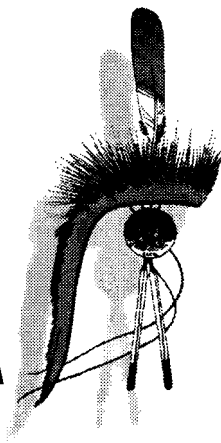


KANZA!

SPIRIT

931ST AIR REFUELING GROUP



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McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas

December 2001

Reservists cope with call-up transition

By SrA Robert Sperling
Air Force Reserve Command PA

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga.— Reservists called to active duty to support Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle are finding a renewed sense of purpose and patriotism as they answer their country's call.

"After the Sept. 11 terrorist attack, I was the only one of my college classmates that was able to be a part of the response," said a senior airman assigned to an Air Force Reserve Command unit from Charleston AFB, S.C. "It is a great feeling to be a part of something good."

In addition to their contributions to America's war on terrorism, the more than 9,000 reservists who have been called up since Sept. 20 are receiving additional pay and benefits while in active-duty status. Their entitlements include increased military pay, basic allowances for housing and subsistence, Continental United States cost-of-living expenses, and medical and dental benefits for themselves and their families while activated.

An activated reservist receives pay based on years of service and grade. For example, a technical sergeant with more than 18 years of service gets \$2,421.30 a month plus basic allowance for housing and basic allowance for subsistence. Current pay tables are available at www.dfas.mil.

A Reserve technical sergeant with the 917th Civil Engineer Squadron at Barksdale AFB, La., said, "The change in pay from

civilian life to active duty has been a respectable increase."

While on active duty as a fireman, he is augmenting the active force's 2nd CES at Barksdale and will receive approximately \$40,800 annually. In civilian life, where he is also a fireman, he makes approximately \$22,800 a year after his retirement and medical benefits are withdrawn. Some allowances are not taxable for people on active

duty and their medical insurance and retirement benefits are not withheld from their paychecks.

Mobilized reservists receive the same medical and dental coverage as their active-duty counterparts. Their families become eligible for TRICARE benefits depending on the duration of the sponsors' active-duty

See Transition Page 7



Spirit Photo/Tech. Sgt. David Brumley

Honor Guard

Staff Sgt. Nathan Parks, Senior Airman Alice Medina, Tech. Sgt. Randy Brown and Tech. Sgt. Roxanne Howard, members of the 931st ARG Honor Guard, practice for the team's upcoming performance at the NCO Induction Ceremony during the December UTA.

Commander thanks troops

By Lt. Gen. James E. Sherrard III
Commander, AFRC

WASHINGTON—One positive outcome of this year's tragic events is the way you have stepped forward to serve your country in its time of need. Whether as a volunteer or one of thousands called up to defend American soil or take the war to the terrorists, you have demonstrated great courage and resolve during these grave times.

Your ability to serve is possible only because of the support and sacrifices made by your families and employers. They too are helping America and Air Force Reserve Command fight terrorism and protect our way of life.

As we celebrate the holidays and look forward to a new year and the hopes that it brings, let us remember the words our commander-in-chief spoke Oct. 17 to troops and families at Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

"We are determined," said President George W. Bush. "We are patient. We are steadfast. We are resolved. We will not tire, and we will not fail. The cause is just. And we will win."

Marsha and I wish each of you, wherever you might be in the world, the best of the holiday season.

May peace and joy find your families as well while you safeguard the freedoms and blessings of the United States. God bless each of you and God bless America.

931st busy, thankful during holidays

By Col. Jim Bouska
931st ARG Commander

Happy Holidays.

I can't believe it is already December and yet another year has gone by. I wish all of you the best during this season. In fact, as your commander I require you to have a good time and be with your families as much as possible.

First, let me take a moment to reflect on this holiday time and the reason we celebrate Christmas. Let's also be thankful for a country that allows us the freedom to celebrate as we choose.

It has been a very busy year even prior to September. However, I am extremely proud of how everyone in the 931st has stood up to all the new requirements.

So far, our flight crews are participating at almost twice the normal rate, all on a voluntary basis. We also have several people who have volunteered for long tours (30 days or more) to help out other organizations. But what some of you may not realize is that we now have or soon will have four individuals who

have been mobilized for one year. We need to thank them and to support them and their families during this very trying time. **Thanks!**

As busy as this year has been next year will continue in the same vein. Some of the upcoming events for the 931st are:

- Sunday of the December UTA we will be having an NCO and Senior NCO induction ceremony. It is very important we recognize and applaud these individuals for their dedication and work to achieve these grades and what they bring to our unit in experience and time.

This ceremony will also be the premier performance of our own 931st Honor Guard. Following we will have a reception in Signatures at Emerald City where we can take time to honor these people and to spend some holiday time together before it gets really hectic. Besides the food is free.

- From January 9 - 13, which includes our UTA, we will be having 4th Air Force on station to give us a Staff Assistance Visit. This will be a team of between 50 and 60 individuals from all functional areas. I know

there is "always danger from above", but having been on about 10 SAVs myself I know the only dangers are those we allow to happen and don't try to fix ourselves. We need to take care of the team when they are here as if they are part of the 931st family and remember we are all working together to improve the performance of our unit.

- We are tentatively planning a formal 931st Dining Out on Saturday of the April UTA. We are looking for speaker suggestions and hope to have the AFRC Band for our entertainment. The location will be the Emerald City Ball Room. Hope to see you, your spouses, and guests there.

There are many other things happening in the coming year. Some will be fun things and some not so fun things. But as long as we pitch in and work together nothing will stop us.

Earlier, I mentioned that there is a lot to be thankful for. I want you to know that besides being thankful for my God and my family, being the commander of the 931st family is right at the top of my list.

Happy Holidays and God Bless you all.

KANZA
SPIRIT THE AIR FORCE GROUP

Vol. 6, No. 11

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Deadlines

The deadline to submit articles and newsbriefs for publication is the 20th of each month.

Legal info

This funded Air Force newspaper is an authorized publication for member of the U.S. military services.

Contents of the *Kanza Spirit* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or the Department of the Air Force.

Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the 931st Public Affairs Office.

All photos are Air Force photos unless otherwise indicated.

Chaplain's Message

Immanuel — God with us

By Chap. Charles Peters
931st ARG

In the stable at the inn in Bethlehem cattle breathed softly in their slumber.

A virgin mother had brought forth her child and laid him in a manger. An angel appeared to a shepherd, and a multitude said, "Glory to God!" What a moment! What an hour! "God with — Immanuel!"

It staggers our imagination to believe that God himself became a man in the person of his Son.

The word "incarnation" comes from the Latin word "incarnates," meaning to be made flesh; hence, it means to give actual form, to make real, to become identified with.

Christianity has its roots in the deep, firm soil of history. The doctrine of the incarnation means that God came down amid the uproar and confusion of this world.

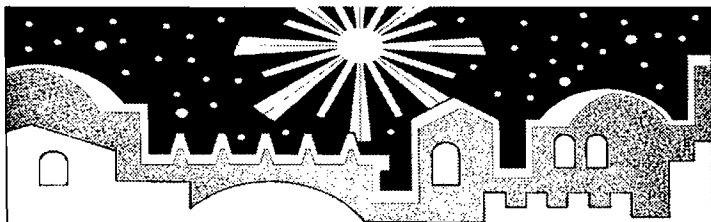
It means that God is capable of participating in our pain, our suffering, our conflicts and our sorrows.

His love is not just a vague theory sung in ancient verse or proclaimed by shepherd mystics of the backcountry, but is real, vibrant and realizable to us today. He came to the world that we might know that God has an absorbing interest in the way we live, the way we believe and the way we die.

He came to demonstrate to us that God and people belong together.

He came to mend the gap that had separated creature from the creator, and all this he did for you and me because God loves us.

May you have a most blessed Christmas, not because of the gifts that you might receive, but because of "Immanuel — God is with us." No one word can bring us so much comfort, peace and joy.



Silent Night, Holy Night

Officials name reputable relief agencies

The following relief agencies were named by the Department of Defense for those who wish to donate to victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon:

- Army Emergency Relief Society, Pentagon Victims Fund, (703) 325-0463, www.aerhq.org.
- Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society, Pentagon Assistance Fund, (703) 696-4904, www.nmcrcs.org.
- Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund, (303) 933-7580, www.feea.org.

Spirit Spotlight

Sen. MSgt.

Eric H. Osen

931st Civil Engineer Squadron

This month's Spotlight selectee is a Diamond, Mo., native and has been in the military for 20 years. He served 7 years active-duty in the Marines and has 13 years in the Air Force Reserve.



Job title:
Utilities Superintendent

Civilian job: Certified Water Treatment Plant Operator

What I'm reading now:
T. E. Lawrence The Seven Pillars Of Wisdom

What I'm listening to now:
"The Tragically Hip"

Favorite way to relax:
Exercise, Visit With Friends, and Drink Beer (But not always in that order)

Easiest way to annoy me: here are so many ways, how can I pick just one...

Most influential people in my life: My college professors. The liberals for telling me how it should be and the conservatives for telling me how it is

If I won \$1 million, I would:

1. Purchase Family Medical Coverage
2. Leave Civilian Job With A Smile
3. Finish Building My House
4. Work On The Family Farm
5. Sign Up For As Many CE Deployments As I Darn Well Please!



Around the Air Force



Reserve Affairs helps during call-ups

By Rudi Williams

Am. Forces Press Service

The military can't build a bridge, fly a tanker or air defense sortie or do much of anything without help from the National Guard and Reserve. That's because the reserve components make up nearly 50 percent of the total armed forces, according to Craig W. Duehring, principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

So far, more than 40,000 guardsmen and reservists have been called up to reinforce active duty units participating in Operation Enduring Freedom. Some are freeing up active duty servicemembers for overseas duty while others are being deployed overseas.

The citizen-soldiers from all the services, including the Coast Guard, are doing everything from law enforcement, medical and intelligence to combat air patrol, air refueling operations and port security operations.

When Enduring Freedom started, reserve affairs officials composed rules and guidelines giving units ideas and directives about the mobility process and their time on active duty. This information is available on the reserve affairs website at www.defenselink.mil/ra/

"We get a lot of questions from servicemembers and their families who are going through this very disruptive process," Duehring said. "To help them,

we've created a family tool kit on the website, where you'll find answers for virtually every issue that could possibly come up."

There are answers for everything from pay questions to the duration of a mobilization, to emergency contacts while the military member is gone.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. P.J. Farlin
Senior Airman Mike Filliettaz, a crew chief from the New Hampshire Air National Guard's 127th Air Refueling Wing, prepares to fuel a KC-135R Stratotanker in support of the Operation Enduring Freedom.

There is also information about handling problems before servicemembers are called up.

"How long?" is probably the first question reserve component personnel and families have been asking, Duehring said.

"Not exceeding 12 months," he said. "That doesn't mean they're actually going to stay on active duty that long, but this was our best guess as to what we thought was reasonable for publishing the orders. It also allows servicemembers to take advantage of some of the medical pro-

grams that have 'tripwires' to cross before they can activate them."

However, he said there would be exceptions to the 12-month rule on a case-by-case basis.

The call ups for Enduring Freedom have been an "unsettling time" for guardsmen and

"Every military organization has a family support center to help families cope with the absence of servicemembers," he said. "Family members can go to the closest military facility — and don't worry if it's a Navy facility, an Air Force or an Army facility, they'll be the same. You can get your questions answered there if you'd prefer to talk to somebody face to face."

Mobilization pay and allowances are handled exactly the same way as for active duty members. For example, guardsmen and reservists called up can take up to 30 days' advance pay to cover unexpected bills that might crop up before they have to leave. But, primarily, pay and allowance issues should be the same as those of active duty members. Duehring said members can pay back the 30-day advance in installments.

Duehring said college students who are called up should contact the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, or SOC, for help in solving any problems they may encounter.

"We've been absolutely flooded with telephone calls, e-mails and letters from people who wish to volunteer their services in defense of their country," he said. "But we don't have an organized program for volunteers at this time." He suggested those who want to volunteer discuss the possibility with their service's reserve personnel centers.

reservists and their employers, Duehring said.

Servicemembers and employers seeking information can call 1-800-336-4590, or tap into the employer support website at www.esgr.org. People with questions that are not answered on the website can call the reserve affairs public inquiries line at (703) 693-8617.

Help is also available for reserve component personnel and their families at several places around the country, Duehring said.

Spirit Shorts

Military Personnel Flight hours

The core hours of operation for the MPF are: Mondays through Fridays—7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; UTA Saturdays—8 a.m.-4 p.m.; and UTA Sundays—10 a.m.-4 p.m. The MPF will be closed Dec. 8 for a Squadron Holiday Luncheon from noon-1p.m.

Airman Leadership

FY '02 dates have been announced. Senior Airmen with 48 months time in service are eligible to attend ALS. Interested members may contact Group Training for further information.

New PME Credit

The new ALS via correspondence, course 01, has been evaluated and is now worth 8 hours of credit. Those enrolled on Jan. 3 or later will automatically receive this PME credit upon course completion.

Family Support

The McConnell Family Support Center provides free seminars on a variety of topics each month that members may attend. To schedule, call 759-6020.

ART Orientation

Newly hired enlisted ARTS should attend this course within their 1st year of being hired. It is now an in residence course, held at Robins AFB, GA. The next class is March 5-6. Contact your unit training manager or Group Training to request a slot.

SGLI and Forms

Reservists are requested to check their Emergency Data

Card and Serviceman's Group Life Insurance form once a year. For information, call Ext. 3458.

NCO Leadership

Class dates from both Tinker and Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base (Carswell) are available. Interested staff sergeants and tech sergeants can contact Group Training for information.

Need to outprocess?

If you need to out process for TDY, reassignment or retirement, keep in mind that on UTA weekends the Military Pay Office (Traci or Dee) is only open for business on Saturdays from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. For information, contact Tech. Sgt. Anick Wallace at Ext. 3665.

Admin Training

The MPF is closed each Sunday of the UTA from 7:30 a.m.-10 a.m. for in-house training. Classes are held in the TNET, Rm. 217, and all administrative personnel, 3A0X1 and 3S0X1 are welcome to attend.

MPF Training

MSgt Kasl will provide training for all 3As and 3Cs on Saturday of the UTA. The location is Bldg. 850, in Rm. 217, from 1:30-3:30 p.m.

One-Stop Travel Pay

Effective Oct. 1, all members of the 931st are now required to turn in completed travel vouchers to Reserve Pay at the time they file AF 938, travel orders. FM will then review the travel voucher for accuracy, log it in to be tracked, and turn it in to 22nd ARW Travel Pay.

It is expected this will expedite

timely processing of vouchers and cut down on the amount of rejected and lost vouchers. For questions, call Traci Teachout at Ext. 3615 or Mary Borst at Ext. 3657.

Family Support

The McConnell Family Support Center provides free seminars on a wide variety of topics each month that 931st members may attend. To schedule, just call 759-6020.

Employees Retain Benefits

Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act of 1994, reservists who are mobilized may keep their employer-sponsored health-care coverage for

up to 18 months.

Employers may continue to provide coverage at no cost to the employee.

However, if the employer requires the member of the Reserve or National Guard to pay the whole tab, coverage could be cost-prohibitive for many families.

An employer may require the employee to pay the entire premium cost plus a 2 percent administrative fee if the employee is absent for more than 30 days.

For members who elect health care for their families under Tricare programs, USERRA allows them to return to their civilian employer insurance plans with no waiting period or penalty for pre-existing conditions, other than service-connected conditions.

Induction ceremony, Christmas social slated

Admiral Bull Halsey once said, "There are no great men, just great circumstances, and how they handle those circumstances will determine the outcome of history."

The 931st ARG has approximately 47 members who have demonstrated patriotism, valor, and ability. They have been selected to join the ranks of noncommissioned officer and senior noncommissioned officer.

All are invited to Emerald City Dec. 9 to welcome these inductees. An invitation will be mailed to inductees and their families; all others will need to see their squadron representative to sign up themselves and their families.

Immediately following the ceremony the ARG/CC will be hosting a Christmas social. The event is free to all. There will be an array of food, drinks, and fellowship.

Keep in mind the current events around the world may dictate the agenda however, the tentative schedule is as follows:

Noon-1 p.m. Induction ceremony

1 p.m.-3 p.m. Christmas social

*All events in the Emerald City gymnasium.

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Staying safe during winter

The Federal Emergency Management Agency provides tips on preparing for "Old Man Winter."

Before severe weather arrives, here are some things that you can do to prepare.

- Store radio, flash light, and extra batteries where you can get to them easily
- Keep cars and other vehicles fueled and in good repair
- Get a NOAA Weather Radio to monitor severe weather
- Know safe routes home
- Know how to turn off the gas, electric power, and water to your home

During any storm or emergency...

- Monitor your NOAA Weather Radio or local radio and/or TV station.
- If you leave your home for any reason, tell others where you are going

After a Storm...

- Report Downed Power Lines
- Inspect for physical damage to property
- Check on neighbors or anyone who may need help

This and more information about winter preparedness is located on the FEMA website at www.fema.gov.



Veterans Day

Spirit Photo/AIC Edina Reyes

Master Sergeant Charles Smith (right), 931st Chief of Security Forces, talks with Maurice Ecker during a visit to the Wichita Veterans Administration Hospital Nov. 12.

Smith and Master Sergeant Brian Lawley, 931st AGS, were part of a group of McConnell's Top Three Association who commemorated Veteran's Day by visiting the hospital and talking with veterans like Ecker, who was a member of the Navy during World War II.

The Top Three Association is a service organization made up of the top three enlisted ranks. Any Master Sergeant and above is eligible to join.

Transition

Continued from Page 1

orders. To help families of reservists activated for Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom, DoD has waived TRICARE deductibles for care received since Sept. 14.

More information about these benefits is available at www.defenselink.mil/news and www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/default.htm

The activation of reservists has caught some families off guard.

"Our command staff had to set up a support chain for all of the reservists and their families who were unfamiliar with all of the new benefits available to

them and to assist them as they transition to active duty," said a lieutenant in a security forces squadron in the western U.S.

"The majority of my troops are in good spirits and are very excited to be able to participate in such a worthwhile mission and wish that they could do more," said the SFS operations officer. "We have had troops in our squadron who either recently separated or were about separate reconsider their decision and reenlist just to be a part of this mission."

Reserve personnel called to active duty are protected by federal law under the Uniformed Services Re-employment Rights Act of 1994. USERRA provides service members, upon release

from active duty, the right to return to their former position or one of similar status, seniority and pay. USERRA applies to involuntary and voluntary duty. For more information concerning USERRA, log on to www.esgr.org

Reservists and their families are heeding their country's call to arms and doing their best to make a difference. However, for some, the transition to active-duty military pay and benefits has not been an easy one.

Some corporations are stepping up to cover monthly health insurance premiums and other company benefits for their employees.

The Air Force Aid Society can help activated reservists and

their families make the transition, especially if paychecks have been slow in arriving. AFAS supplies families with basic living needs, emergency travel funds, solutions to childcare problems, assistance loans and grants and more.

Married reservists and their families are not the only ones having to adjust to full-time military service. The Charleston airman was enrolled in law school on Sept. 11.

"After being activated, I had to put that on hold to pursue the needs of my country," he said. "The really great part about serving my country in this way is that the school is holding my spot in this highly competitive degree program."



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Cuomo

Operation Enduring Freedom

An Air Force B-1B Lancer crew and a B-1B crew chief from the 28th Air Expeditionary Wing discuss the maintenance log before leaving on a combat mission from an operating location in support of the U.S. Central Command execution of Operation Enduring Freedom. Crew chiefs are responsible for the maintenance, refueling, launching, pre-flight and post-flight inspections of the aircraft.

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