution has no impact if it is not implemented. Improvement is healthy and necessary. In the long run, an unchanging short-term focus on the status quo has catastrophic results. To combat this, organizations pursue methods to systematically move their individuals to higher levels of achievement. The National Guard Bureau has initiated a strategic planning and improvement program labeled Continuous Process Improvement (CPI).

Eighteen months have passed since the 125th Fighter Wing began its use of CPI practices. What I've learned during this time is that individuals resist change, organizations must evolve to remain relevant, overcoming the former is difficult, coordinating the latter is vital, and a leader's role is to organize individuals through change. The 125th FW accomplishes its strategic planning through its Executive Council, a term borrowed from Air Force Smart Operations. The Executive Council is comprised of senior leaders who continually implement Wing and Group strategic plans. They also conduct formal meetings every six months where strategic plans are updated and revised. We are currently on our third edition of the 125th FW Strategic Plan and first editions of Group strategic plans. The full impact strategic planning has had on the Fighter Wing is hard to measure and equally difficult

to overstate. Collective understanding of our organizational goals and priorities has promoted cooperation across units and aligned subordinate activities. Additionally, our strategic planning continues to identify important problems lacking clear solutions. These problems become projects sponsored by a senior leader and facilitated by trained CPI professionals.

The 125th FW has successfully implemented improvements to programs and issues including cross-organizational and readiness training, the Florida Air National Guard's (FLANG) sponsor program, 125th FW hotel reservation process, 125th FW dental readiness, FLANG recruiting, 125th Maintenance Group (MXG) training, and FLANG Active Guard and Reserve accessions. Aided by the engaged and unwavering support of senior leadership, each of these projects succeeded because the professionals working in the problem areas developed the solutions and implemented the changes. Another potential benefit is that everyone involved in these projects will approach future problems with a little more wisdom and courage. We also have ongoing projects addressing 125th FW energy consumption, information sharing, email practices, and 125th MXG weapons inspections.

Despite all the success, significant challenges remain. Wider implementation up, down and across the organizational ladder is needed. A common theme in classical philosophy, from the likes of Socrates and Aristotle, is that all humans seek happiness and that they are most happy when optimally challenged. Challenge your people by identifying the strategic problems so that they can use their knowledge, wisdom and courage to solve them.

Col. James Eifert
Commander, 125th Fighter Wing

Q: What is your hometown?

A: Orlando, Fla.

Q: What made you decide to join the military?

A: In the second grade, I read a book about the aces of World War II and decided right then that's what I wanted to do, too!

Q: How long have you served?

A: I was at the United States Air Force Academy for four years, followed by nine years in the active duty Air Force and now 20 years in the Air National Guard.

Q: What is your favorite thing about military service?

A: Working with people who hold similar values about integrity, duty, honor, service to country and commitment to excellence. Nothing against the majority of our civilian counterparts, but there is something about our line of work that sets us apart in a special way. In my view, it is a nobler purpose to which we aspire every day than the average person in the work-a-day grind who has never experienced the commitment to a greater good such as this service to our country which we perform. I am convinced that in the armed forces, I work amidst and among the finest citizens our nation can produce, and it invigorates me every day. The flying jets part doesn't hurt either!

Q: If you had to sum up your "command philosophy" in a couple of sentences, what would it be?

A: My leadership philosophy in a nutshell is that "We are better than me." We are smarter, stronger, and more talented together than any one of us is alone, and it takes all of us working together toward a common purpose to

surmount the many challenges we face. It's all about the team. I recognize that I do not have all the answers, and I rely on my leadership team around me to figure out the best path to success. That requires them communicating openly down their chain to identify problems and solicit solutions from their people at every level.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish as the commander of your unit?

A: I want to continue and grow upon the 125th Fighter Wing's impressive record of sustained excellence. My experience has been that nothing motivates people for success like success. Once you taste winning, you never want to allow losing to happen again, and that becomes a tremendous intrinsic motivator. It becomes who you are, and the culture of your organization soars with that collective commitment to excellence. When I hand over the reins to the next Wing Commander, I want to be able to say that I not only carried on our tradition of excellence, but that I cranked it up a notch while still keeping our Airmen proud, strong and motivated for the long haul. In order to accomplish this goal, I am convinced that we need to embrace Strategic Planning and Continuous Process Improvement and make it a permanent part of our culture. It is the only way that we can continue to get better without killing our people by making them work harder.

CPI is all about working smarter by fixing processes that are wasteful, inefficient or ineffective and empowering the consumer of those processes to fix them.

Q: What has been your proudest moment as a commander so far?

A: That's a tough one – there are so many proud moments I experience every day working with the incredibly high caliber of professionals here! I'd say the most proud moments are those I've spent observing our amazing



Airmen preparing for and returning from deployments to the AOR. Their commitment to service is incredibly humbling and motivating to me.

Q: What advice would you give to junior members of the organization who aspire to command one day?

A: Look, listen, and learn. Then step up and spread your

leadership wings at every opportunity. Regardless of your rank or position, every person in this organization has an opportunity to lead every single day. Your leadership opportunity may be nothing more than bringing a positive, can-do attitude to your job. If you do that consistently, you become a leader! Additional leadership opportunities will be afforded to you - it is inevitable.

Lt. Col. James Spooner Commander, Detachment 1

Q: What is your hometown?

A: I am a “rebel” by transplant. I was born a Yankee and saved 32 years ago when I moved to Jacksonville, Fla., which I now consider my hometown!

Q: What made you decide to join the military?

A: I visited the Florida Air National Guard while I was in high school, and got the opportunity to meet some really great people and play with some great toys (M16s and F-15s), and I have loved it ever since!

Q: How long have you served?

A: More than 22 years – but who’s counting??

Q: What is your favorite thing about military service?

A: Everything – the people of the Florida Air National Guard are the best in the world (and I’ve seen most of the world), our organization’s commitment to a great cause (our freedom), the chance to do great things and fly “the world’s greatest air superiority fighter known to mankind and the universe!”

Q: If you had to sum up your “command philosophy” in a couple of sentences, what would it be?

A: I could talk a lot about this subject and drum up things like “take care of your people and your people will

take care of the mission” or other catch phrases. If I had to talk to one issue in regards to leadership, I can summarize with “enjoy what you do” – at every level, including leadership. Enjoy working with the people you work with and enjoy the work that you do. This one philosophy

will result in your loving the work you do and the things you accomplish. It will drive you to be better at your job and serve as a guide for the future success of individuals and the organization as a whole.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish as the commander of your unit?

A: Be the helping hand. I would like to see everyone in the organization get better at their core duties, additional duties, special projects and other duties. I can help facilitate everyone’s organizational and individual goals so they may be more successful within the organization and the bigger picture of life.

Q: What has been your proudest moment as a

commander so far?

A: I think it is a little early for me to have any proud moments – I’ll let you know next year! Currently, I’m very proud of how motivated and energetic the people of the unit are in executing and supporting the alert mission.

Q: What advice would you give to junior members of the organization who aspire to command one day?

A: Everyone has the potential. Strive every day to develop your potential into the success you desire.





MORE THAN 60 YEARS OF FLORIDA AIR GUARD HISTORY FINDS A HOME

Air Guard dedicates The Frank W. Kozdras Heritage Center in St. Augustine

By Master Sgt. Thomas Kielbasa
Florida Air National Guard Public Affairs

When future generations of Airmen look back at the history of the Florida Air National Guard, they will definitely know the name “Kozdras.”

Earlier this year the Florida Air National Guard Heritage Center in St. Augustine was officially dedicated as The Frank W. Kozdras Heritage Center in recognition of former commander of the 202nd RED HORSE Squadron Col. (Ret.) Frank Kozdras. Kozdras currently serves as director of the heritage center and for the past few years has been compiling the 60-year history of the Florida Air National Guard into a comprehensive archive inside the historic St. Francis Barracks.

Friends and Florida Air National Guard leaders surprised Kozdras on Jan. 28 by unveiling a plaque and dedicating the heritage center in his name. The former Air Guard officer was visibly moved and surprised.

“I was in complete shock,” Kozdras recalled. “But this is probably one of the most significant things I’ve done.”

At first glance the Kozdras Heritage Center is a small collection of displays, wall-to-wall bookshelves, a few exhibit cases and printed highlights of the Florida Air National Guard history. But a closer inspection reveals invaluable artifacts and documents linking the Air Guard of



today to its beginnings in 1947: flight manuals from each fighter aircraft flown by the Florida Air National Guard, photographs of early pilots and crewmembers, vintage flight suits, helmets, and even an instrument panel from an F-106 Delta Dart jet fighter.

Kozdras helped create the center in 2007 while he was researching material for the 60th Anniversary celebration of the Florida Air National Guard. As he began collecting historical documents and books he noticed there was a lack of Florida Air National Guard history on display.

“My idea was that the Air Guard needed something that was accessible and showcases the Air Guard history since 1947,” he explained.

After he was given office space for the heritage center at the Florida Air National Guard Headquarters, Kozdras sent letters to retirees asking for aviation books, photographs, artifacts... anything about their experience in the Air National Guard. He





said initially about 20 people sent him some photos and documents, but it was enough to get him started. Now after almost five years the collection is the state's most comprehensive repository of information about the first 60 years of the Florida Air National Guard and comprises thousands of documents, photos and books.

One of the highlights of the center is a collection of photographs and documents about the storied "1958 William Tell Weapons Meet" where the missile team from the 125th Fighter Group competed against the best teams in the U.S. Air Force and fired the first "perfect score" in the history of the event. The collection includes newspaper articles about the William Tell and an original pamphlet from the event held at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

While the collection is impressive, Kozdras said he is still "only scratching the surface of the history" of the organization and he is constantly adding to the stacks of books, magazines and documents.

Kozdras – who made history himself by serving as the first commander of the 202nd RED HORSE – notes the heritage center is truly a living project and plans to improve and expand the collection as this generation of Florida Air National Guardsmen makes history. He noted that every person serving in uniform today is making a



difference, and eventually their achievements should be added to the heritage center.

"I don't think many people realize that what they are doing today is making history," Kozdras said. "I always tell people 'Don't miss the opportunity to tell your story and share your experiences for the record.' If we don't preserve our own history now, there will be nothing there for our future generations."

Little Things Matter!

By Laura Pageau

Florida Air National Guard Family Readiness

We've all heard the expression "don't sweat the small stuff." However, I have a different perspective to share with you. Think about all of the interactions we have daily with our family, friends, coworkers and the community at large. The way we interact is influenced by so many factors, but we all have a choice to be any way we'd like to be.

We are lucky to be individuals, and there are some very unique types out there! There is always that person who is never happy, no matter what. There is the person who is always so upbeat and chipper it's almost annoying. The serious one, the nerdy one, the brainiac and the egotistical one. Knowing these people and their personality types gives you an idea of how to interact with them and how they may react in return.

Even so, you can still try to shape those connections through your actions and words. Little things like saying "please" and "thank you," not interrupting, really listen-

ing, giving a compliment, helping carry a heavy box, or offering a shoulder to cry on are some examples. Sometimes we get so busy with our day-to-day lives that those small niceties get overlooked. I don't know too many people who are intentionally rude, but I do know a lot of people who could use a bit of etiquette 101!

There is a concept known as the "assumption of goodwill" that I learned about when I took my Active Relationships training certification course. In essence, it means that in any situation you should always assume the best, not the worst. Try to use that concept for a day or two and see what happens. You might be very surprised to see how that simple concept has a great effect.

Don't let life control you – control your life. Remember that your words and actions matter, and that you never know what affect you might have on that person you show kindness to. You have a choice to make the little things matter and I hope you do!

SUMMERTIME SAFETY

It's really about being deliberate and methodical with our actions to ensure things are done right the first time. Doing things right will help ensure they get done the first time, rather than having to do it again because it was done wrong, often resulting in injury and/or compromising the mission.

Here are a few examples as we jump into summer:

At Work: Follow established procedures and safety guidelines. It may take some extra time to follow every step, but it will ensure the entire checklist doesn't have to be re-accomplished a second time because one critical step was missed. When the operations tempo is demanding, it doesn't mean you can't call a "Knock-It-Off."



Doing so is the first step in recognizing that you're not feeling safe in performing your task which in turn could impact your job performance and/or emotional well-being.

At Home: Summertime means yard work, household projects, etc. It also increases the potential for accidents and inju-

ries. Take the time to check your equipment. Don't start working around your house without thinking through any safety issues first. By all means, make sure you think about your kids and pets and ensure they are kept clear of any dangerous work or equipment. Taking the time to plan and check the equipment will help ensure you and your loved ones are able to enjoy summer, rather than wishing you could from an emergency room.

At Play: Summertime for many of us means outdoor activities and sports. Coming off the winter/spring months also means many of us may not have been as active as we are in the summer. Jumping right into rigorous activities without proper preparation is a recipe for injury. Everyone knows that warming up is the right thing to do before any physical activity, but beginning any sport after a long layoff means just a little bit more is required. Make sure any sporting equipment is in proper working order. Also, start that sport at half-speed and slowly build up to full-speed. Going all out immediately is a good way to get hurt because your body simply isn't prepared for the physical activity you're now demanding of it.



Taking things a bit more slowly and deliberately is the right way to get things done right, and SAFELY, the first time! Safety... it's an attitude.

Travel Alert

Did you know as a Florida Air National Guard member you are required to report all travel (including family vacations) outside the U.S. to your

Security Manager and unit Antiterrorism Officer (ATO) before you travel?

Here is the most recent Travel Alert issued from the U.S. Department of State. Remember to follow all safety guidelines and stay alert while travelling abroad!

TRAVEL ALERT

May 01, 2011

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Worldwide

The U.S. Department of State alerts U.S. citizens traveling and residing abroad to the enhanced potential for anti-American violence given recent counter-terrorism activity in Pakistan. Given the uncertainty and volatility of the current situation, U.S. citizens in areas where recent events could cause anti-American violence are strongly urged to limit their travel outside of their homes and hotels and avoid mass gatherings and demonstrations. U.S. citizens should stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of their surroundings at all times. This Travel Alert expires Aug. 1, 2011. (Excerpt from http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_5447.html)

A VIEW FROM THE COCKPIT

By Col. Bill "Yogi" Bair
Operations Group Commander, 125th FW

It's 2:30 a.m. at the "alert shack." Suddenly the loud sound of the klaxon goes off. All the lights come on and you hear the rumbling of the hangar doors opening and the sound of footsteps running down the hall. You scamper out of bed, get your flight suit and boots on and head down to your particular aircraft bay. As you arrive at your airplane the maintenance crews have already disconnected the grounding wires, and are helping you into your parachute harness. As you climb into the cockpit, you call out, "Arm safe!" With your heart racing, you get an "all clear" from your crew chief and begin the process of starting the two Pratt and Whitney F-100-220 engines, and getting your avionics and radar turned on. The maintenance crews are pulling all the safety pins and arming your weapons in an orchestration that even a NASCAR pit crew would envy. While all this is going on, you are talking to the command post getting "words" (information as to the bearing, range and altitude of the target of interest, and confirming via a series of codes if the scramble order is a valid one) and finishing the rest of your strapping in to the ejection seat procedure. In less than five minutes you go from a dead sleep to taxiing out to the dark runway, and blasting off over the black abyss of the Atlantic Ocean, a feat that on a normal training mission takes almost 30 minutes to accomplish. And that is just the beginning.

This is exactly what pilots and maintenance crews at Detachment 1 are prepared to do 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This small unit of around 28 full-time personnel are charged with the safe operation of at least three fully mission capable F-15 aircraft along with all the additional duties a normal organization is required to accomplish. Every 12 to 18 months they get what amounts to a no-notice Unit Compliance Inspection combined with a Phase II Operational Readiness Inspection, less the Chemical Gear, in what is known as a North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) Alert Force Evaluation (AFE).

Sometime in the next six months, Detachment 1 will be under the scrutiny of the NORAD Inspector General (IG) team while they conduct the 2011 AFE. This inspection starts with the arrival of the AFE team at the front gate, where the IG will have their Entry Access List validated with the command post and gather the unit personnel to notify them of the impending inspection. Then you wait. Suddenly the klaxon sounds. This starts

the series of events described above, but this time under the watchful eye of the NORAD IG. Just as the unit has done so many times before, two aircraft launch out of the barns and are airborne in a minimum amount of time. The pilots must now go through a series of radio channel changes, talking to both Air Traffic Control and controllers from the Eastern Air Defense Sector, on two different radios, all while ensuring that they are safely flying their aircraft and searching their radar scope for the target of interest. During last year's AFE, the two 125th pilots intercepted not one but three different targets, completing all required checklist items flawlessly. At the completion of the intercepts the pilots flew back to the Detachment and started the next phase of the AFE.

Once the aircraft arrive back in the Alert barns, it is time for the maintenance crews to shine. They have just one hour to perform all the necessary post-flight recovery procedures to include ensuring all the weapons are in a safe condition, and then perform a normal aircraft shutdown. They must do all this with a critical eye. Once they are done with their inspection, the aircraft goes to the IG and they go over it with a fine tooth comb. After the IG inspects two aircraft, they watch as missiles are downloaded from each airplane and a weapons functional check is conducted to ensure all weapons stations were fully functional and defect free.

While the maintenance crews complete their duties, the pilots and an IG representative go inside for a thorough debrief of the mission. The pilot tapes will be reviewed to ensure proper tactics were flown and all proper ID criteria were adhered to. They ensure all written guidance was followed for each type of target of interest, as well as aircraft technical order and Air Force Instruction guidance was followed.

Once the inspection is over, the IG team members leave the Detachment to write the draft report. The next day, they arrive back at the unit, conduct an executive out-brief with the commander and debrief the unit on their grade before finally departing.

Detachment 1 is charged with keeping the southeastern United States safe from any and all airborne threats that may enter or originate in our sovereign airspace. These professional maintainers and pilots deserve our gratitude and respect for their dedication and continual solid performance. The next time you run into one of them, tell them thanks for keeping us safe and a job well done!!

Florida Air National Guard's Finest Honor

By Maj. Miki Kristina Gilloon,
Florida National Guard Public Affairs

The Florida Air National Guard recognized six of its outstanding Airmen during an Airmen of the Year banquet at the Renaissance Resort in St. Augustine Feb. 11.

The competition recognizes Florida's enlisted personnel for their superior leadership, job performance, community involvement and personal achievements.

"For our Airmen, this represents the hard work they do all year long in their primary jobs, how they continue to grow pursuing their education and how they volunteer their time and energy to their units and to charitable organizations in their communities," said Chief Master Sgt. Charles Wisniewski, state command chief. "Being selected tells our Airmen that senior leadership recognizes their efforts and appreciates their dedication by

highlighting their achievements as an example of what it takes to be considered the best of the best."

Of the approximately 2,000 enlisted Airmen in the Florida Air National Guard, the top Airmen are:

Airman of the Year: Senior Airman Christopher Hancock, 202nd RED HORSE Squadron, Camp Blanding, Fla.

Noncommissioned Officer of the Year: Tech. Sgt. Penelope Pippin, 114th Range Operations Squadron, Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.

Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year: Senior Master Sgt. Angella Beckom, 125th Medical Group, 125th Fighter Wing, Jacksonville, Fla.

First Sergeant of the Year: Master Sgt. Tiffiney Kellum, 101st Air and Space Operations Group, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

Honor Guard Member of the Year: Master Sgt.



Airman: Senior Airman Christopher Hancock

Duty Title: Electrical Power Production Journeyman

Organization: 202nd RED HORSE Squadron, Camp Blanding, Fla.

Senior Airman Christopher Hancock set a positive example by instituting new procedures and practices for his unit's Power Production Safety Program by tracking and monitoring safety checklists and developing material waste control plans. He also served as a team leader for three base air shows, ensuring the installation and testing of Mobile Aircraft Arresting Systems so that all aircraft were able to land safely in the event of an emergency.

Noncommissioned Officer: Tech. Sgt. Penelope Pippin

Duty Title: Client Systems Craftsman

Organization: 114th Range Operations Squadron, Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.

Tech. Sgt. Penelope Pippin is one of three personnel certified as a System Control Operator in the unit. She uploaded mission configuration files and troubleshooted Transportable Command and Telemetry System equipment during multiple launch missions. She also completed 19 computer-based training courses in two months, which allowed her to seamlessly manage operating system upgrades at State Headquarters in St. Augustine, Fla., while ensuring that all systems complied with Air Force procedures.



Senior Noncommissioned Officer: Senior Master Sgt. Angella Beckom

Duty Title: Health Services Management Superintendent

Organization: 125th Medical Group, 125th Fighter Wing, Jacksonville, Fla.

Senior Master Sgt. Angella Beckom revolutionized monthly Individual Medical Readiness Reports for unit commanders and first sergeants, improving the overall 125th Fighter Wing statistics and contributing to the highest ratings of six scored Force Health Management programs during a 2010 Health Services Inspection. With her extreme attention to detail, she screened and updated 130 medical records for the 202nd RED HORSE Squadron's Operational Readiness Inspection which resulted in an "Excellent" rating for the medical element.



...ored As Outstanding Airmen of the Year

Karrie Warren, 101st Air and Space Operations Group, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

Honor Guard Manager of the Year: Tech. Sgt. Martha Dunning, 101st Air and Space Operations Group, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

The finalists will move forward to compete nationally at the National Guard Bureau's 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

Brig. Gen. Joseph Balskus, Assistant Adjutant General – Air, was the guest speaker at the banquet.

“Primarily, most of this is about being the one who steps forward,” Balskus said. “Throughout our history how many times has one individual made a huge difference for what happens with the people he or she comes in contact with?”

Classic cases of leadership and inspiration the general

touched on during his speech included George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Amelia Earhart, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ronald Reagan.

“If you review the bios of our winners -- Hancock, Pippin, Beckom, Warren, Kellum, and Dunning -- you will be amazed at how individually they have accomplished and contributed so much and are making such a difference for our Florida Air National Guard and America,” he said.

This banquet was part of an Outstanding Airmen of the Year Recognition Weekend held in conjunction with the Florida Air National Guard Commander's Conference, Council of Colonels and Commanders Advisory Council, Chief Master Sergeant and First Sergeant breakout sessions and professional development training.

First Sergeant: Master Sgt. Tiffney Kellum

Duty Title: First Sergeant

Organization: 101st Air and Space Operations Group, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

Master Sgt. Tiffney Kellum is responsible for overseeing the health, morale and welfare of more than 230 enlisted personnel in the unit. She provided sound counsel to Airmen and served as a liaison between the unit and family members by providing guidance on enlisted and personal issues. Kellum was also key in developing a new Airman and Family Team program which focused on Airmen and family bonding.



Honor Guard Member: Master Sgt. Karrie Warren

Duty Title: Combat Operations Division Assistant Superintendent

Organization: 101st Air and Space Operations Group, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

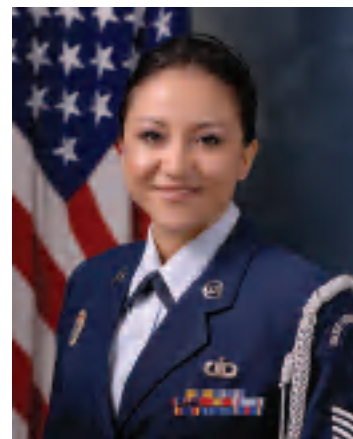
Master Sgt. Karrie Warren exemplified the Honor Guard motto of “To Honor with Dignity” by dedicating more than 20 hours performing in seven retirement ceremonies and 22 short-notice events throughout the state and in the local community. Additionally, she organized 12 ceremonial events during the Program Manager's absence to ensure mission objectives were met. She is an expert in all team positions and fosters exceptional teamwork and initiative.

Honor Guard Manager: Tech. Sgt. Martha Dunning

Duty Title: Senior Air Defense Technician

Organization: 101st Air and Space Operations Group, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

Tech. Sgt. Dunning led an elite 15-member Honor Guard team and devoted more than 100 hours to the planning and oversight of the team's training and performances in ceremonial events supporting the state of Florida, 1st Air Force, Tyndall Air Force Base, 601st Air Operations Center and the local communities. Her sound expertise, guidance and oversight of two ceremonial details during national-level conferences were a testament to her leadership.



Florida Air Guard units named among the best in nation

By 1st Lt. Jesse Manzano
Florida National Guard Public Affairs

The Florida Air National Guard has new bragging rights: two of its units were awarded the prestigious Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA) for meritorious service earlier this year by the Department of the Air Force.

The units – the 114th Range Operations Squadron (ROPS) and the 290th Joint Communications Support Squadron (JCSS) – garnered recognition for the award periods of Oct. 1, 2009 - Sept.30, 2010, and April 1, 2008 – March 31, 2010, respectively.

This is the fifth time the 114th ROPS received the AFOUA and it is the unit's third consecutive award. With approximately 113 Airmen in their ranks, the unit provides support to the 45th Space Wing of the Air Force Space Command both at Patrick Air Force Base, as well as at Cape Canaveral, on Florida's Space Coast.

"I couldn't possibly be more proud of the outstanding men and women of the 114th ROPS for the sustained high level of performance and great attitudes they put into their work each and every day," said Lt. Col. Todd M. Oller, commander of the 114th ROPS. "They are the best example of teamwork I've ever seen. Add that to the fact that they've won this honor three years in a row and it just magnifies their accomplishment."

The 290th JCSS has been awarded the AFOUA four times and this award marks the second consecutive two-year period award for the unit. Based out of MacDill Air Force Base, the 290th JCSS is made up of 190 personnel who provide globally deployable communications support to the regional combatant commands, to the United States Special Operations Command, the Department of Defense, other government agencies, and to the State of Florida.

"It is an honor to lead such a dedicated team of joint tactical communicators. No matter what the tasking, location, timeline or customer, the 290th JCSS members are focused, qualified and eager to exceed the expectation and requirements of the mission," said Lt. Col. Loretta J. Lombard, commander of the 290th JCSS. "I couldn't be blessed with a better team of operators and support personnel. This award validates our sustained success in achieving our unit's objectives."

Airmen from both units who were assigned or attached to the organization during the inclusive award periods will be authorized to wear the AFOUA ribbon or appropriate cluster if they directly contributed to the mission and accomplishments of the organization.



Lt. Col. Loretta Lombard, 290th JCSS commander, and Brig. Gen. Joseph Balskus, FLANG commander, pose with members of the 290th JCSS.

I am pleased to introduce a new section of the Eagle's Eye we will call "From the Joint Force Headquarters." Our Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Emmett R. Titshaw, Jr., is doing incredible work for the Florida National Guard and I felt our readers would enjoy having some knowledge on his whereabouts and events he performs as the Adjutant General. Much of his duty involves Army-centric activities, trips to Tallahassee, trips to Washington, D.C., and community events to support the Florida National Guard, and we are extremely proud of the continued support on the Air side as well. Enjoy the updates.

Brig. Gen. Balskus

*By Maj. Miki Gilloon
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs*



The Guard has proven to be of great value for America – and will continue to be relevant – as our organization continues to be involved in multiple and diverse missions, Adjutant General of Florida Maj. Gen. Emmett Titshaw stated recently during a Senior Leadership Conference attended by Florida Army National Guard commanders.

“We are no longer a strategic reserve force, but we are evolving into a more operational force as evident through our capabilities of protecting America at home and defending America overseas,” he said.

As a continental United States-based force, the Florida National Guard provides significant military capabilities in response to unexpected emergencies. Whether called upon to provide manpower, logistics, communications, medical treatment, weapons of mass destruction response or support to civil authorities, the Florida Army and Air National Guard quickly responds at moment's notice. With more than 12,000 Soldiers and Airmen serving in over 55 communities and 39 counties across

the state, the Florida Guard provides an indispensable link between the military and the citizens of Florida.

“The National Guard has become a relevant operational force that is depended upon to carry out the mission of the United States,” Maj. Gen. Titshaw said. “We're in a very high rate of operational tempo that we're going to see throughout this era of persistent conflict.”

Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 14,000 Florida National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have deployed around the world. About 2,400 Soldiers from the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) recently returned from a one-year deployment to Southwest Asia to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, and subsequently, Operation New Dawn. This was the largest ever single-unit deployment of Florida National Guard Soldiers since World War II.

Other major deployments this past year included: Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group to Southwest Asia; members of the Air Defense Artillery to the National Capital Region and Afghanistan; the

690th Military Police Company to Afghanistan; the 779th Engineer Battalion to Iraq; the 125th Fighter Wing to Saudi Arabia; 3rd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group to Afghanistan; the 1153rd Finance Management Detachment to Iraq; and the Special Operations Detachment-Central to Germany and Africa. Also during this period, Florida Air National Guard F-15 jets successfully flew the 55,000th sortie for Operation Noble Eagle – the ongoing operation to defend North America from an aerial attack.

The Adjutant General also said that as a “dual-missioned” operational force the Florida National Guard remains engaged in overseas contingency operations, is vigilant in our preparations to respond to domestic emergencies, and is committed to serving our communities and Florida citizens.

This edition of the Eagle's Eye echoes the common theme that the Florida Air National Guard is a ready, reliable and accessible force that provides an unmatched return on investment and is of great value to the state of Florida and our nation.

Gov. Scott & Lt. Gov. Carroll reach out to our Airmen

By Maj. Miki Kristina Gilloon
Florida National Guard Public Affairs
Photos by Debra Cox



Gov. Rick Scott & Lt. Gov. Jennifer Carroll join Maj. Gen. Emmett R. Titshaw, Jr., on a visit to the 125th FW April 16.

Governor Rick Scott made his first visit to the Florida Air National Guard's 125th Fighter Wing, April 16.

The governor said that the opportunity to visit and meet with the Airmen gave him a better sense of the Florida Air National Guard's mission. The governor was accompanied by Florida Lt. Gov. Jennifer Carroll during the morning visit.

"The most impressive things are the people and their professionalism and commitment to our state and our country," he said.

During their visit, Governor Scott and Lt. Governor Carroll met with 125th Fighter Wing Commander Col. James Eifert, who provided a mission briefing of the wing's history, command structure to include the geographically separated

units, and federal and state missions.

"We are an air dominance F-15 unit that trains every day," Eifert said as he talked about the airspace in which the aircraft fly. "This training enables us to employ and develop tactics that we use in both the homeland defense mission and in our deployed environments."

The governor and lieutenant governor had the chance



to view
F-15 aircraft
take-offs for a train-
ing mission and aircraft weapons loading demonstration.



They also received an overview of the 125th Maintenance Group's phase dock where F-15 aircraft were in various stages of inspections by maintenance personnel.

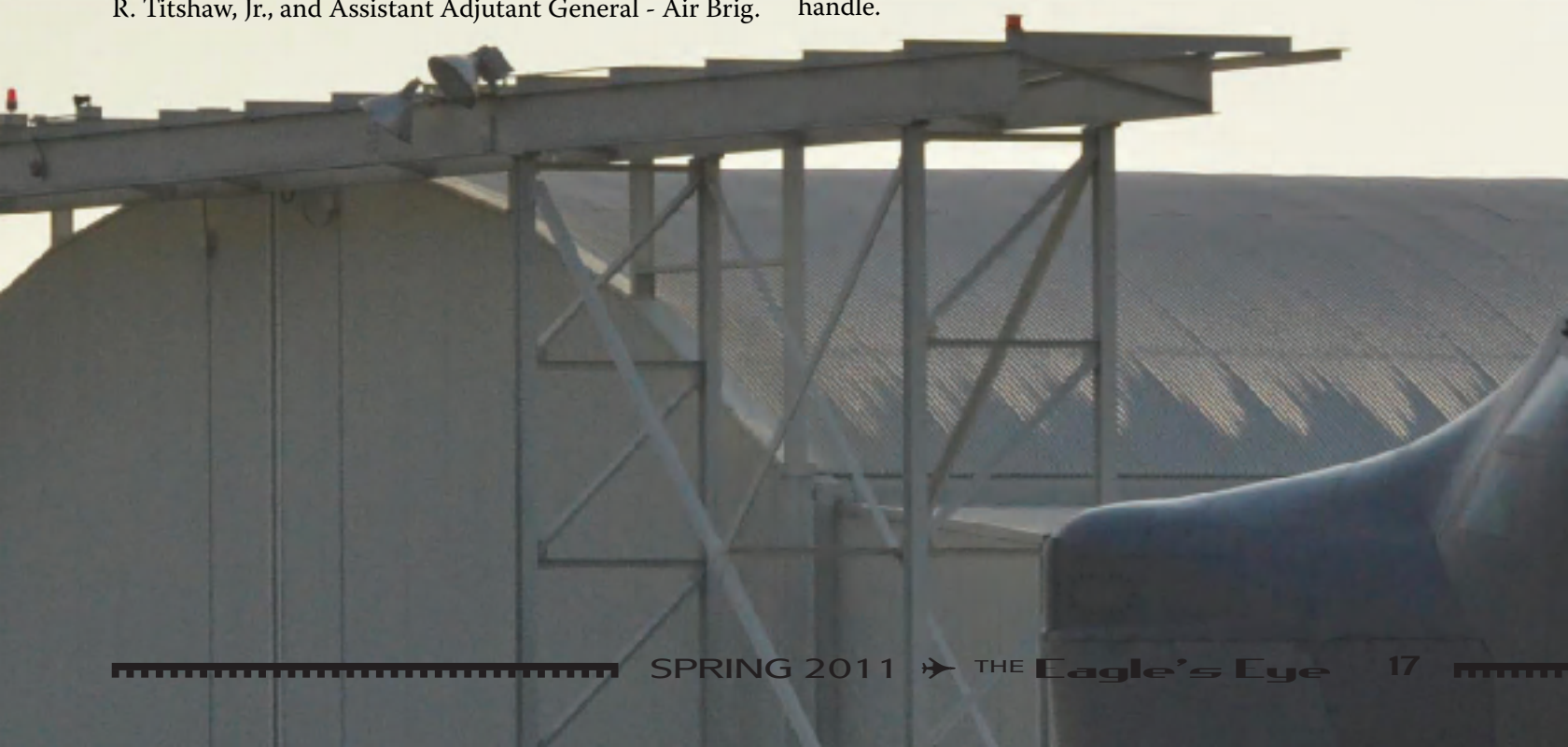
To conclude the tour, Gov. Scott recognized and personally thanked four Airmen for their performance and contributions during the Wing's recent deployment to Saudi Arabia. The Airmen were: Tech.

Sgt. Gregory Moss and Staff Sgt. Jacob Neer from the 125th Maintenance Group; Tech. Sgt. Corey Blue, 125th Communications Flight; and Senior Master Sgt. Bobby Shuler, 125th Security Forces Squadron.

The Adjutant General of Florida Maj. Gen. Emmett R. Titshaw, Jr., and Assistant Adjutant General - Air Brig.

Gen. Joseph Balskus were also present for the visit.

The 125th Fighter Wing maintains and flies F-15 fighter aircraft at Jacksonville and provides air defense for the southeastern United States, from Charleston, S.C., to the southern tip of Florida and across the Florida panhandle.



Operation Integration: *Florida first responders join forces for emergency exercise at Camp Blanding*

Story & Photos By
Master Sgt. Thomas Kielbasa
Florida National Guard Public Affairs

More than 250 emergency responders from multiple Florida agencies donned hard hats, hefted shovels and picks, and came together this week for a yearly exercise designed to keep citizens safe throughout the Sunshine State.

On March 8 the Florida National Guard hosted the third annual “Operation Integration” at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center; the focus of the day-long exercise was to integrate the emergency response skills of various agencies into a scenario simulating a large-scale natural disaster.

“This is all for one purpose: to serve the people of Florida,” said Capt. Gene Redding of the Florida National Guard.

Redding, and a team of Soldiers and Airmen from the Guard’s CERF-P (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package), worked side-by-side with other state and local emergency response experts during the “Operation Integration” scenario held at Camp Blanding’s urban disaster training area.

In the scenario a series of tornadoes ripped through a major metropolitan area during rush hour, destroying several buildings and a chemical plant. Victims – por-



trayed by role-players from the Florida Youth Challenge Academy – littered the rubble and were in desperate need of medical attention.

According to Redding the scenario is realistic: “We have severe weather here in the state of Florida. Certainly the people that live in Florida are no strangers to that.”

Participants included Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) task forces, hazardous materials experts and medical technicians from agencies including: Seminole County, Lake County, Clay County, St. Johns County, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the State of Florida, and several local fire-rescue teams.

Redding said this year is slightly different than the past two similar exercises hosted by the Florida National Guard. He explained the National Guard is integrating more with local and state first responders as opposed to the active duty military teams they’ve worked with in the past.

“These are the people we are most likely to work with in the event of a disaster,” he added.

Top Right Photo: Members of the Florida National Guard (left and center) discuss emergency recovery operations with a representative from Central Florida Urban Search and Rescue (Task Force 4) during the “Operation Integration” exercise.

Bottom Left Photo: Sgt. John Ryon of the Florida National Guard uses a camera to search for trapped victims during “Operation Integration.”



114 ROPS, A CLASSIC ASSOCIATION

By Tech. Sgt. R. Brian Mongold
114th Range Operations Squadron

So far, 2011 has been a spectacular year for the 114th Range Operations Squadron (ROPS). Following its fifth Outstanding Unit Award (third in a row), the team also received a 45th Space Wing Team Award for the Transportable Communications and Telemetry System (TCATS).

TCATS provides space-vehicle position data during launches and has the capability to destroy off-course launch vehicles, ensuring the public remain safe. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of TCATS is in its' ability to adapt to any launch mission. It can be transported by land, sea, C-5 Galaxy and C-17 military cargo aircraft.

The technology is truly amazing, but it's the 112 members led by Lt. Col. Todd Oller, commander of the 114 ROPS, who have dedicated countless hours to the TCATS. This elite organization has developed countless policies and procedures and training materials. They are tirelessly working to certify members in their respective crew position.

The 114 ROPS members have consistently displayed excellence in all facets, beginning with education and training. Annual Training was fully revamped



to provide in-depth instruction and execution of both career field and TCATS crew positions.

Training provided during AT has been extensive and progressive. Monthly UTAs are used as a continual extension of this training with classroom instruction, followed by hands-on activities.

The unit is comprised of many superstars, including former FLANG Airmen of the Year selectees Tech. Sgt. Kristian "K2" Kobilis, Master Sgt. Dan Alonso, Chief Master Sgt. Bob Lee, Tech. Sgt. Mark Farmer, Tech. Sgt. Doug Henry, Master Sgt. Melissa Merideth, two-time



winner Tech. Sgt. Dan Flores and current Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Tech. Sgt. Penny Pippin.

Needless to say, the 114 ROPS has taken every challenge that has come its way and gone above and beyond the call of duty each time.

In addition to the TCATS capability, the team offers launch experience that is unmatched. Just last year, Master Sgt. Greg "Jonesy" Jones surpassed the 100 launch mark, a feat unheard of in space operations. Additionally, the team flawlessly shadowed the Delta IV Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite P, a defining moment which proved to be the final task necessary to obtain Eastern Range operational acceptance by Air Force Space Command.

All of these accomplishments led Brig. Gen. Joseph Balskus, commander of the Florida Air National Guard, to recently comment that the 114 ROPS is becoming a "classic association," where operating with a standard of excellence is the norm.

While 2011 has been an outstanding year for the 114 ROPS, they will not rest on their prior accomplishments. The leadership, coupled with a deep sense of pride, camaraderie and professionalism, have helped the 114 ROPS become a "classic association."



Top Right Photo – Brig. Gen. Burke "Ed" Wilson presents the Outstanding Team Award to members of the TCATS team during the 2010 Annual Awards Banquet.

Middle Left Photo - Tech. Sgt. Kristian "K2" Kobilis and Tech. Sgt. Dan Flores man the Telemetry System Operator (TSO) station.

Bottom Left Photo - Following setup of the TCATS, 114 ROPS Airmen prepare to shadow the Delta IV launch.

159th Weather Flight turns the page

By Master Sgt. Nick Barnhardt
159th Weather Flight

Earlier this year, the 159th Weather Flight (WF) said goodbye to one of its founding fathers. On March 5, Master Sgt. Dave Brown retired from the Florida Air National Guard (FLANG) after more than 23 years of service.

What sets his retirement apart from most is that Brown was present on Dec. 15, 1992, when the 159th WF was activated and federally recognized as a numbered weather flight. He is the last of that original group of fourteen charter members to depart the 159th WF.

Brown began his weather career back in November 1971 when he entered the Air Force as an Airman First Class. After basic training, then Airman Brown went to Chanute Air Force Base, Ill., to receive his initial training as a weather observer. Since then he has served in all corners of the globe, with active duty time at Fort Knox, Ky., Camp Casey, Korea, and Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. During the Global War on Terror, he proudly served at Fort Campbell, Ky., Hunter Army Air Field, Ga., and Incirlik Air Base, Turkey.

In between his active duty Air Force and Air National Guard stints, Brown also excelled outside of the military by obtaining his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology

from Marshall University in 1980.

Many Airmen have journeyed through the 159th WF in the past 19 years, and most have fallen under Brown's guidance on their progression through the ranks. His wealth of experience and calm delivery were a staple of drill weekends and annual training periods that both officers and enlisted members alike came to rely on.

Lt. Col. Steven Longobardi, commander of the 159th WF, stated, "Sergeant Brown's dedication and love for the weather career field kept him in the program he loved for a career that spans 23 years. It says a lot for an Airman to stay in a career field for his entire enlistment, and it exemplifies what being a member of the Air National Guard family is all about."

Brown's devotion to the flight knew no distance, as he continued to travel to drill weekends even though his civilian employer relocated him to Huntington, W.V., in 2008.

Master Sgt. Dave Brown will forever be known as the last of the "originals;" a mentor who started the flight and helped build it from the ground up to what it is today. It goes without saying that his exit will leave some big shoes to fill, and thanks to his tireless efforts and tutelage, he has prepared his fellow Airmen to do just that.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

By Capt. Jennifer Hunt
Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, Florida National Guard

The Department of Defense, the military services and the National Guard observed the seventh annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) in April 2011. This important observance serves as a reminder and raises awareness concerning the most violent and underreported crime in the United States and military services today, with more than 3,158 cases reported in FY10 across all services. This is believed to be only 80 percent of actual cases.

This year's theme continued from last year and was "Hurts one. Affects all. Don't Let Your Guard Down." It serves as a reminder that Servicemember on Servicemember assaults are not only damaging to the individual but to the entire National Guard family. It destroys the very vital trust shared amongst our Soldiers and Airmen and destroys the cohesiveness and effectiveness of units within our organization. Sexual assault amongst our ranks cannot and will not be tolerated. All servicemembers, regardless of rank or position, are duty bound to safely practice bystander intervention when possible.

The Florida National Guard (FLNG) took the opportunity to observe SAAM 2011 through collection and donation of much needed items to local Rape Crisis centers. From April 15 through the first week of May, FLNG units were asked to establish donation centers at their local armory or wing. Members of the FLNG were invited to donate items such as hygiene supplies, clothes, canned foods, toilet paper, diapers and baby food, which were then collected and delivered to a designated local Rape Crisis Shelter. This drive not only raised awareness about sexual assault but also provided much needed supplies to community partners that have provided assistance to many of our Soldiers and Airmen in the past.

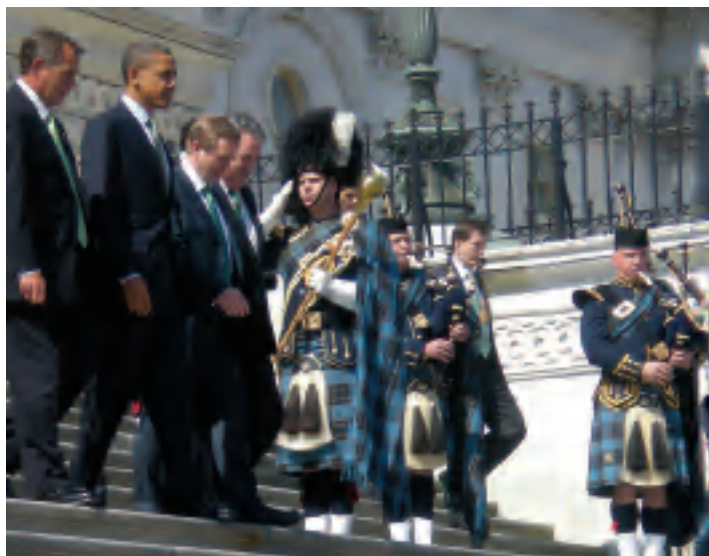
Sexual assault is a horrendous crime that has no place in the Florida National Guard. If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, please have them contact the Joint Force Headquarters Sexual Assault Response Coordinator for assistance at (904) 823-033, (904) 482-2347 or toll-free at (877) 816-3893.

By Staff Sgt. George Black
125th Fighter Wing

Piping for the President

Being a musician sets you apart. Drummers, guitarists, piano players – all are part of a special and talented group who can bring music notes on a page to life. Me – I play the bagpipes. While it may not come in very handy at a sing-along around a campfire or at a party, my ability with this unique and under-appreciated instrument provided me with an exciting opportunity most musicians never get – to play for the President of the United States.

I started playing bagpipes in 2003 when I moved to Cincinnati for college. I had always had an interest in the bagpipes, but it wasn't until then that the opportunity to take lessons presented itself. I seized the chance, and after about a year of formal instruction, I had learned enough to earn a spot with the Cincinnati Caledonian Pipes and Drums. Since then, I've been hooked.



Members of the USAFR Pipe Band play for President Barack Obama on the steps of the Capitol.

For the past few years, I have played with a local group called the City of Jacksonville Pipes and Drums, a not-for-profit teaching organization. In 2009, I contacted the former pipe major of the United States Air Force Reserve Pipe Band, retired Master Sgt. Scott Gunn, with a question about wearing the USAFR tartan kilt during a performance. As luck would have it, he was interested in picking up new pipers for the USAFR Pipe Band, and I auditioned for him on his next visit to Florida.

So in early 2011, when the new pipe major put out a call for pipers to perform at the annual St. Patrick's Day ceremony in Washington, D.C., I immediately volunteered. I was lucky enough to be one of the 12 musicians – nine pipers and three drummers – selected to participate in this special detail.

A month before rehearsals started, I was issued an

official set of USAFR bagpipes to practice on so that I could become comfortable with them before the big day. When the time came, I reported to Dobbins Air Force Base, Ga., to begin several days of rehearsal with the other members of the detail. Our instructor, Donald Lindsey, put us through hours of tough rehearsal and taught us that the best way to prepare is to "practice not to fail."

We boarded a C-130 on March 15, bound for Andrews Air Force Base, Md. Upon our arrival, we conducted a final rehearsal to ensure that all the kinks were ironed out and we were all on the same sheet of music – pun intended.

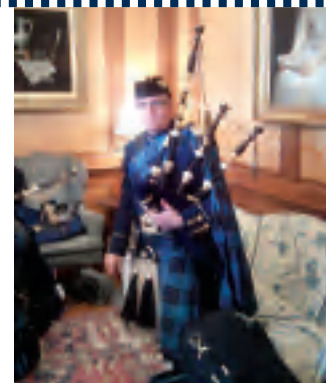
On the morning of St. Patrick's Day – March 17 – we arrived at the Capitol and were welcomed into the Speaker of the House's conference room. We played our first set – "God Save Ireland" – as the President, Vice President, Speaker of the House and the Irish Prime Minister all arrived at the Capitol for their St. Patrick's Day luncheon. We returned to the Speaker's conference room while they met, and lined up again on the steps of the Capitol to play "Let Erin Remember" as the President and distinguished guests departed.

During the afternoon, we traveled to the White House, where we performed at the East Wing entrance for more than 600 guests arriving for the annual St. Patrick's Day reception. As we played for approximately 45 minutes, senior government officials and military leaders, celebrities and other distinguished guests arrived to the sounds of our pipes playing ensemble and solo selections. Despite my nerves, I was able to play my solo – "Lord Huntley's Cave" – without any mistakes.

Later that night, we marched into the grand entrance of the White House to perform for the guests. After playing the famous tune "When Irish Eyes are Smiling," we marched out while playing "The Minstrel Boy."

After our performances, we were able to shake hands with President Obama and the First Lady, who congratulated us on excellent performances and posed for a group photo with the band.

Overall, it was an incredible experience. Although playing for such an important audience made us all a bit nervous, the tough rehearsals helped us come together as a band and made us all more comfortable and confident. It was definitely the highlight of my bag-piping career so far!



SSgt. George Black decked out in full regalia before his White House performance.

125FW Participates in Weapons System Evaluation Program

Photos & story by
Maj David Shachter
F-15C pilot, 125th FW

The Air Force conducts a live fire air-to-air weapons system test and evaluation known as Weapons System Evaluation Program (WSEP) at Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, Fla.

The WSEP stated objective is to “evaluate the entire fighter weapon system - from aircrew to machine to weapon.” In doing so, WSEP provides critical test data for the Air Force, the results of which validate air-to-air missile strengths while uncovering limitations. The program provides critical data needed to validate and tweak employment tactics.

WSEP is comprised mainly of engineers, contractors and a handful of system experts. However, there are no dedicated aircraft assigned to the WSEP mission. The program instead relies on the Department of Defense fighter force to travel to Tyndall AFB and participate in live fire tests. For this reason, the 125th Fighter Wing recently sent nine “Golden Eagle” F-15Cs and 133 Florida Air National Guard (FLANG) pilots, maintainers and support personnel from Jacksonville to Tyndall AFB.

The 159th Fighter Squadron F-15Cs were recently upgraded with the newest air-to-air radar in the Air Force inventory, the APG-63V3, commonly referred to simply as the “V3.” The 159th FS is the first and only operational F-15C squadron to employ this cutting edge Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, with

other Air Force fighter squadrons scheduled to upgrade in the future.

Additionally, the 159th FS’s entire fleet recently underwent a significant software suite upgrade. Similar to the V3 upgrade, the 159th FS was the first Air National Guard squadron to implement this new software.

Both the V3 radar and the software suite upgrade went through developmental and operational testing prior to release to the 125th FW. However, WSEP provided a unique opportunity for the FLANG to validate the Air Force’s newest F-15C hardware and software.

The 159th FS did just that Jan. 24 – Feb. 4, testing weapons performance from the ammunition storage area, through loading, shooting, and missile flyout. WSEP enabled newer members of the 125th FW to gain experience handling and firing live weapons. Furthermore, the 125th FW had the opportunity to fly Gen. William Fraser III, the commander of Air Combat Command, during a missile shoot. This allowed Fraser to observe FLANG professionalism while witnessing the upgraded capabilities of the 125th FW F-15Cs.

By the end of the two-week trip, the 125th FW flew 122 sorties. Along with incentive and training flights, the 125th FW fired 22 Air Intercept Missiles, using both AIM-9 heat-seeking missiles and AIM-120 active radar missiles. Pilots gained in-depth missile system knowledge, maintenance proved their combat capability, WSEP engineers gathered valuable F-15C test data and the 125th FW F-15Cs verified that when called to combat, Air Force air-to-air missiles will find and “splash” their targets.



An F-15 from the 125th FW flies a mission during WSEP at Tyndall AFB.



As part of WSEP at Tyndall AFB, an F-4E flies a mission over the Florida panhandle.

Yellow Ribbon: Florida Air Guard preps families for unique deployment

By Capt. Lisa Browne Banic
Florida National Guard Public Affairs

Airmen from the Florida Air National Guard's (FLANG) 202nd RED HORSE Squadron based in Camp Blanding volunteered to deploy on short notice to Afghanistan, their command took notice.

While deployed for Operation Enduring Freedom as heavy equipment operators, the Airmen will be focused on their mission, and the RED HORSE leadership knew they shouldn't have to worry about the families they leave behind. In order to address any family issues prior to the mission, the Airmen gathered for a Yellow Ribbon deployment briefing Jan. 22 in Orlando, Fla.

Congress approved and funded the Yellow Ribbon programs for the first time in 2008 to provide Guardsmen with reintegration resources supporting their families, their communities and their non-military jobs. This program was one of the first in Florida to help Air Guard members and their families before they deploy.

"You've got to figure out who is going to be left behind and how one person will do the job for two back home," said Col. Wallace J. Paschal, commander of the 202nd RED HORSE and advocate for the Yellow Ribbon Program.

"Providing this as a pre-deployment program helps give families a better idea of what to expect before their loved one leaves," he explained.

Many Guard families have a steeper learning curve than active duty families in coping with the absence of their military family member.

In America's Duty: The Imperative of a New Ap-

proach to Warrior and Veteran Care, Nancy Berglass, director of the Iraq Afghanistan Deployment Impact Fund and non-resident senior fellow for the Center for a New American Security, argues in November 2010 that

the strength and viability of an all-volunteer force is undermined when the health and well-being of its members are not being adequately addressed by the U.S. government.

Wendy Layton, Yellow Ribbon Program coordinator, and the daughter and wife of National Guardsmen, said the Air Guard leadership is learning that a tailored National Guard deployment process is needed to address the unique family and non-military aspects of their day-to-day life that active duty doesn't face.

Yellow Ribbon events generally take place near the city where the unit is located. Representatives from local veterans' centers, businesses, schools and workforce centers

provide participants with local information tailored to their area.

Since its inception, the program has continued to change to meet the needs of the Soldiers and Airmen throughout multiple deployments, extended conflicts and an economy in recession by bringing in services and resources to address emerging issues.

Since 2008, the Florida National Guard has conducted more than 50 Yellow Ribbon events across the state, serving more than 8,000 Guardsmen and family members. For additional information on the Yellow Ribbon program visit their website at www.floridaguard.army.mil/programs/ribbon.aspx.



AOC spouse named 'Lynn Haven Citizen of the Year'

By Angela Pope
AFNORTH Public Affairs

She has four sons – three are autistic and one has a speech delay. She works tirelessly to help other families with autistic children through the non-profit organization she founded and directs. She oversees fundraisers and awareness campaigns. She does all this while refusing to take a salary.

Because of her efforts within the community, Helen Ezell, wife of Tech. Sgt. Joseph Ezell of the 601st Air and Space Operations Center, was named Citizen of the Year for the city of Lynn Haven, Fla.

"I didn't even know I had been nominated, so it was a complete shock," Mrs. Ezell said.

Her nomination was submitted to the city by family friend, Rebecca Dickerson, who also works with Mrs. Ezell.

"Helen began her journey into the world of autism approximately eight years ago," Ms. Dickerson wrote in her nomination letter. "This began a very long and, at times, very frustrating odyssey for Helen and her family. When the Ezells looked around, they realized they had no idea where to go or who to turn to for the help and support their family so desperately needed. It was in response to this that Helen decided to open the Autism Education Center."

Mrs. Ezell said she opened the center for special needs children because Bay County needed it. Moreover, her family needed it.

"I am driven by my sons' needs first and foremost. No one in the county could help them," she said. "No one had all the services they needed under one roof. I decided I could either sit at home and moan about it, or I could get up and do something about it."

Described as a 'one-stop autism shop' by some of the parents who have used it, the AEC in Lynn Haven offers medical, therapeutic, educational and instructional programs which were created to deal specifically with an autistic child's age and delay.

Mrs. Ezell, a former behavioral health nurse, took to working with special needs children rather easily.

"I work with approximately 30-50 special needs kids weekly," she said. "I am very comfortable with them. And while my job may not be easy, I love it."

The challenges of her job extend far beyond working with autistic children. The center has no major sponsors, which means operating on a shoestring budget from time to time.

"I've had to do therapy sessions in the dark with flashlights when we couldn't pay the center's electricity bill. The kids loved it though!" Mrs. Ezell said. "We also worked with no water when we couldn't pay that bill, so we just lugged in bottled water for the kids. We just do what we have to."

The entire staff works for no wages, choosing instead to return every bit of money to the AEC.



Lynn Haven, Fla., Mayor Walter T. Kelley presents Helen Ezell with a plaque commemorating her selection as the city's Citizen of the Year. Mrs. Ezell is the founder and director of the Autism Education Center in Lynn Haven. (Courtesy photo)



Helen Ezell, founder and director of the Autism Education Center in Lynn Haven, Fla., conducts therapeutic listening with 6-year-old Mandela Carson at the center while her 5-year-old son Riley Ezell watches. Because of her efforts with the AEC and within the community, Mrs. Ezell was named Lynn Haven's Citizen of the Year. (U.S. Air Force photo by Angela Pope)



Helen Ezell, founder and director of the Autism Education Center in Lynn Haven, Fla., shows a speech therapy card to 5-year-old Erika Mickle during a therapy session at the center. Because of her efforts with the AEC and within the community, Mrs. Ezell was named Lynn Haven's Citizen of the Year. (U.S. Air Force photo by Angela Pope)

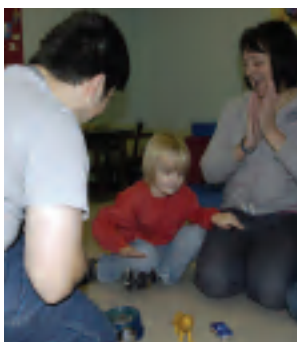
A few years ago, when the center was still just a vision, a family loss gave Mrs. Ezell the money she needed to get going.

"The initial \$5,000 I put down to start the AEC came from my grandmother's estate, and I think she would've been proud that I chose to use it that way," she said. "She might have kicked me for my next decision though – I went from a high-paying nursing job to receiving no paycheck whatsoever. But I've never been happier!"

Somehow throughout all of her pursuits, Mrs. Ezell found time to chronicle her experiences with autism in a book titled "Four Princes – A Journey." In the book, she details how her sons' multiple autism diagnoses nearly destroyed her, yet she found peace with it. Though she hasn't found a publisher for the book, she hopes to someday.

"I want to get this book out there so other families with special needs children can see what is possible if they roll their sleeves up and just get on with it!" she said, adding that she is currently working on a second book.

Mrs. Ezell doesn't think she's done anything extraordinary.



Helen Ezell, founder and director of the Autism Education Center in Lynn Haven, Fla., applauds for her 5-year-old son Riley Ezell as he works with Jesse Slappey, a behavioral therapist at the center. Because of her efforts with the AEC and within the community, Mrs. Ezell was named Lynn Haven's Citizen of the Year. (U.S. Air Force photo by Angela Pope)

"I do what I think parents of special needs children must do – I work hard and look after my children," she said. "I never realized the AEC and all of my efforts would become such a big deal, but I am thankful for the experience. I have grown tremendously from doing this."

Her husband is thrilled with her recognition.

"I'm extremely proud of my wife and humbled at the same time," Sergeant Ezell said. "She thoroughly deserves this award more than any one person I've ever met in my lifetime, and the fact that she chose me to be part of her life humbles me daily."

During the award ceremony, which was held Jan. 25 in Lynn Haven, Mrs. Ezell was overcome with emotions as Mayor Walter T. Kelley spoke of her accomplishments and struggles.

"I've had the pleasure of watching Helen in action, and there is no one more dedicated to the cause of autism than she is," Mayor Kelley said. "She's that type of person who never has 'free time' because she is always focused on making the lives of autistic children in our community better. She is a shining example of what 'selflessness' really means."

Through it all, Mrs. Ezell summons up the energy each and every day to educate parents and caregivers on the struggles that children with autism face, and she also knows the realistic and exhausting toll such drive and determination can take on a person.

"The ceremony brought me to tears," she said. "It was very hard to hear about my life and my sons' struggles read out loud in public, but I am extremely grateful for this award. I know I couldn't have done all of this on my own."

She added, "I have beautiful children, an amazing husband, supportive friends and colleagues, and strong family ties," Mrs. Ezell said. "I thank all of them for helping me. I'd especially like to thank Beca Dickerson, Michelle Hall and Lindsay Carson who work on a daily basis at the center, and to William Keeley who runs the Monday night adult program. Without these amazing people, this wouldn't be possible."



Helen Ezell, founder and director of the Autism Education Center in Lynn Haven, Fla., works with 5-year-old Erika Mickle and her father Erik Mickle during a therapy session at the center. Because of her efforts with the AEC and within the community, Mrs. Ezell was named Lynn Haven's Citizen of the Year. (U.S. Air Force photo by Angela Pope)

A Model Partnership for Success

By Maj. John H. Waltbillig, Jr.
Weather Readiness Training Center Commandant

General William M. Fraser III, commander of Air Combat Command (ACC), recently visited Camp Blanding Joint Training Center (CBJTC) for the purpose of observing the new Battlefield Weather Mission Qualification Training (BWMQT). The BWMQT course combines combat training operations for battlefield weather Airmen while simultaneously instructing weather task qualification training, taking full advantage of the primary military reservation and training base of the Florida National Guard.

The ACC commander was accompanied by Maj. Gen. Emmett R. Titshaw, Jr., our Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Don Tyre, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army, and Brig. Gen. Joe Balskus, the Assistant Adjutant General - Air and Florida Air National Guard (FLANG) commander. Also attending was Dr. Fred Lewis, the Director of Air Force Weather and the Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations, Plans and Requirements, Headquarters U.S. Air Force.

The 93rd Air Ground Operations Wing (AGOW) and the Florida Air National Guard's Weather Readiness Training Center jointly facilitate each BWMQT course, which lasts 11 weeks and trains approximately 18 combat weathermen who will go on to gather and interpret weather data and provide intelligence from deployed locations while serving as members of Air Force Special Tactics teams with U.S. Army Special Operations Forces.

"This is a tremendous joint program and I am ex-



Soldiers and Airmen take part in Battlefield Weather Mission Qualification Training at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center near Starke, Fla.



cited the Air and Army Guard is working together to provide this specialized training," said

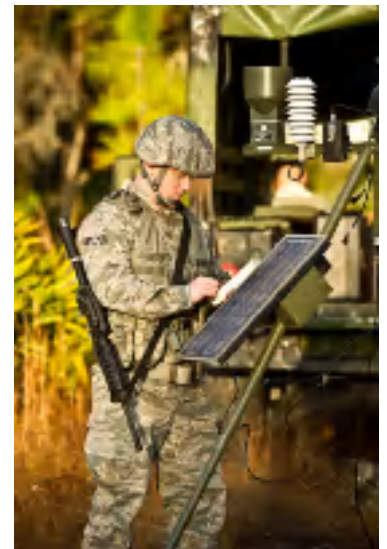
Titshaw. "I feel the Army 11 Bravos are preparing these weathermen to be able to survive combat situations and feel confident in skills formerly very unfamiliar to them."

Maj. John Waltbillig, WRTC commandant, agreed.

"The WRTC staff and Air Force Adjunct instructors have worked seamlessly with the Florida Army National Guard's 211th Regiment Instructors to provide Air Force and Reserve Component students optimal training that is essential to total force integration for deployments downrange in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, New Dawn and other various Army support taskings," he said. "This joint force initiative continues to showcase the skills of the Florida National Guard as a Center of Excellence."

Fraser was given a briefing on how, in cooperation with ACC, the WRTC provides a standard, repeatable, total force battlefield weather training solution. The WRTC is responsible for instructing BWMQT students on High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) operations and tactical meteorological equipment. This training provides locally defined mission specific and commander directed requirements. The ACC commander was also given a tour of Camp Blanding that culminated in an actual walk-through of the field training exercise, requiring a complete wear of protective gear to include helmet, goggles and flak vest as he and Titshaw walked through the wooded training area.

The ACC commander finished by addressing the students and instructors and shaking hands with numerous Air and Army personnel. "This training is pertinent to all Airmen who deploy and integrate with Army units," he said. "It is highly important that we become assets, not liabilities."



RED HORSE ROUND UP

By Staff Sgt. Bill Nicholls
202nd RED HORSE

The 202nd RED HORSE Squadron (RHS) is halfway through an enhanced training and deployment program geared toward making the unit more versatile.

Col. Jack Paschal, 202nd RHS commander, said a variety of deployments are necessitating increasing training, leading to new capabilities.

“We had a team of Navy nuclear specialists here in January, who briefed us on time, distance and shielding – the three essentials for surviving a nuclear incident. If you prepare properly and follow protocol, you can survive and accomplish the mission,”

he said. “There used to be a lot of ‘rad-phobia’—people assumed you were a goner if you were exposed, but that is not true. Maximizing time, distance and shielding and seeking immediate medical care afterwards can save lives.”

Airmen from the 202nd RHS will also be heading to Augusta, Ga., in June for another round of Chemical, Biological Radiological, Nuclear—Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF) Training. The Georgia assignment will be a Command Post Exercise (CPX) in which the 202nd RHS will support Army ground forces in a CCMRF

scenario. Route reconnaissance utilizing engineers, electricians and utilities experts will be the major activity, in addition to having Air Guardsmen in the Command Post.

Paschal explained that this sort of realistic training helps prepare the unit for real-world scenarios they may face in the future.

“If we have to go to Japan or any other disaster site, we want enough fully trained people to go in there and get the job done,” he said.

Three on-going deployments are also in progress for the 202nd RHS, including a community betterment project in Deming, N.M.

Staff Sgt. Troy Casserotti, a heavy equipment operator who assisted with Deming upgrades, explained that the project would help the local community.

“We helped build a 47-acre retention pond. Flooding is a big problem out there. The retention pond will stop

the streams from flooding houses,” he said.

Casserotti also said the project provided valuable training for members of the 202nd RHS.

“We also got in some good stick time for dump truck drivers, excavator and loader operators by helping to cover a sanitation site, in addition to constructing a ball park for the kids,” he said. “It was a very satisfying project, in terms of really making a big difference to help the local community.”

Additionally, groundbreaking ceremonies were held April 5 in St. Michael, Ariz., for 202nd RHS construction efforts that will result in a new classroom building for 70 disadvantaged Navajo Indians. The St. Michael’s project is scheduled for completion in September 2011, and will help local children enhance their education through use of the new building, as well as some remodeling of existing structures.

Lastly, 202nd RHS Airmen will soon be involved in a long-range project in which materials from a mountain

will be utilized to surface a hard road in Newtok, Alaska. Due to weather extremes in the area, multi-layer roads have to be built on top of “perma-frost” material to withstand hard use and low temperatures. Demolition experts from the unit will detonate sections of a mountain, and then use the material from the mountain in road construction. Some

of the extreme challenges facing the Florida team will include cold weather, wind chill, and transporting equipment more than 1,000 feet in altitude.

All of these deployments and training opportunities help the 202nd RHS become an even more skilled and adaptable unit, capable of responding to any mission they are called to in the future.



ONCE, OR ONCE AGAIN

By Lt. Col. Loretta J. Lombard
290th JCSS Commander

The 290th Joint Communications Support Squadron is in the fight again. On various dates between February and April this year 32 personnel boarded airplanes for multiple locations within the Central Command battle zones to spend the next six months providing communications support to the Joint Task Forces engaged throughout the theater.

With only 190 personnel in the unit, it is the first trip for some, but a second, third, fourth or more journey for many. I like to refer to them as our “repeat defenders.” The dedication to serve is equally strong, be it for the first or fifth tour.

So what is it like? Why do they go? What are they thinking about while they are away? Even though this is Staff Sgt. Gerald “JJ” Mastrovito’s fourth deployment, it is a new experience for him and Staff Sgt. Joseph Michael. They are teamed at a remote site in Afghanistan with few military members and even fewer trees.

“All I see are rocks and sand,” Michael said.

The air is so clean and the night so silent, it is easy to forget there is danger just steps away.



Staff Sgt. Joseph Michael and Staff Sgt. Gerald Mastrovito perform a maintenance check on equipment at their remote site in Afghanistan.

“It is very beautiful; the stars are crazy,” Mastrovito said. “I mean on a clear night I can look up and see millions of them.”

But they don’t forget. Nor do they forget their families back home. Michael said he enjoys the time spent ‘round the fire telling stories of home, family and the funny experiences and irritations of deployment. Mastrovito thinks of his daughter and how the softball season is going.

They both said they’re thankful for the communications services they are there to provide. Access to the internet for video chat and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phones help keep them in touch with family.

“My wife texts me updates from the games. Softball is a slow game, so I pretty much get updates in real time,” Mastrovito said with a hint of a giggle.

When asked why he was there, Michael said it wasn’t for the money or his career but was really about his duty to his fellow Guardsmen and his dedication to serving his country whenever and wherever they needed him to be. Mastrovito sympathized and said they each push each



Brig. Gen. Balskus encourages the 290th deployers during a ceremony at the MacDill Base Theater in January 2011.

other to be better Airmen.

“It’s hard because we all have other jobs and businesses that count on our expertise, it’s hard to leave them, but the memories and friendships are worth it,” Mastrovito said. “We have a common bond now.”

This is the first desert deployment for Senior Airmen Rebekah Davison and Justin St. Vincent. Why go?

“Because, I’m a person that follows my heart, and my heart was telling me that it was my time to contribute,” Davison said.

For St. Vincent, he said it’s the opportunity to experience defending his country. He left behind college, his civilian job, and his fiancé, whose mother is in chemo treatments.

Davison attends the local chapel and has the support of fellow Airmen since she is at one of the larger bases. St. Vincent is in the mountains of Afghanistan and said he will never be able to forget the snow, cold and jagged terrain when he returns to warm, flat Florida. He also said he’s 100 percent certain that communications is a necessity for success in war. So in response to why go, Davison summed it up for them both.

“There is nothing more satisfying in my heart than to do my part in serving our wonderful nation in its time of need,” Davison said.

Brig. Gen. Joseph Balskus, commander of FLANG, would nod his head to that statement. He speaks frequently about how being part of the Guard waits the “all-clear” signal during her last deployment to Camp Liberty in 2007.



Master Sgt. Courtney Howard-Kirby waits the “all-clear” signal during her last deployment to Camp Liberty in 2007.

Guard being part of us – in our heart, not just our mind or body.

As for our other repeat defenders, Master Sgt. Courtney Howard-Kirby is on her fourth deployment, while Master Sgt. David Greagrey is performing his third tour in the desert but his first as NCO in charge of a team. And then there is Master Sgt. Timothy Maczuga, who has lost count of all the deployments in his active duty and Guard career.

Each of them knows what it means to leave family to serve the greater good. Howard-Kirby's children are a little older this time, one in sixth grade and another a college freshman, but she is still concerned about leaving them with Dad and Grandma. Even from the other side of the world, she still maintains a lot of control and contact with emails to teachers, online bill pay and tracking homework via the school website. It's hard for a mom to leave the family behind while deployed.

Dads can have it rough, too. Greagrey is a single father and his nine-year-old daughter is staying with his



Senior Airman Justin St. Vincent checks the calibrations on satellite dishes I as part of his regular maintenance duties while deployed in Afghanistan.

mom during the deployment. However, he said he's comforted by the assistance of loved ones.

"Between family, friends and the 290th family who would drop whatever they are doing to assist in any matter that arises, my concerns are minimal," Greagrey said. "That is invaluable in being able to focus on the mission."

Greagrey deployed to Joint Base Balad in Iraq where he was deployed in 2006. Being in charge this time, though, he said is a whole new ballgame. He said he gets tickled by the first-time deployer who gets so excited to wear body armor and Kevlar helmet on a full C-130 flight and then looks so dejected when he find he will be sitting in that overcrowded, smelly aircraft for hours without reprieve.

Maczuga, or "Mac", is one of our full-time staff members. He volunteered to deploy to stay on the leading



Senior Airman Rebekah Davison practices establishing communications with the TACSAT antenna.

edge of what is changing in the Area of Responsibility (AOR) and to be better prepared to lead and foster the development of unit members in the early stages of their careers.

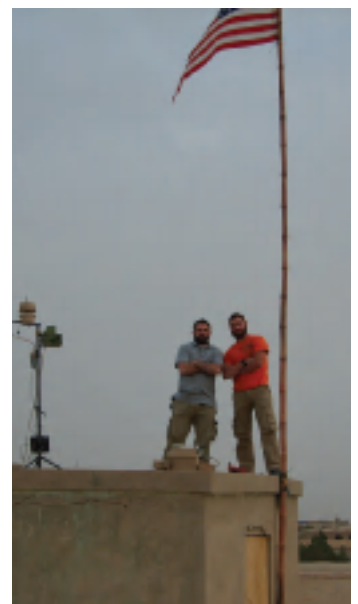
Maczuga has two small daughters at home with his wife. He encourages them and his mother-in-law, who is battling cancer, using video teleconferencing, Skype, Facebook and email to lessen the distance between them.

"Stepping outside of our comfort zones with new responsibilities and challenges even makes the most seasoned deployers appreciate the stability and comfort of routines," Maczuga said. "Seeing the younger troops become shining stars and allowing them to benefit from the mentorship that only us 'old guys' can lend is fast becoming the best memory and reward of this deployment."

Those are sage words from a seasoned repeat defender.

So that's what it is like. That is why they go. That is some of what they are thinking about. They are just a few of the faces and voices of the hundreds of American heroes in the desert this year – all dedicated souls with the Air National Guard flowing through their hearts.

Our admiration, prayers and maybe a few care packages, go out to each and every one of them until they return. Thanks, or thanks again.



Staff Sgt. Gerald Mastrovito and Staff Sgt. Joseph Michael proudly stand by "Old Glory" after ensuring their comms equipment is good-to-go in Afghanistan.

601st Recognized for Excellence

By Capt. Jared Scott
601st AOC Public Affairs

The 601st Air and Space Operations Center (AOC) here was recently named the First Air Force Outstanding Command and Control Unit for 2010 for its involvement in two of the largest disaster recovery efforts in United States history.

"2010 marked a big year for America's AOC, facing new challenges like the earthquake in Haiti and the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico," said Col. Randy Spear, 601st AOC commander. "No matter what the task at hand, America's AOC was prepared to take on the challenge."

On Jan. 12, 2010, an earthquake hit the small island nation of Haiti. Port-au-Prince's main seaport was destroyed and most roadways were left impassible, leaving the Toussaint Louverture International runway the only access to provide relief to the Haitian people.

With the airfield's control tower destroyed and a huge increase in aircraft arriving from around the globe to provide desperately needed supplies, the runway at the airport quickly became unmanageable.

The 601st AOC Air Mobility Division was able to create and provide an airflow management plan allowing the small airport that normally sees an average of 25 flights per day to accommodate approximately 130-175 flights per day during relief operations.

"Before the AOC stepped in to support relief operations there were literally hundreds of aircraft headed to Port-au-Prince," said Col. Brad Graff, 601st AOC AMD chief. "That influx in air traffic resulted in many of those aircraft being diverted to other airfields due to lack of ramp space. Twenty-four hours after we took the helm the number of aircraft diversions were drastically reduced to virtually zero."

By Jan. 30, 2010, more than 13,800 American citizens had been evacuated, 18,346 passengers relocated, and 9,712 short tons of cargo and supplies delivered.

Relief efforts in Haiti proved to be just the beginning of 2010 for the AOC, and provided valuable experience for what lay ahead.

Following the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010, senior Department of Defense and Homeland Security officials decided to

centralize airspace management operations in the 601st AOC.

The Joint Aviation Coordination Command (JACC) was created to ensure the safety and efficiency of aircraft in the temporary flight restriction (TFR) area over the gulf. Air operations Center personnel provided crucial airspace expertise enabling 17 federal agencies to identify, skim and burn millions of gallons of oil. During response operations the TFR saw several hundred aircraft a day and covered 20,000 square miles.

"The decision to move the Joint Aviation Coordination Command to the AOC made sense," said Colonel Spear. "Centralizing airspace operations at the AOC allowed the JACC to de-conflict flight schedules of aircraft operating in the TFR, ensuring maximum coverage and safety with minimum overlap of effort. The airspace management expertise at this AOC, along with the ability to access shared databases, common operating pictures and full



Located in the 601st Air & Space Operations Center at Tyndall AFB, Fla., Aviation Coordination Command airspace managers coordinate airspace activity on the ACC Operations floor. The ACC was created to provide support to the U.S. Coast Guard during Deepwater Horizon Response air operations.

motion video, had a huge impact on response operations."

The 601st AOC's Intelligence & Reconnaissance Division worked closely with the ACC director, providing him satellite imagery to help locate surface slicks, recover spewing oil, and minimize environmental impacts.

The AOC also provided the air defense support to seven special security events in 2010, including the State of the Union Address, Super Bowl XLIV, United Nations General Assembly, Nuclear Security Summit and three Space Shuttle missions.

"America's AOC is home to some of the sharpest members the military has to offer," said Chief Master Sgt. Lynn Boop, 601st AOC chief enlisted manager. "In this AOC there is no such thing as a typical mission; each mission presents a new set of challenges, which we consistently overcome and conquer. Whether it's coordinating ramp times in Haiti, providing imagery to first responders, resolving airspace issues over a disaster area or flying air patrols on Super Bowl Sunday, the men and women of this organization will not falter, and we will not fail!"

The 601st AOC is responsible for detecting, deter-



Maj. Gen. Garry C. Dean (left), Continental U.S. NORAD Region-1st Air Force (Air Forces Northern) commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Joseph Thornell (far right), AFNORTH command chief, present a trophy to Col. Randy Spear (second from left) and members of the 601st Air and Space Operations Center, which was selected as the Command and Control Unit of the Year for 1st AF. The 601st AOC was among the many honorees during the organization's annual awards banquet Feb. 24 at the Horizons Community Center at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. (U.S. Air Force photo by Lisa Norman)

ring, defending and if necessary, defeating any aviation threat to the citizens of the continental United States and to U.S. critical infrastructure.

Along with this award, several AOC members received numerous awards and high accolades for exemplary performance, including the 2010 Air Force Chief of Staff Team Excellence Award and several best practice awards.

"There were several deserving units, including the Eastern and Western Air Defense Sectors, up for this award who all demonstrated meritorious service over the normal call of duty," said Colonel Spear. "The men and women of America's AOC have worked very hard this past year and award or no award, I am extremely proud of the job they do every day."

The 1st Air Force Outstanding Command and Control Unit for 2010 award was presented to AOC leadership at the 2011 First Air Force Annual Awards Banquet held here Feb. 24.

For more information on America's AOC and its mission visit www.facebook.com/AmericasAOC and become a fan today.

Chaplain's Corner

*By Lt. Col. Steven E. Thompson
125th FW Chaplain*

One of the strengths of the members of the National Guard, both Army and Air, is that we are sure, stable and steady. Our ongoing relationships with our co-workers, our tasks and our equipment give us a unique edge. We know our people and we know our purpose.

Some might wonder if our familiarity with our mission and those who make it happen breeds a bit of stagnation. They may think that perhaps the Guard is a little less dynamic than the revolving door world of our active duty counterparts. Obviously, those folks have never worked alongside a Guardsman!

Flexibility is the key to airpower. We live it every day. Whether interpreting the weather or working in it, purchasing missiles or tracking their flight paths, building runways or packing parachutes, turning wrenches or turning out ID cards, intercepting enemy aircraft or halting computer viruses, giving shots or praying for those who are getting them, we all show up for work and begin making adjustments before finally getting it done. Guardsmen are resilient and bring an essential ability to adapt to every task, every time. We are a steady, flexible and unwavering force that can effectively fight with you and, if you give your wingmen a chance, can successfully fight for you. That leads me to our Air Force's "101 Days of Suicide Prevention," which run from April 1 to July 10.

Let me encourage you to be an encourager. Care enough to care. Let others notice you noticing. Know how to know about your people. For these 101 days followed by the next 264, exercise your soul on behalf of a fellow Airman going through a tough time and if necessary, let them exercise their souls for you. Ecclesiastes 4:12 reminds us that a cord of three strands is not easily broken. You, God and your wingman form a rope of hope. Join me in holding on when we need to and helping out at all times. Together we will all pull through!

Additionally, I would like to welcome our new chaplains!!! Two godly men are in the process of becoming part of our team. Chaplain Major Emile Hawkins is coming our way via the Oklahoma Air National Guard. He is married with children, has a Ph.D. in Strategic Leadership and teaches at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla. Chaplain Hawkins is a published author, terrific preacher and a blessing to be around.

Chaplain 1st Lt. John Williams is brand new to our unit and the Air Guard. He too is a professor with an earned doctorate degree. Chaplain Williams teaches Greek at Trinity Baptist College in Jacksonville, Fla., and is a gifted musician. I am sure that you will enjoy getting to know and serving with both of these men.

God Bless You!

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