AIR FORCE MATERIEL COMMAND
LEADING EDGE
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People

The stars of AFMC

LEADING EDGE

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AFMC
AIR FORCE MATERIEL COMMAND

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Mission Focus

Cover stories

Cover design by Ms. Libby Van Hook, AFMC Public Affairs.

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They come in all sizes and colors, young and old, retired or just beginning their careers in the Air Force Materiel Command. They take care of their families, pursue outside interests and, in some cases, overcome obstacles that would bring others to their knees. In this annual people edition of the Leading Edge*, we highlight a few of the many talented people who make up the AFMC family.*

Special Feature

Mission Progress

Features

Departments Briefs

A baby Loggerhead sea turtle makes its way to the shore after nesting at Eglin AFB, Fla. Read about it on Page 22.

Four F/A-22 Raptors fly over the Mojave Desert during a landmark test mission conducted at Edwards AFB, Calif., Aug. 29. (Air Force photo by Kevin Robertson)

Raptors break record with seven airborne F/A-22s

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — A record-setting seven F/A-22 Raptors simultaneously filled the skies here Aug. 29 as Combined Test Force experts successfully conducted several test and training missions.

Test force experts completed the first four-ship flight test of the Intra-flight Data Link with Raptors 4005, 4006, 4007 and 4008. Along with that four-ship testing, CTF members carried out the initial operational test and evaluation with Raptors 4002, 4003 and 4009.

In all, 16 aircraft were airborne, including chase aircraft and tankers.

The mission tested the IFDL — a low-probability-of-intercept transmitter that allows Raptor pilots to automatically share flight information with other airborne crews without using radio communications, and providing pilots clear situational awareness.

It's unique to the Raptor because target information is communicated continuously between multiple aircraft, reducing its vulnerability to radar and infrared threats.

— Reported by AFFTC Public Affairs

AFRL awards contract to defend cybersecurity

ROME, N.Y. — The Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate has awarded a contract with BBNT Solutions of Cambridge, Mass., to develop technology for the enhancement of cybersecurity.

The 18-month agreement, "Proactive and Predictive Cyber Indications and Warnings," will produce technology to support the intelligence community's Advanced Research & Development Activity. It is expected to develop a method to identify, quantify and test "observables" for impending cyber attack.

This will support development of a "theory of observables" for advanced cyber indications and warning. A theory of observables will identify observables not only for individual novel attacks, but also for patterns that indicate whether a larger-scale campaign is in progress.

— Reported by AFRL Public Affairs

Global Hawk returns from German deployment

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — The Air Force's Global Hawk Unmanned Aerial Vehicle — a high altitude, long endurance, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platform — returned home from a successful three-week deployment to Germany, according to program officials.

Landing at the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB, Calif., after a 21.6-hour, transatlantic flight, Global Hawk Air Vehicle No. 1 completed the program's first deployment to Europe.

While deployed Oct. 15 through Nov. 6, the Global Hawk system completed six sorties for a total of 29 flight hours. The sorties focused on demonstrating increasing levels of interoperability between the Global Hawk system, a German exploitation ground station and a German electronic intelligence sensor developed by the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Co., Friedrichshafen/Ulm, Germany and integrated by prime U.S. contractor Northrop Grumman Corp., San Diego, Calif.

— Reported by ASC Public Affairs

Global operational testing enhances tanker mission

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — The Air Force's acquisition of the KC-135 Global Air Traffic Management system entered a new phase by conducting an operational test of the modified aircraft during recent worldwide flight tests.

Members of the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center, Detachment 5, tested the KC-135 during an around-the-world tanker flight, while concurrently flying four additional GATM-equipped KC-135s at Fairchild AFB, Wash., from the end of September through mid-October.

The around-the-world KC-135 flight included four air-refuelings designed to simulate a real-world Air Mobility Command mission. Operational testers sought to ensure the new GATM system would merge with the tanker's unique mission — air refueling to enhance the Air Force's capability to accomplish its global mission, and demonstrated the interoperability of the GATM system with established air traffic control structures in 17 different flight information regions.

— Reported by AFFTC Public Affairs

AFRL composite advances lead to air duct solution

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Materials research scientists and engineers from the Air Force Research Laboratory's Materials and Manufacturing Directorate designed and prototyped a new polyimide cover for B1-B bleed air ducts.

The ducts connect the aircraft's engine bleed air to a heat exchanger, and the cover is critical to keeping volatile fluids from reaching a duct's hot surface, a situation that could prove catastrophic to flight operations.

Ogden Air Logistics Center, Hill AFB, Utah, began manufacturing and producing the air duct covers at their high-temperature capable production facility in January 2003. The B1-B System Program Office plans to place the parts on the aircraft on-site as they are delivered, so the project could be complete by July 2004.

— Reported by AFRL Public Affairs

Around the command

☆☆☆☆ Gen. Greg Martin

Logistics key to future conflicts

Logistics. It's absolutely essential if we want to win a war. We all know that. Conversely, one of our own favorite targets is often the other guy's logistics.

So we all agree that logistics is vitally important. Why, then, do we have so much trouble defining it? After all, roughly half this command was once Air Force Logistics Command.

The box in the middle of this page gives you three definitions to start with.

To shed more light on narrowing down exactly what the men and women of the Air Force Materiel Command mean by logistics, we can look at recent conflicts and lessons learned from them.

Learning lessons

Going back to Operation Allied Force, our leadership sought lessons learned and then boiled a phone book-sized document down to five vectors that would dramatically improve the way our Air Force fights.

The first was to **get real-time information into the cockpit.** B-2s were flying 17 hours each way to put bombs on target, but a lot can change on the ground in that much time.

Likewise, C-17s air-dropping food to refugees need to see any fast-moving changes to the battlespace.

Those are just two examples, but real-time information in the cockpit can be the difference between life and death — for us, for our enemies and for noncombatants.

A second vector was to **develop technologies to complement stealth.** Eventually, our enemies might figure ways to counter stealth, but we can delay or prevent that if we continue to develop technologies that enhance it.

Developing **smaller, more precise weapons** was a third direction. We can lessen collateral damage if our weapons are lethal enough to neutralize the target we must take out, but not so big that they destroy everything around it.

Fourth, was to **involve senior leaders, military and otherwise, in our exercises and wargames.** We will never be effective joint and coalition force members unless we practice together and our top people understand the needs, concerns and motivations of everyone involved.

Definitions of 'logistics'

- ***Webster's Dictionary*** *— The aspect of military science dealing with the procurement, maintenance and transportation of military materiel, facilities and personnel.*
- ***Joint definition*** *— The science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces.*
- ***Anonymous logistician's*** *— Moving the right items to the right place at the right time in the most efficient manner.*

The last vector was to **more formally develop our command and control** above the tactical level. Making the air operations center a weapon system is part of that effort.

Setting logistical goals

While those five lessons don't directly speak to logistics, they help us set logistical goals. A quick review of the five recent major conflicts since Vietnam reveal more specific logistics concerns.

Operations Desert Storm, Deliberate Force (against Slobodan Milosevic) and Allied Force, were resounding successes, but showed a need for less footprint and more rapid deployment. We took months to build up to those fights.

During Allied Force, the long supply chain and sustained operations introduced the centralized intermediate repair facilities. The repair facilities in Europe helped keep engine and major avionics parts serviced and flowing to where they were needed.

Allied Force also established the need to quickly stand up a large number of bases. We operated out of 26 bases in that war — quite a feat when you consider we had never operated out of more than half of those places.

To do that, we had to establish the base, set it up, get communications, and stock munitions, fuel bladders and everything else it takes to fight a war. Logistics people did it, but it wasn't easy, and it hasn't received the kind of notoriety it really deserves.

The current fights are Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Once again, we learned we needed less footprint and more rapid deployment.

Once again, we had to quickly stand up a large number of bases, operate from and sustain those bases. The need for global access was another requirement — nearly everything was brought in by air, an incredible feat of planning and mobility forces.

The bottom line

The bottom line for logistics after five conflicts in 12 years is the need for global access and for rapid stand-up and sustainment of bases.

No matter which of the initial definitions of logistics is chosen, those are the targets that must be tackled. We've made some huge strides in these areas, both in AFMC and the Air Force as a whole.

It's not over

However, there are still things to be done.

For instance, we need **more lethality per weapon system.** In Vietnam, we spent hundreds of flights and lost many men trying to destroy a single bridge, but never hit it. It was finally taken out by the first operational test flight of laser-guided bombs.

Now, with the B-2 dropping 80 independently targeted bombs at once, we require a smaller footprint forward. We can take down targets faster with less force, less movement and less risk than ever before.

Next, we need **more reliable weapon systems and components.** And we see even more impressive weapon systems in the future. This helps logistics on many fronts, with the most obvious simply being less maintenance.

Also, the more reliable an aircraft is, the fewer spare parts and maintainers we have to carry forward. This lightens our airlift load, both initially and throughout a deployment.

Electronic technical orders are another innovation on the horizon. They could be as simple as paperless, computer-based systems, or as advanced as voice or video instructions rather than written words.

Another advance will be **seamless strategic and in-theater movement with in-transit visibility of all cargo.** The process improvements of just-in-time delivery can be pushed forward on deployments and in combat.

Finally, smarter, faster logistics will include **automated reach back for parts ordering and status.** The decentralized advanced logistics system can anticipate and respond immediately to needs wherever they might be.

A vital mission

There is no question, regardless of the definition, that logistics is vital. Our business in the Air Force, and our success in past and future conflicts, rides on the backs of logistics and its professionals.

It might not be the most glamorous job in the Air Force, but the men and women of the Air Force Materiel Command do it, do it well and will continue to do it even better in the future.

All three AFMC Air Logistics Centers are meeting critical needs in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Top: An Air Force Engine specialist from the 28th Air Expeditionary Wing conducts routing maintenance on an air turbo starter for a B-1B Lancer. (Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Cuomo) Bottom: An Air Force crewchief conducts a door seal replacement on the wing of a B-52 Stratofortress at a deployed location in support of OEF. (Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Larry Simmons)

Stephanie and Ray Edquid pose with Dottie, a service dog in training. The Edquids volunteer as puppy-raisers for Paws With A Cause, a service dog organization and Combined Federal Campaign agency. Stephanie is an E4-B program manager at the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, and Ray is a systems analyst with a contractor at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. (Air Force photo by Dave Faytinger)

Paws With a Cause

Tinker couple fosters future service dogs

Jeanne Grimes
OC-ALC Public Affairs

McIntosh came from the streets; Greer from a local breeder. Then there was Atoka. Love came from Purina. And Dottie is a temporary placement from another foster home that did not work out.

For all their differences, the five Labrador retrievers have one thing in common — they spent their formative puppy months learning the basics of a service dog's responsibilities in the home of Ray and Stephanie Edquid.

Ray, a systems analyst with a contractor at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., and Stephanie, an E-4B program manager in the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, are puppy raisers for "Paws With A Cause."

Employees with a cause

In 1996, Ray saw a Public Broadcasting Service documentary on service dogs. During the Combined Federal Campaign, he checked the catalog of charities for one working with service dogs. He found "Paws With A Cause" and called the organization.

Ray and Stephanie researched the organization and liked what they learned. Not long after they volunteered to foster a puppy, Barbara Lewis, Paws coordinator for Oklahoma, made a home visit.

Within a week, the Edquids had their first of many foster puppies. It was the spring of 1997.

Finding a 'junk-yard dog'

McIntosh, like other Paws puppies from Oklahoma, was named for one of the state's 77 counties. She was a rescue dog who was used to scavening for food — "we called her a junkyard dog," Ray said.

But she was also bright and readily learned obedience commands like heel, sit, down, stay and come. Her socialization included months of outings to every place imaginable — restaurants, grocery and department stores and, with the approval of Ray and Stephanie's supervisors at Tinker, even the work place.

By the time McIntosh left their care months later, she was an obedient, well-adjusted and healthy dog ready for the rigors of more specialized training.

Eventually, McIntosh was placed with a Michigan woman confined to a wheelchair. The Edquids got a real sense of satisfaction that they had made someone else's life better. They also got an 8-by-10 picture of McIntosh with her new owner.

An 'Okie' dog

Greer, another Oklahoma dog who got his start with the couple, is now in Michigan training to be a hearing dog.

"We're waiting for our 8-by-10 for that one," Stephanie said.

Finding 'Love'

Love, the puppy donated by Purina, sailed through basic obedience and socialization, but an incontinence problem sidelined her service-dog career before it even started. Although the medical condition could be controlled with medication, evaluators in Michigan decided dosing the dog twice a day might prove a daunting task for someone physically challenged.

Paws officials also screen for other potential health problems. Dogs may wash out of the program for disposition problems, allergies or, like Atoka, because their hips fail to meet strict Orthopedic Foundation for Animals criteria.

Roughly 40 percent of puppies that go through the foster program never become service dogs, Stephanie said. But that does not mean the puppy raisers' work is wasted.

An interesting turn of events

Only 144 of 257 dogs that came to the charity's Michigan headquarters facility in 2001 to 2002 completed their training, said Paws officials.

Of the 113 which did not, 18 were given to the Customs Service and are now fighting the war on drugs; four went to Leader Dogs for the Blind and are now guide dogs; 14 were returned to their raisers; 24 were returned to animal shelters and subsequently adopted; and 51 became family pets.

In addition, Paws officials kept two of the washouts for the organization's breeding program.

Here Dottie learns the basics of a service dog's responsibilities at the feet of Stephanie Edquid. (Air Force photo by Dave Faytinger)

The newest trainee

Dottie, a product of that program, came to the Edquids at 7 months old.

"Dottie for us is an extended sleepover dog," Stephanie said. When Dottie's previous puppy-raiser needed surgery, a new foster home had to be found. "We don't know how long we'll have her."

Puppy-raisers like the Edquids pay all the costs associated with raising and socializing a young dog. They keep track of their expenses and, in turn, Paws workers provide the documentation so they can take a tax write-off.

But much of what they do with the puppies in their care can not be quantified in dollars and cents.

"It's a daily devotion," Stephanie said. "I start training as soon as I get them. The dogs are really smart; they want you to lead them."

The dogs become an integral part of their family, she said, and that sets puppy-raisers up for some heartache, because every puppy comes with a message: "I'm yours for 15 to 18 months, and then you have to let me go."

"It's tough; you get attached," Stephanie said.

"We both like dogs and the work dogs can do for people," Ray said.

"But you go in knowing in 15 to 18 months, that puppy is going to help someone," Ray added. "It eases the sadness, but it doesn't take it away."

Services troop tells of Iraq experiences

A hot shower never felt so good, and warm rations never tasted so delicious

Lois Walsh
AAC Public Affairs

If it's true that an Army marches on its stomach, then you can rest assured that services people will be there to feed them. That was the case recently when 96th Services Squadron personnel of Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., deployed to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

With three days notice, Staff Sgt. Shiela Leick, storeroom non-commissioned officer in charge, left for a staging area at Prince Sultan Air Base before going forward into Iraq. The task for her and eight other Eglin troops was to set up a dining facility for people already forward deployed.

Although Leick said she was "excited to deploy" and "looking forward to being part of history by going to war," she didn't know the challenges that were ahead.

Leick said she had a difficult time describing the dirt expanse she encountered after 10 days of travel to Iraq. Hitching a ride on a rescue plane brought her to the final destination.

"It was a bare base with four tents to sleep in," Leick recalled. "The command post building was run down with cardboard covering the holes in it."

Running water, air conditioning and bathrooms all became a fond memory, she said.

"We were briefed to conserve water, and we could shower 'when we get water,'" Leick said. "We would brush our teeth and wash our faces with bottled water."

Leick said she and her deployed comrades did laundry by hand with underwear hanging inside the tents when there wasn't a sandstorm. But she said she didn't complain, because "everyone was doing the same thing."

Despite the obstacles, Leick and crew hunkered down, spending their days building every single facility in a 200-plus tent city designed to hold more than 1,500 people. Among the tents was a 50-section temper tent that would eventually become the main dining facility.

Easter Sunday dinner was the first hot meal that many of the deployed forces enjoyed after weeks of meals ready to eat. British troops allowed 96th Services Squadron personnel use of their facility to prepare the meal. (Courtesy photo)

All supplies into Iraq arrived by convoy which, Leick said, slowed the process of getting the dining facility up and running. By May 1, troops said goodbye to meals ready to eat and hello to unitized group rations. UGRs were put into boiling water to give the personnel their first hot meal in more than six weeks.

"They couldn't believe that they were getting real food," Leick said. "They were definitely happy."

If UGRs could evoke such a reaction, a home cooked meal made them ecstatic, she said. Appropriately, that meal was served on Easter Sunday.

"We used the British dining hall, a bombed-out building, for that meal," Leick said. "We cooked steaks for 1,000 people and didn't turn anyone away."

Staff Sgt. Shiela Leicks, in her job as the 96th Services Squadron storeroom noncommissioned officer in charge, checks the inventory at an Eglin AFB, Fla., dining facility. (Courtesy photo)

Leick said business was slow at first until word spread that the Air Force dining hall opened. After that, they fed more than 1,200 people daily.

"We had steak and lobster on July 4 and also had birthday meals," Leick recalled. "Sometimes we'd have fresh fruit and vegetables, sometimes not."

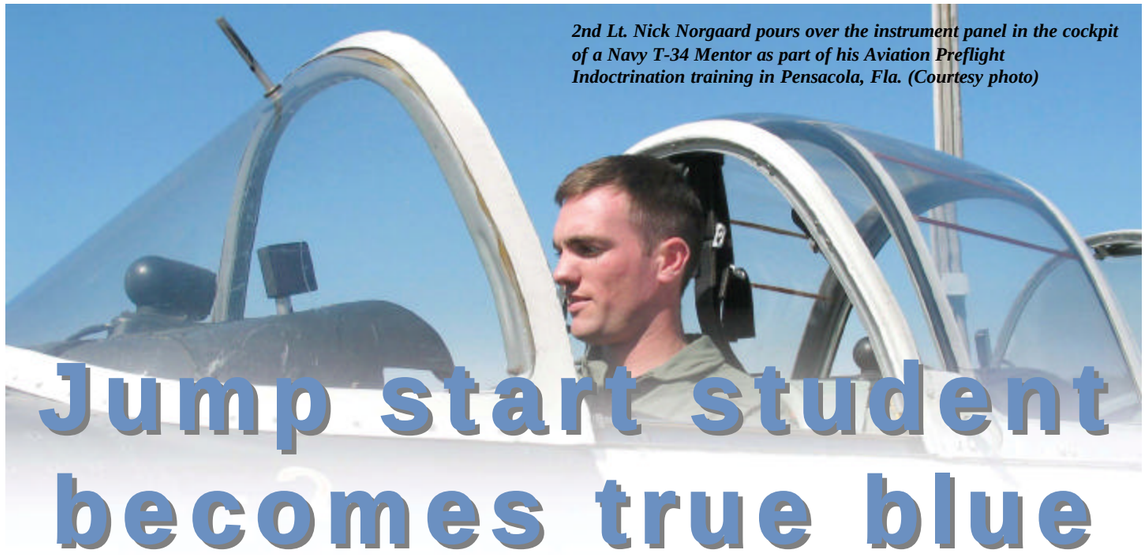
Leick said the frantic pace made the days fly by for her and her crew, who returned July 10. Leick's husband, Daniel, a master sergeant at nearby Hurlburt Field, Fla., was also deployed at the time.

She said arriving at a bare base was a learning experience, "if someone told me what (the deployment) would be like, I wouldn't have believed them."

More than anything, Leick said she cherishes her privacy now that she's back at work at Eglin. That was evident when she arrived at the hotel at her first stop on the way back home.

"I was by myself, but I locked the bathroom door, just because I could do it," she said.

Ninety-sixth Services Squadron members make up majority of first services team in Iraq. They include: Master Sgt. Frank Villa,Tech. Sgts. Gerald Sims and Conrad Pascal, Staff Sgts. Shiela Leick, Sarah Bowen, and Marcus Wilson, and Senior Airmen Jason Deomes and Nalia Bauer.



2nd Lt. Nick Norgaard pours over the instrument panel in the cockpit of a Navy T-34 Mentor as part of his Aviation Preflight Indoctrination training in Pensacola, Fla. (Courtesy photo)

Jump start student becomes true blue

Crossing into into the blue isn't a requirement of the Jump Start program, but it's a path one student chose after getting a close-up look at what the Air Force has to offer.

Second Lt. Nick Norgaard was attending the University of Central Oklahoma and working part-time as an intern in the Jump Start program when he began his civilian career with the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., in December 2001.

Toward the middle of his internship, Norgaard approached Jane Boone, Jump Start program manager, to discuss his interest in applying for Officer Training School and becoming a pilot.

"My advice to him was to talk to some of the logistics career broadening officers here on base to find out about OTS," Boone said. "With just one contact, Nick was linked to a great support system."

Tinker's Jump Start program is part of the Education and Training Partnership, a benchmark program designed to capitalize on state and local educational institutions and infuse the work force with trained employees.

Students generally enroll during their last two years of college and work an average of 20 hours per week at the GS-4 level. After graduating and completing a minimum of 640 intern hours, they are considered eligible for full-time employment in one of several career fields.

"This program is for students who have declared a major that relates to the kind of work the center does," Boone said.

Currently, 30 students are enrolled in the program and 25 graduates of the Jump Start program have integrated into the OC-ALC work force on a full-time basis.

Norgaard first learned about the Jump Start program at the beginning of his senior year at UCO. "I was looking for a job and the internship sounded great, although I really had no idea what I'd be doing at Tinker Air Force Base," he said.

He was attracted to the program because it provided flexibility around class schedules and a full-time position upon graduation.

One of the best things about the program he said, "is you get to rotate through different areas at Tinker which gives you exposure to a variety of career fields and programs."

"This gives you an idea of what you'd like to do when you're placed in a full-time position," he said. "As soon as I started working at Tinker, I developed a deep interest in military aviation. I was fascinated by the power and complexity of Air Force aircraft and eventually decided I wanted to be a pilot."

Norgaard said he had no idea what it took to become an officer or a pilot, but thought he would like to do it.

"I started doing some research online and found out there was an Officer Training School for people in my shoes," he said. "I talked to Jane and…she was incredibly supportive. She set me up for lunch with a career broadening officer at Tinker who went through OTS a few years ago," he said.

"He was a great source of information about not only OTS, but about life in the military," he said.

Norgaard told his recruiter he wanted to become a pilot. The recruiter told him to see how he did on the Air Force Officer Qualifying Test and physical.

"I did great on the AFOQT, but my vision test results were not good enough for pilot," Norgaard said. "At that point, my recruiter told me about the navigator career field and I decided that it was the next best thing to being a pilot so I applied for it and got it."

Norgaard is stationed at Pensacola, Fla., and is going through the Aviation Preflight Indoctrination — four weeks of academics and two of survival training.

"The Navy uses API as a weeding out process, so it has been very challenging," he said. "It's been a lot of fun because you get to learn so much about the other services."

Norgaard resigned his civilian position in the Jump Start program in November 2002 and went to OTS in February 2003. He was commissioned in May.

— Darren Heusel, OC-ALC Public Affairs

AFMC captain beats odds: Two sets of identical twins

Kyle Combs
AFMC Public Affairs

Capt. Betty Nieset, stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, and her husband Jason, pose with their children (from left) Kyle, Lindsay, Brooke and Joshua. (Courtesy photo)

Some people beat the odds to overcome adversity. Some win money or free vacations.

But few have hit doubles like one Air Force Materiel Command captain has done. Not only has she won two command level awards in the financial management career field and met President Bush twice — she's also given birth to two sets of identical twins.

Capt. Betty Nieset, an AFMC budget analyst at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, gave birth to twin girls Feb. 2, 1997 and twin boys June 24, 2000.

"All four children are so different that I couldn't imagine life without them," she said. "Their personalities are all their own — the only thing alike about them is their DNA."

According to the National Organization of Mothers of Twins, the odds of a woman giving birth naturally, without fertility drugs, to two sets of identical twins are about 1 out of 70,000.

Nieset's twins are a further rarity because neither side of Nieset's family has a history of twins. Her doctor said there must be something in her body chemistry that makes her eggs split after fertilization. He also said if she got pregnant a third time, she'd most likely have twins.

Capt. Betty Nieset and her children Brooke, Lindsay, Joshua and Kyle, visit with McGruff. (Courtesy photo)

Early challenges

During both pregnancies, Nieset and her husband, Jason, were surprised to learn they were having twins. In fact, when Nieset found out she was pregnant again with twins, she cried.

"I just wanted a normal pregnancy," she said.

Nieset made that wish because of a difficult first pregnancy. She started having contractions at 17 weeks when they weren't supposed to start until closer to 36 weeks.

Nieset said she had high blood pressure, gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia — a condition characterized by high blood pressure, swelling and increased risk for premature births. At one point, her doctor said she would lose the babies.

Her first set of twins was delivered nearly seven weeks early. The two girls, Lindsay and Brooke, each weighed a little more than two pounds.

Nieset said her girls were small but fairly healthy and only had to be on oxygen for three or four days, though they each were in the hospital for nearly 50 days. The girls had to be fed through tubes run to their stomachs until they were strong enough to produce a sucking motion by themselves.

"That was very trying," she said. "I felt a lot of guilt about having the girls so early, especially since I thought I was doing everything right. The nursing staff in the neonatal intensive care unit at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in Fayetteville, N.C., helped me get through a very difficult time."

Brooke and Lindsay are now healthy, 6-year-old first-graders.

The second time around

Early in Nieset's second pregnancy, she gained nine pounds in a month, and her doctor questioned the sudden weight gain. Her first ultrasound indicated the reason — she was again pregnant with twins.

Nieset said she didn't want to go through the same difficulties, so her doctor prescribed a strict diet with no salt, no sugar and no flour to control her blood-sugar levels and blood pressure.

With the help of the diet, her husband and family, Nieset made it through her second pregnancy with more ease. Her second set of twins was delivered at 33 weeks. The two boys, Joshua and Kyle, each weighed four pounds.

They are now very active 3-year-olds attending base daycare.

Handling daily life with ease

When asked how she handles raising the twins, she said, "When you have that type of situation, you just do it. You don't sit there and analyze how you do it."

And "do it" they did.

"We had eight car seats at one time, four for each vehicle because we never knew who was going to be picking them up or dropping them off," Nieset said.

Another challenge occurs when one Nieset child gets sick. It can turn into an epidemic, she said.

Well, not really — but she said until the illness passes through the family and the children's school and daycare friends, she can miss a few days of work staying home with contagious children.

Her bosses have been excellent, allowing her to take pass days, work late or start early, she said.

Outside illness, daily life for the Nieset family can be an adventure, which is why she said routine is important to them.

She and her husband stick to a specific routine, which helps their household flow smoothly. She said the twins know that after dinner they're going to take a bath, do homework, read a book and go to bed. The morning routine is fast and furious, all four children are up, teeth brushed and ready to go out the door in one hour.

Nieset said things are a little more difficult when the family is away from home or their routine changes slightly for other reasons, like when her husband went back to college at Wright State University as a full-time nursing student. Jason Nieset, who hung up his Air Force staff sergeant stripes and stayed home with the twins for the first few years, decided to further his education.

"My husband and I will encourage our children to do what they want to do...look at us — their mom is in the military and their dad will soon be a nurse."

Capt. Betty Nieset

Nieset said her husband is a good role model for the twins.

"I think it's going to help them going through school seeing that Daddy had to study, too," she said.

While the twins are developing good study habits, they are also developing separate identities. They are separated in school and daycare — each having a different teacher and different classroom. Nieset said separating the twins during school helps them play nicely together at home because they don't see each other all day and don't have time to get tired of one another.

Being part of a military family, the twins will undoubtedly move. But Nieset said she's not too concerned about them being lonely. While her children have other friends, they often choose to play together.

"My kids always have a playmate," she said. "I hope the girls will be best friends, as well as sisters, and I hope the same for the boys."

Capt. Betty Nieset enjoying some leisurely time with her husband Jason and children, two sets of twins. (Courtesy photo)

Nieset said she and her husband have thought of having more children, but not necessarily biological children. If the Niesets decide to expand their family, they will probably adopt or foster.

Believe it or not, they said they'd only want to adopt or foster twins.

Thoughts for the future

Besides thoughts of family expansion, Nieset also thinks of her career potential. She's up for promotion next year and would like to be a squadron commander someday not too far in the future.

When asked if she thinks her children will someday join the Air Force, she said, "My husband and I will encourage our children to do what they want to do…look at us — their mom is in the military and their dad will soon be a nurse," Nieset said.

No one knows what the odds are that any of the twins will join the Air Force. But with the Niesets' history in mind, it's not too far-fetched to think about.

Not just horse and rider; they're dancing partners

Holly Logan
WR-ALC Public Affairs

Sixties television star Mr. Ed may have had all the right words to say, but Regalo has all the right moves. Regalo, a half Spanish-Andalusian half American quarter horse stalled at Robins' Pine Oaks Riding Stables, can spin, shake hands, count by stomping his left front hoof, say hello by raising his front right hoof, throw kisses and even answer simple "yes or no" questions with a nod or shake of the head.

The bond between Regalo and his owner Louie Barrientes, support equipment and vehicle management directorate equipment specialist at Robins Air Force Base, Ga, started in 2001 when Barrientes got the 12-year-old horse he fondly calls his "soul mate."

"I had heard through a friend that a lady named Bennie Foss in Boerne, Texas (about 25 miles northwest of San Antonio), who originally owned Regalo, wanted to get rid of him," he said. "He had developed a bad habit of bucking, and she couldn't break him.

"She didn't want to sell him. She just wanted to find someone who could work with him and give him a good home."

Barrientes, a 51-year-old equestrian, said he and Regalo had a rocky beginning; but given time, they became as close as brothers.

"When I first got in the corral with him, he came at me and made me jump the corral fence," he said. "He was just so mischievous. Foss said if I could get on him and stay on, I could have him for free."

When Barrientes entered the corral a second time, the two clicked.

"I wasn't giving up on him," he said. "I got back in the corral and started talking to him in a soothing voice and played with him a bit until I calmed him down. I mounted him right away.

"I knew if he were going to do something, he'd do it out in the open. I held on, waiting for him to explode, but he never tried to buck me."

But when Foss saw the connection Barrientes and Regalo had, with tears in her eyes, she seemed to have second thoughts about releasing the horse.

"When I saw her crying, I told her she could keep him if she wanted to, but she insisted that I have him," he said.

After nearly a year of working with Regalo daily, Barrientes taught the not-so-old horse some new tricks — and earned the trust of a hoofed friend.

Louie Barrientes, support equipment and vehicle management directorate equipment specialist at Robins AFB, Ga., uses a riding crop to prompt his horse Regalo, a Spanish Andalusian, to dance. (Air Force photo by Sue Sapp)

"He was a little hard headed at first, but once I showed him what I wanted him to do by using different signals, there wasn't anything he wouldn't do for me," Barrientes said.

Jose Diaz, Barrientes' long-time friend from Jalisco, Mexico, became his mentor and taught him the ropes of horse training. Using a technique known as "negative reinforcement," Barrientes gently poked Regalo in various places, such as his neck, leg and chest to generate desired responses such as nodding and shaking his head and leg raising.

After using the painless training technique for a while, Regalo learned to perform his talents on cue. Each time Regalo successfully performs, Barrientes rewards him with a carrot — one of the four-footed performer's favorite treats.

A native of San Antonio, Barrientes discovered his passion when he was a young teenager, and it led him to train more than 30 horses in his lifetime.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," he said. "My parents used to take us to the drive-in theater, and we'd see all these old Mexican cowboy movies in the golden area of Mexico. I loved the outfits, the silver, saddles and how they'd train the horses."

While horses have been a part of Barrientes' life for many years, none has captured his heart the same as Regalo. "He loves me unconditionally," he said. "I spend about an hour with him every day. "Every morning when I come in to feed him his breakfast, he'll stick his head out of the stall and start whinnying. He's my soul mate. I couldn't imagine life without him."

Eleven-year-old girl plays football as well as her male teammates

Holly Logan
WR-ALC Public Affairs

Forget pom-poms and cheers on the sideline — Adriana Dee grabs the shoulder pads and helmet when football season starts.

Dee, an 11-year-old sixth-grader at Robins Elementary School (at Robins Air Force Base, Ga.) joined the Youth Center football team, the Robins Eagles. She said there's nothing unusual about her chosen extracurricular activity.

"I just see myself as a person playing football," she said. "There's nothing weird about it. I feel like I can play just as well as the boys."

The newest player on the 19-member football team has played tight end and defensive tackle.

In her first game carrying the ball for the 4-0 team, the 5-foot-5-inch girl was 10 yards from scoring her first touchdown.

Ronald Quimby, the team's coach, said he sees her as any other kid on the team.

"The kids adjusted and welcomed her right away," he said. "She hasn't missed a beat." Quimby, 38, has coached the sport at Warner Robins since 1994, and said female participation in the traditionally male sport is growing.

"In the recent past, more girls have joined area recreational football teams, and they tend to do well," he said. "Her gender wasn't even an issue with our team. We treat her like any other football player."

However, when it comes to some of the typical "atta boy" football player behavior, Quimby said he had to make some adjustments.

"I have to remind myself to pat her on the shoulder when she does a good job, instead of doing like most guys on a ball team do," he said. "When we're out there, my motto is that 'we play to have fun, but what better way to have fun than to win?' All I really expect out of the kids is to do their best, and I think they all do a good job at that."

Dee's father, Capt. Michael Dee, 5th Combat Communications Support Squadron Deployment Plans Flight commander, practices with her at least three times a week. He said he fully supports his daughter's football fun.

"If she wants to play football, then she plays," he said. "I work with her by letting her tackle me, and I tackle her."

Adriana Dee stands on the sideline during a season game. (Air Force photo by Sue Sapp)

Adriana Dee listens to Robins Eagles coach, Ronald Quimby, give instructions for the game. (Air Force photo by Sue Sapp)

Dee's father said although Adriana has a long way to go, she is a quick learner.

"If she wants to be a football player, I'll help her make that happen," he said. "I teach her that football is a mental game as much as it's physical. If you're not as strong or fast as someone, you have to use your mind to compensate for those differences. Her skills in blocking far exceed many of the boys in the league. Now, we just have to get her to tackle."

Although Adriana is seen as an easy-going kid by most, her father said it takes one phrase to get her going.

"All she needs is for someone to tell her she shouldn't play football because she's a girl and that gets her fired up, especially when it's from the kid she's supposed to block," he said.

"I'm proud of Adriana. She's stuck with it thus far, and from here, she'll have to figure out whether or not she'll play in the future."

'You can't be a closet bagpiper'

SSG bagpiper accustomed to drawing attention

Emily Reagan
Maxwell AFB, Ala.

Onlookers stop and stare — is it the sentimental and stirring melody coming from a cowhide and reeds? Or is it a Scottish plaid kilt and knee-high socks? Either way it attracts listeners and gawkers.

"You can't really be a closet bagpiper."

After playing the bagpipes more than 27 years, Charles Hightower is used to the attention he gets when he practices and performs on his bagpipes.

"I'll usually practice in the house if I can get away with it," said Hightower, who's been married for 19 years, has three children and writes application software at Standard Systems Group. "It's so loud. I don't want to cause a divorce so I'll bend to their will."

For his practice backup plan Hightower resorts to piping in local parks. He usually draws an audience, even without his Scottish costume.

Hightower only wears the kilt during his public performances, which have compiled over the years into quite an impressive list.

The Scot has piped for one of the royal princes of Saudi Arabia, at the grand opening of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, in front of then Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, for Chuck Yeager and other fighter aces during Gathering of Eagles at Air Command and Staff College and more.

For several years he was a volunteer member of the Alabama State Trooper Honor Guard, piping in parades and trooper funerals.

Hightower became interested in the bagpipes after hearing some bagpipers at the Highland Games in Atlanta when he was just 13.

"I loved the way they sounded. It was an electric moment for me. I said 'I gotta learn to play that'," said Hightower, who had been previously and unsuccessfully forced to play the piano.

But rather than making an investment in a musical instrument, his parents made their own cheap version of the bagpipe chanter out of a wooden dowel with drilled holes.

"I became discouraged playing on a stick," said Hightower. He set aside his dream until he could convince his parents to invest in his piping future.

When his parents approved several years later, he started learning on the softer practice chanter, used by pipers to improve fingering. After six intensive months he was ready to learn on the actual bagpipes.

> ***'I'll usually practice in the house if I can get away with it because it's so loud. I'd don't want to cause a divorce so I'll bend to their will.'***
>
> **— Charles Hightower**

"The first time I played it felt like I was blowing up an air mattress with a hole in it. I was dizzy and disoriented," said Hightower.

Eventually he built up his lung power and was able to master the difficult fingerings and grace notes.

Along with a stellar resume of performances, Mr. Hightower has won some bagpipe competitions at various highland games.

Since it takes a great deal of practice time to remain competitive, Hightower was unable to compete when he and wife, Amy, started their family.

"Now that they're getting older and have pursuits of thier own, I intend to resume competition next fall," said Hightower.

In addition to his personal practice regime, Hightower teaches nine students at Auburn University at Montgomery and is the Pipe Major of the Montgomery St. Andrews' Pipes and Drums. "I really enjoy it," said Hightower. "It's just something that daddy does."

People most often request Hightower to play the popular "Amazing Grace" and "Scotland the Brave." But, even more frequently, people request to know what he wears under the kilt.

A software writer at Standard Systems Group, Maxwell AFB, Ala., Charles Hightower teaches the Great Highland bagpipes to local college students and usually practices in parks. Hightower has been playing the bagpipes for more than 27 years. (Courtesy photo)

Lt. Gen. Charles Coolidge looks back on his 36-year career, where he always looked foward to coming to work. He credits his philosophy and work ethic to the inspiration of his father — a Medal of Honor recipient. (Air Force photo by David Housch)

A 36-year trek to the stars

Tech Sgt. Carl Norman
AFMC Public Affairs

The Air Force and he, an 18-year-old from the hills of Tennessee, grew up together, reaching for the stars.

After earning his bachelor's degree in basic science, Cadet Charles Coolidge graduated in the Air Force Academy's 10th class — just 20 years after the Air Force became a separate service. He then went on to pilot training, graduating the day before Neal Armstrong walked on the moon.

Those events put into motion a career that would span 24 assignments in a dozen states and one foreign country.

"I've had the opportunity to serve in virtually every part of our Air Force from the first command to materiel command, which is 'the' supporter of the warfighter," he said. "Without us the warfighters are nothing and vice versa. We are nothing without them."

Facing new challenges

But all good things must come to an end. Coolidge, now a lieutenant general and Air Force Materiel Command vice commander, retires in January 2004, ending 36 years of wearing Air Force blue.

"I can retire with confidence because the future of our Air Force is in great hands," he said. "Today's Air Force is a much better Air Force than the one I joined. Our young people are highly trained, motivated and better educated that we were."

During his tenure, Coolidge has proven pretty successful according to most people's standards. He's served in five major commands and on the staff of four of those, shaping policy and procedures for service members around the globe in nearly every Air Force mission area.

But when it comes to talking success, the general is reserved.

"I've always felt success is doing the best I could do at a job and not worrying about the consequences," he said.

"About every time I thought I understood my job and thought I was getting proficient at it, somebody would give me another one," he said. "I was invigorated by that. I thought it was neat to work for people who keep you stretching and forever reaching for more difficult challenges and working with talented, wonderful people who share the same values. Money on the outside was not that important as long as my family was taken care of and comfortable. This was all I wanted to do in life."

In Vietnam, his only overseas assignment, the general trained Vietnamese pilots how to defend their country. Some, he said, had never flown an airplane before and some "could fly circles around us."

"Flying with someone whose language you don't speak, and with a crew whose customs, courtesies and language are all different than yours, is unique and it changes how you think about things," Coolidge said.

He said it made him realize there are good things in everyone even though they may come from different cultures and backgrounds, something that would frame the rest of his career.

"If you trust them, depend on them, tell them how important they are and have your actions speak as loud as your words, people won't let you down. They live up to expectations, regardless," he said.

Through the years

Looking back on 36 years as an Air Force officer, Coolidge said he enjoyed all aspects of his career, but teaching thousands of Air Force Academy cadets physics and basic pilot training tops his list of most enjoyable.

"When I say teaching, I mean helping them learn, because I didn't teach them anything," he said with a laugh.

He said the only job he actually sought in the Air Force was physics instructor duty at the academy. Incidentally, he also wound up running the Wings of Blue parachute team program, scheduling aircraft, assigning crews and doing virtually everything an operational unit does — as a captain. He has about 100 jumps under his belt.

Despite his current rank and accomplishments, Coolidge said people have to set their own personal goals to define success.

Having his 'goals' in order

"My goals are faith, family and mission," he said. "Maybe people would question whether I have them in the right order; I think I do.

"How can you devote time to one and two and still do three? I think if you have the first two right, the third takes care of itself. I've never sought after an assignment myself and have never promoted myself for assignments. I figure if I do a good enough job, my boss will take care of my future."

> ***"My goals are faith, family and mission. Maybe people would question whether I have them in the right order, I think I do."***
>
> **Lt. Gen. Charles Coolidge**

He also said that just because he chose the Air Force doesn't mean it's for everyone.

"That's a personal decision and a family decision," he said. "I can tell them that my experiences have been exhilarating, fun, challenging, rewarding, stressful, difficult and one I would never trade for anything else in the world. Every day ought to be challenging, fun and an experience. If you're not having fun in the Air Force, then you're doing it all wrong."

The wind beneath his wings

Based on that, Coolidge is apparently doing things right because he said he's excited about coming to work every day. He credits his philosophy and work ethic to pretty high inspiration — a father who is a Medal of Honor recipient.

"My dad has a military aspect to him most parents don't have. Frankly I didn't understand how rare a Medal of Honor was until I was at the Air Force Academy," Coolidge said. "You grow up with that, and with people who are his acquaintances and friends who are other Medal of Honor recipients who you'd see on a sem-frequent basis, and you think this is kind of old hat stuff. But it's not. It's incredible what a Medal of Honor represents."

But Coolidge credits both his father and mother for being supportive throughout his years in blue.

"They've been the wind beneath my wings all through my life, an inspiration, an example and role models," he said. "In days where we look to role models, my father is one and so is my mom."

Switching his focus to mentorship, Coolidge listed several names who have mentored him that could be a who's who of Air Force leaders — former Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman, Gen. John Handy, Air Mobility Command commander, and other former Air Force chiefs of staff, major command commanders and fellow instructors.

"Mentorship is a subordinate being able to talk to a senior person on literally any subject and learn from them; a mentor who's been through the ropes before and gives you the lay of the land without telling you what to choose," he said. "I don't think a mentor provides a useful service if they tell you what choices to make."

He said the best thing to do is lay out the options and provide a little guidance.

A fond farewell

As he packed mementos from his office in AFMC headquarters here, Coolidge said, "It's been an incredible honor and privilege for me to serve in the Air Force. Everyday I get up and am excited to go to work. The day that stops is probably the day you need to hang it up.

"Fortunately for me that's never happened, not because I was getting promoted, but because I enjoyed every minute of working with all the people I got to work with. When I see others succeed, I applaud because I too have succeeded. I share in their success. That's what my Air Force career has been all about. I like to applaud."

HAARP opens gates to community

GAKONA, Alaska — Scientists and engineers of the High-Frequency Active Auroral Research Program near Gakona, Alaska, opened their doors to more than 100 guests for the seventh open house of the largest Defense Department facility of its kind Sept. 28 and 29.

HAARP is a joint Air Force and Navy program. Its scientific research is coordinated with and largely conducted by academia. Currently, the facility is approximately one-fourth complete with 48 of 180 antennas in place and functional.

The primary focus of this year's open house was to explain the process for completing the facility which studies the effects of naturally occurring anomalies in the Earth's ionosphere that sometimes disrupt communication, navigational and power grid systems — such as region-wide electrical production network.

The facility is comprised of a large radio frequency antenna array and diagnostic equipment designed to reproduce, characterize and understand natural phenomena similar to those that occur naturally in the ionosphere and space, and radiates 960,000 watts of radio frequency energy into the ionosphere.

The stimulated phenomena, which can only be observed with sensitive diagnostic equipment, provide scientists and engineers with a better understanding of how these naturally occurring phenomena and the effects they produce on communication, navigation and radar systems.

— Reported by AFRL Public Affairs

Near Gakona, Alaska, HAARP antennas stand 65 feet high and spaced 80 feet apart in eight columns by six rows. The instruments study the effects of naturally occurring anomalies in the Earth's ionosphere that sometimes disrupt communication, navigational and power grid systems-such as region-wide electrical production network. (Air Force photo by 2nd Lt. J. Elaine Hunnicutt)

Balloons visit Albuquerque middle school

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — The Airborne Laser program showed students at Van Buren Middle School Oct. 3, that its focus is not restricted to the demanding task of building the world's first laser-armed combat aircraft.

Volunteers from the ABL System Program Office at Kirtland and community balloon aficionados visited the school to inflate two balloons which will represent ABL during the ongoing Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. Scores of students from the school turned out to inspect the balloons at close quarters and chat with the pilots and crew members.

— Reported by 377th ABW Public Affairs

SSGs AFWAY system adds bulk buying capability

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, GUNTER ANNEX, Ala. — Experts at the Standard Systems Group continue to re-engineer the Air Force's information technology purchasing Web site, aiming at increasing its service-wide usage and improving system procurement and purchasing processes.

AFWAY, an online ordering system fielded last year, places information technology products and more than 30 leading commercial vendors at the fingertips of every Air Force member with IT needs, supporting purchasing and tracking IT products via an interface to the Air Force inventory tracking system.

A new bulk buy enhancement was recently implemented, which gives users the capability to use AFWAY for large quantity purchases to ensure the best price from vendors.

User training is available through SSG. For more information, or to schedule training, contact the System Program Office at ssg.afway.pmo@gunter.af.mil.

— Reported by SSG Public Affairs

ASC doubles capacity with new supercomputer

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — A new, $15.1 million supercomputer formally began operations here Oct. 6, giving Aeronautical Systems Center's Major Shared Resource Center more than double the computing capability and computer hours available.

The new SGI Origin 3900, built by Silicon Graphics, Inc. of Mountain View, Calif., is the largest such computer in the world, with a computing environment of 2,048 processors, two terabytes of memory and 40 terabytes of disk storage.

In addition to its computing power, the Origin 3900 boasts memory capacity equal to all the information held in a typical research library. The supercomputer makes the MSRC one of four major high performance computing centers in the Defense Department.

— Reported by ASC Public Affairs

Last C-130A Hercules makes final flight at AAC

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. — The oldest flying C-130 cargo aircraft and last existing C-130A in the U.S. Air Force flew its final flight Oct. 3, ending nearly half a century of test service.

The aircraft will be stripped of its essential equipment and used to test installation security systems on the Eglin range.

The C-130A, affectionately nicknamed "The Lone Wolf," has been stationed at, or near, Duke Field for the past 48 years, serving the test community as part of the 46th Test Wing.

—Reported by AAC Public Affairs

BAF testing furthers first-ever C-130J integrated defensive systems

Capt. Catie Hague
AFFTC Public Affairs

An electronic warfare test team at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., verified two of three C-130J aircraft systems worked as planned recently, putting the aircraft's first-ever integrated defensive systems one step closer to reality.

Edward's electronic warfare and avionics engineers verified a newly installed radar warning receiver and countermeasures dispensing system on a C-130J from an Air National Guard unit in Baltimore, Md. The aircraft rolled into the Benefield Anechoic Facility to undergo a week of ground testing to make sure all the systems integrated into the mission computer wouldn't interfere with other avionics systems before testing them in flight, according to Ana Franco, 412th Test Wing electronic warfare electronics engineer.

BAF experts could not support checks on the missile warning system because the tests will have to be completed while the aircraft is airborne.

Air Force operational test and evaluation pilots helped with the BAF verification, part of the aircraft program's follow-on qualification test and evaluation effort.

Teresa Upperman, 412th TW electronic warfare electronics engineer, said the new systems will increase aircrew's situational awareness in a continuously changing threat environment. The C-130J is a medium-range tactical airlift aircraft designed primarily to transport cargo and people into theater.

"The C-130J has never had defensive systems," Upperman said. "In other aircraft, these are stand-alone systems, but in the J model they've all been integrated into the aircraft mission computer and avionics system."

She said they work on the same principles as the F/A-22 Raptor and the Joint Strike Fighter.

"Not only are the defensive systems able to talk to each other, but they can also pass and receive information like airspeed and altitude — a real benefit during war," she said.

Before entering the BAF for testing, experts conducted baseline software checks at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. BAF testing was then performed to verify systems integration.

"First we tested the radar warning receiver by directing simulated threat signals at the aircraft," Franco said. "Then we tested the countermeasures dispensing system using a test set to confirm the release buttons were functioning correctly. Based on the tests in the chamber, there didn't appear to be any interference with other onboard equipment."

The final phase of testing before the program enters operational testing began Oct. 7 at China Lake Naval Weapons Center, Calif., according to Upperman.

"It's the last chance to work out all the bugs and fix any problems documented to date," she said. "During open air testing, all defensive systems are tested concurrently while flying the C-130J in an 'operational environment.' The operational testers will then determine if what we have meets the warfighter's needs."

The BAF test facility is used to investigate and evaluate anomalies associated with electronic's warfare systems, avionics, tactical missiles and their host platforms. It supports installed systems testing for avionics test programs requiring a large, shielded chamber with radio frequency absorption capability that simulates free space.

Basically, the chamber can produce a realistic airborne environment on the ground, which can be used to test various EW scenarios, reducing risk and saving flight hours, time and money, said Col. Jon Link, 412th TW EW director.

Upperman said open air testing should be complete by Thanksgiving, with publication of the final test report scheduled for February 2004.

(Air Force photo by Thomas Powell)

Airmen help fliers breathe easier

Fuels specialists in the 78th Logistics Readiness Squadron's liquid oxygen station at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., have the coolest job on base. It is so cool that it is boiling hot.

Tasked with the job of storing liquid oxygen, or LOX, which in its normal state is 297 degrees below zero, the airmen must stay on their toes, or they could very well lose them.

Dressed in white coveralls, facemasks, ear shields and thick leather aprons, they are protected from the LOX, and the LOX is protected from them.

"Jet fuel and LOX don't mix," said Billy Arnett, fuels specialist. "We have to make sure there is no fuel on our boots or clothes or there could be an explosion." With the same precaution in mind, Arnett explained that placing any object inside the volatile liquid would cause it to freeze immediately, leaving little room for mistakes for those who handle it.

"This stuff is so cold that it boils," Arnett said. "It would be like hot grease hitting your skin."

Although it can be dangerous if handled improperly, LOX is the same life-giving gas that surges through to aviators when they lose pressure or have other in-flight emergencies.

"Liquid oxygen is used for breathing purposes," said Willie Harris, fuels flight chief. "We are responsible for receiving and storing liquid oxygen for the maintenance organizations here on base. They in turn put it onto the various aircraft."

Staff Sgt. David Humphrey, noncommissioned officer in charge of fuels hydrants, said once received, the LOX is stored in 2,000- and 3,000-gallon tanks at two LOX stations and is frequently monitored to prevent contamination and ensure safe use.

Daily sampling is the primary method to ensure contamination does not occur. According to Humphrey, during the handling and transfer of LOX, environmental contaminants must not enter the system, and it must retain a 99.5-percent purity rating.

When not contaminated, LOX is colorless and odorless.

Every 90 days a sample is forwarded to Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, to be further tested.

"At Wright-Patterson, the LOX undergoes a full specification analysis where it is tested for odor, particulates or other constituents in the liquid," Humphrey said.

The LOX is transported to an aircraft via 50-gallon LOX carts, which are filled from the larger tanks. Senior Airman Ryan Bonnell, with aerospace ground maintenance, picks up and delivers LOX carts. Before he begins, he must perform an inspection of the cart's chassis and wheels and ensure none of the tanks have dents.

"When we tow them, we make sure all of the hoses are secure and all vent valves are closed," he said. "This is especially important because the carts are transported over asphalt where grease and other particulates could cause a fire or small explosion if mixed with the LOX."

"When we are done, the maintenance side takes over," Humphrey said.

Billy Arnett collects a sample of liquid oxygen to test for odor and contamination. Arnett is a fuels specialist with the 78th Logistics Readiness Squadron's LOX station at Robins AFB, Ga. (Air Force photo by Sue Sapp)

Staff Sgt. Brian Holloman, 116th Air Control Wing crew chief, said the LOX content is checked and verified before each flight, ensuring there is sufficient LOX to get through the flight.

When it is time to refill the tank there are certain safety steps that must be followed.

"First we have to inspect all of our safety equipment thoroughly," he said.

Next they suit up in white coveralls, face shields and aprons, check technical data on aircraft, connect hoses, watch gauges and then wait. Service time varies depending on the initial amount in the tank. According to Haughton, a completely purged tank could take up to two hours to fill.

Just as with those who store the volatile liquid, extreme care must be taken by those who put it on the planes.

"Everything must be kept really clean in order to prevent fires," said Staff Sgt. Dave Houghtaling, an Air National Guard technician. "Half of the time is preparation and waiting."

Having an interesting job is one thing, but having a job that ultimately saves lives is another all together. Those who work with LOX are able to combine the two in a job that makes going to work the coolest of all experiences.

— Lanorris Askew, WR-ALC Public Affairs

Joyce Sands, a sheet metal mechanic at Robins AFB, Ga., works on a left ramp diverter seal on an F-15. Sands is part of the F-15 hospital crew that helps repair battle damaged aircraft. (Air Force photo by Sue Sapp)

F-15 Eagle hospital crew helps keep mission moving

Lanorris Askew
WR-ALC Public Affairs

Nursing nose jobs, fire and crash damage, collapsed gears and other aircraft mishaps are all in a days work for F-15 hospital crew specialists at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., trying to keep the Warner Robins depot maintenance line running smoothly.

F-15 hospital crew experts mend damage that would otherwise grind the weapons system's programmed depot maintenance line to a screeching halt, according to Albert Martin, F-15 crash damage section industrial production manager.

Martin said the hospital crew concept came about when the men and women working there realized the production line's aircraft flow stopped when maintainers came on fixes above and beyond their capability.

Under a newly adopted Lean concept, maintainers are supposed to move an aircraft from one position or cell to the next every two and a half days based on the schedule of input aircraft, Martin said. This was sometimes interrupted because the individuals on the production line or those doing operational checks also had to trouble shoot the area.

"Every time troubleshooting had to be done, if the problem held priority over the next aircraft then the complete production line slowed up," he said. "We devised a concept where we put in a safety valve so whenever the production line got into trouble with something they couldn't handle, we move it out of the line and send it to what we call the hospital area. Anything they can't fix they send to us and instead of having the complete line in the red we only have one or two airplanes."

According to Martin, 36 civilians and between 10 and 17 military members from the 653rd Combat Logistics Support Squadron make up the ailing aircraft's healing force.

"We take care of any little thing that may slow the schedule ranging from corrosion to component failure," said Martin.

He said there are five different skills on the hospital crew, every major one available on the production line.

"We can do everything here," he said. "We have hydraulic people; aircraft components people, electrical and avionics people, pretty much any skill that's needed to do any type of aircraft overhaul maintenance is in this section."

Lean has made its presence known and, according to David Pryor, deputy section chief, the crew's layout allows it to handle three hospital type jets and up to four crash-damaged aircraft at any given time. Because they deal mostly with crash-damaged aircraft, a team goes out and does an assessment when it receives word there's an aircraft with crash damage.

"That team dictates to me what I'm supposed to do by developing a work package, tell me what is funded and not funded, and that's what we work from — whatever they say," he said.

Once the work is complete the aircraft goes out to functional test where hospital crew members perform all of the operational checks.

"The hospital crew process is still brand new so there are a lot of things we are still fine-tuning," Martin said. "We go back and find things we need to readdress, and it keeps making it better."

Benny Roberson, aircraft work leader who recently transferred from the C-141 production line to the hospital crew, said the work is very interesting.

"What we do here is a whole new job from what I am used to, but it makes a huge impact on the mission," he said.

Since its inception in July the crew has turned five aircraft for the hospital crew that would have otherwise hindered the production line.

Martin said last year they turned five crash damaged aircraft that were already in the system and two are in the system for fiscal year 2004.

Baby sea turtles make waves

1st Lt. James Madeiros
AAC Environmental Public Affairs

More than 40 people gathered on a stretch of Santa Rosa Island under the setting sun to help a clutch of Loggerhead sea turtle hatchlings paddle into the Gulf of Mexico Sept. 26.

It was the second of two public hatchling releases for the nesting season, which extends from May 15 through October 30, until the last nest has hatched out.

Three species of sea turtles nest on the Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., range, along 17 miles of public and restricted beaches on the Gulf side of Santa Rosa Island, as well as three miles of beach on Cape San Blas.

"We have Leatherbacks, Atlantic Green sea turtles and Loggerheads," said Bob Miller, Jackson Guard endangered species biologist. "The turtles are federally listed as threatened or endangered species. It is Eglin's responsibility to ensure that these turtles and their habitat are protected."

Both Leatherback and Atlantic Green sea turtles are endangered, and the Loggerhead sea turtles are a threatened species.

When a species is threatened, it means that the animal is likely to become endangered "within the foreseeable future throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range," Miller said.

An endangered species, the more severe of the two categories, is in danger of extinction within its range.

"An endangered species may go extinct if not protected," Miller said.

To keep that from happening, Miller and Erica Schnarr, Jackson Guard volunteer coordinator, work with a group of 17 to 20 primary and alternate volunteers in the sea turtle nesting program, which was begun in 1989.

"This year we had 22 nests," Schnarr said. "We've got volunteers who check the nests every single day. Without them, we wouldn't be able to do this program."

The state of Florida trains volunteers annually in addition to the training Jackson Guard provides that is specific to Eglin beaches and protocol.

Once the nesting season begins, volunteers go in search of sea turtle tracks, which can tell them several things, such as what kind of turtle it is, its general size, and where it has dug its nest. When a nest is found, data is collected from that time until the eggs hatch, to include a Global Positioning Satellite coordinate for the location.

"The volunteers actually dig down into the nest until they find the eggs," Miller said. "They mark where the egg chamber is, put screening over the top, mark it with four posts, a ribbon and a sign that identifies it as a sea turtle nest."

To do all of this work, Jackson Guard must renew an annual permit that authorizes Eglin to take the proper steps to ensure the protection of the turtles, like conducting nest surveys, relocating nests and screening nests to ward off predation.

"We do what is known as a Section 7 consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to get terms and conditions in order to protect the nesting adults, the nests themselves and the hatchlings," Miller said.

The public releases, which are another authorization of the permit, are a way to bring awareness to the work that is being done to protect the sea turtles, Schnarr said.

Top: Robert Owens, 9, accepts a baby Loggerhead turtle from Bob Miller, Jackson Guard wildlife biologist, for release into the Gulf of Mexico. (Air Force photo by 1st Lt. James Madeiros) Bottom: A baby Loggerhead sea turtle makes its way to the shore on Santa Rosa Island after nesting. (Air Force photo by Marvin Skillen)

"It's just a matter of getting the word out," she said. "People think that you have to work for Jackson Guard, or be Air Force-affiliated to do stuff like this, and you don't."

At the last public release Chris Hood, an environmental engineer for a consulting firm on base, brought his wife, Laura, and two children, Stephen and Rebecca, to watch the Loggerheads take to the sea for the first time.

"We've never done this before, so we're excited," he said. "It's just one of the great things about living here."

Recruits take enlistment oath from Thunderbirds

Edwards hosts 'unforgetable' experience for 20 future airmen during annual open house

New Air Force recruits started their military career by taking the oath of enlistment from the Air Force's elite flying team, the Thunderbirds, at the open house and air show at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Oct. 26.

A group of about 20 future airmen came to experience their first enlistment in a way that the Air Force recruiters hope the recruits will never forget.

The ceremony started with a short speech from one of the Thunderbirds' pilots reminding the recruits the importance of the oath of enlistment and how the oath is the first step into the Air Force. The ceremony then ended with the oath of enlistment being administered to the recruits with the Thunderbirds five F-16s as a backdrop.

"As recruiters, we know the decision to join the military is a life-changing choice. We hope this experience will reinforce in the minds of the recruits the excitement that comes with making the choice of joining the Air Force," said Staff Sgt. Dawn Dunning, recruiter for the Lancaster area. "This experience was also a good way for the recruits to see the type of high-tech aircraft they will be working with."

According to Dunning, today's Air Force is always looking for intelligent recruits that can work on equipment and aircraft that are state-of-the-art and always changing.

"I am excited to be the newest member of the Air Force," said Shaleah Fields, an information manager recruit. "I want to someday get my master's degree in Anthropology. I feel that the Air Force is the best way to accomplish this goal."

Fields said having a mother who works on an Air Force base helped with getting the information she needed to join the military.

"I encouraged my daughter to join the Air Force because of what the Air Force is going to allow her to be a part of," said Gloria Fields, a NASA-Dryden employee here. "I allowed my daughter to make her own decision, but I am happy that she decided to join the Air Force. I feel confident that the Air Force is going to help my daughter accomplish her lifelong goals."

According to Dunning, the future looks bright for the Air Force because of the quality of new recruits.

"I am impressed with the recruits that are coming our way," said Dunning. "Most of the time the recruits come into my office knowing what they want to do for their country and have the intelligence needed to perform the tasks needed for that particular field. Through my experience as an Air Force recruiter, I am confident that tomorrow's Air Force is in good hands."

— Airman 1st Class Mark Woodbury, AFFTC Public Affairs

Air Force recruits take the oath of enlistment from the Air Force Thunderbirds Oct. 26 at the Edwards AFB, Calif., Air Show. The recruits will soon go to basic military training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas. (Air Force photo by Thomas Powell)

Archeological survey digs up battlefield debris near base, park boundary

Tech. Sgt. Eric Grill
ESC Public Affairs

Archeologists recently found artifacts at Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass., that possibly date back to the 1775 battle that led to the birth of America.

Two spent musket balls, one whole musket ball, an ox shoe, spectacles and a musket ball tool were dug up during an archeological survey on the south side of the base between Oct. 17 and 23, said Don Morris, Hanscom's environmental director.

Previous archaeological surveys resulted in finding no battlefield debris. However, reports of the skirmishes fought April 19, 1775, led the team of archeologists to suspect isolated preserved areas within Hanscom still contained musket balls, gunflints or buttons.

"The musket ball finds are significant because it's known that a portion of the battle occurred in this general area," Morris said.

"It appears that a major part of the fighting took the form of a running battle with British flanking units being used to surprise the Colonial forces in the woods to the north and south of the (battle) road," said Michael Roberts, president of Timelines, Inc., and was one of the archeologists conducting the survey.

The battle of April 19, 1775, is when the "shot heard around the world" was fired. No one knows for sure who fired that fateful first shot, or who gave the orders, but history shows that in five minutes of battle in Lexington, British soldiers killed eight militiamen and wounded 10 more. The Revolutionary War had started.

The battlefield extended throughout the Concord, Lexington, and Bedford area and spanned all the way into Boston. This battle area also included land that is now known as Hanscom Air Force Base.

Bordering Hanscom is Minuteman National Park, a national historic park preserving the historic beginning locations of the American Revolution. Because Hanscom borders Minuteman National Park, scientists had long believed that artifacts from the battle remained on Hanscom grounds, Morris said.

"By law, the Air Force is required to protect cultural resources on its property," Morris said. "So, in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Air Force Cultural Resource Management policy and the base Cultural Resource Management Plan, Hanscom conducted an archaeological reconnaissance survey in 1992 and a more intensive survey in 1998."

Those surveys found that evidence of the Battle of April 19, 1775, "may still exist within and beyond the confines of the areas tested," he said.

Morris said officials from the Hanscom Civil Engineer Environmental Office obtained funding to perform a specialized archaeological survey using metal detectors, field excavation and global positioning equipment to focus on the resources associated with the battle. Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence officials contracted with a cultural resource consultant, TN and Associates from Tennessee, and Timelines Inc, a local archaeological firm in Littleton, Mass.

Before the survey began, Roberts said he believed that concentrations of musket balls might be revealed during the metal detection survey.

On the very first day, the team found the two spent musket balls, and the intact musket ball team members believe may have fallen from a soldier's pocket, Morris said.

"Each artifact will be researched for its origin and subjected to a series of treatment processes that will restore and preserve them," he said. "A report will be submitted later next year."

The findings from this survey are just preliminary, Morris said.

Walter Donohue (right) and Alvin Lynn, use a metal detector and shovel to examine part of Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass., during an archeological survey on the south side of the base. The two archeologists found musket balls, a musket ball tool and spectacles that may date back to the Revolutionary War. (Air Force photo by Jason Ide)

Dr. (Capt.) DeWayne Lazendy, a pediatrics resident, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, examines one of the 1,175 pediatrics dental patients seen during the humanitarian mission to Suriname. (Courtesy photo)

Medics to South America

Al Eakle
74th Medical Group Public Affairs

Mention the word "deployment" and most people think of Southwest Asia. For more than a dozen medics from the 74th Medical Group of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, deployment means a humanitarian mission to South America, which they recently completed.

The team included an internal medicine physician, dermatologist, pediatrician, OB/GYN physician, two pediatric residents, a OB/GYN resident, two dentists and two technicians, optometrist and one technician, pharmacy specialist and one independent duty medical technician.

Team Wright-Patt medics provided primary medical, dental and eye care to people in Suriname.

"This deployment allowed us to see tropical and geographical-unique diseases not normally seen here," said Dr. (Col.) Steve Chambers, deployment commander. "We saw diseases that had either gone untreated or had progressed beyond what would normally be seen."

Dr. (Col.) Mark Rasch and Airman Audrey Bourdlais, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, take care of one of the 724 dental patients seen during the humanitarian mission to Suriname. (Courtesy photo)

A Suriname Army translator looks on as Dr. (Maj.) Jeffrey Bennett, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, examines a young pediatrics patient. (Courtesy photo)

The team Wright-Patt medics saw nearly 6,000 patients during a nine-day period. This included: 2,467 internal medicine, 1,175 pediatric, and 596 OB/GYN patients. Dentists saw 724 patients and extracted 1,076 teeth. The optometrist saw 960 and prescribed 868 pairs of glasses.

"Missions such as this go a long way in preparing us better for a operational deployment," Chambers said. "Participants become familiar with the logistics of setting up operations in austere locations such as this one, including force protection."

"It also went a long way in showing the American flag in that country," Chambers said.

Special Ops earns excellence award

Single system program office teams at WR-ALC and ASC locations share honors

Lanorris Askew
WR-ALC Public Affairs

Brig. Gen. Darryl Scott said it was no surprise to him that the Special Operations Forces System Program Office at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., was honored with the Air Force Organizational Excellence Award Oct.1. With a list of achievements over the past year that number in the double digits, it should be no surprise to anyone.

Leading the kudos, the center vice commander said he was proud to be part of the special ceremony honoring their achievement.

Speaking to a crowd of more than 200 from the special ops community, he said that it was they who stood behind the warfighter and made it possible for all of the wonderful pictures broadcasted on CNN.

The award, which covers the period from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2002, recognizes unprecedented support to the unique, high-demand weapon systems used by special operations forces during the intense operational tempo of Operation Enduring Freedom and in preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

With the HH-60 Pave Hawk and HC-130 Combat Search and Rescue aircraft from the 347th Rescue Wing, Moody AFB, Ga., sitting in the background, Scott recited a list of accomplishments that included the SOF directorate fielding enhanced and new operational capabilities by accelerating modification programs and initiating new projects in response to combat mission needs.

According to Scott, those capabilities included new armor plating, defensive avionics software, radio upgrades, real-time streaming video, sensor upgrades, tracking, countermeasure upgrades and environmental system improvements. The SPO is also credited with providing exceptional sustainment support to all special operation forces and combat search and rescue systems.

"The Special Operations Forces and Combat Search and Rescue Forces have been engaged in combat virtually from day one after the strike on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001," said Scott. "During all this, the overall support posture of the weapon system increased throughout the period of conflict. Throughout the operations they maintained more than a 90 percent in-commission rate and the not mission capable rate due to supply was less than 10 percent."

A reduction in critical backorders from more than 1,000 to less than 200 over that period was also achieved.

"The award is a result of the collective efforts of a single system program office team with two primary locations here at WR-ALC and at Aeronautical Systems Center, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio," said Don Michels, director Special Operations Forces Combat Search and Rescue System Program office.

Tech. Sgt. Tim Toscano with the 41st Rescue Squadron at Moody AFB, Ga., demonstrates the GAU-18 50 caliber machine gun on the HH-60 Pave Hawk, during a ceremony at Robins AFB, Ga., honoring the Special Operations Forces System Program Office. (Air Force photo by Sue Sapp)

"It's appropriate that all share in this award since it represents and recognizes the collective efforts of the entire team, without which this award would not have been possible," he said.

Michels said they worked when necessary 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week when they had to deploy people forward to help do emergency modifications or for combat mission need requirements.

"Our people went and did whatever was required to help our warfighter customers prosecute the war and do it successfully," he said. "Though we saw our efforts on TV every night there was a lot that went on behind the scenes that nobody saw without which they would not have been able to accomplish their mission."

Tinker man's IDEA to save Air Force $5.7 million

TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. — A Tinker man's idea to have depot-level maintenance on air traffic control radars performed on-site will save the Air Force more than $5 million and earned him $10,000 from the Innovative Development Through Employee Awareness program.

Instead of having the vital airport surveillance radar systems sent to depot, Vern Shurrum, a logistics management specialist in the product support directorate, came up with an idea to repair the radars using an alignment tool, made locally, and everyday tools such as a socket and ratchet. His plan is to correct out-of-tolerance pivot pin hole dimensions on radar antennas by installing a self-lubricating bushing.

Shurrum said the idea for performing maintenance on the GPN-12 and GPN-20 radar systems on-site was spawned after one of the radars failed last year at Travis AFB, Calif.

Under the old system, the antennas were returned to depot in their entirety and exchanged for new ones already built and prepackaged by the Federal Aviation Administration at $139,568 each.

The new process saves a total of $5.7 million once all 41 radar sites are repaired. All that is required to repair the antennas under the new plan are two bushings, a hand reamer guide and collar supplied by the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center and four hours of labor. The parts and time are valued at a total cost of $345.

— Reported by OC-ALC Public Affairs

Vern Shurrum, Tinker AFB, Okla., Product Support Directorate, demonstrates his idea to have depot-level maintenance on air traffic control radar antennas performed on-site by installing a self-lubricating bushing. (Air Force photo by Eddie Edge)

AAC dental commander awarded bronze star

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. — Col. Robert Garrett, 96th Dental Squadron commander, recently received the Bronze Star in a ceremony attended by his family and squadron. Brig. Gen. Thomas Bailey, Jr., Air Force Materiel Command Surgeon, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, pinned the Bronze Star on Garrett.

Garrett was commander of the 320th Expeditionary Medical Group in the 320th Air Expeditionary Wing while engaged in ground operations against the enemy at Seeb North Air Base, Sultanate of Oman, from Nov. 28, 2002, to June 1, 2003. During this period, he managed the largest medical facility in the area of responsibility, with supplies and equipment valued in excess of $3 million.

— Reported by AAC Public Affairs

Tinker outdoor recreation named best in Air Force

TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. — The Tinker Outdoor Recreation Program recently received kudos as the best outdoor recreation program in the Air Force.

In the past year, program experts organized junkets for everyone from fishing aficionados to those who find their thrills scaling sheer rock faces, rappelling, sport shooting, white water rafting, snow skiing and horseback riding, according to program director Kevin Lawson.

In fact, outdoor recreation program experts at Tinker have increased their program by 85 percent in the past year by listening to their customers, he said. "But the real secret to the program's success is in the staff." That staff includes eight non-appropriated fund workers, as well as 26 lifeguards from May through September.

— Reported by OC-ALC Public Affairs

Two Doctors receive Bronze Star Medals

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Two doctors here were recently awarded the Bronze Star Medal for their efforts supporting Operation Enduring Freedom at two different locations in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility.

Dr. (Col.) Gregory Toussaint, the new chief of medical staff for the 74th Medical Group, was cited for service as the 444th Expeditionary Medical Squadron commander while engaged in ground operations against the enemy at a classified location

Dr. (Col.) Thomas Koroscil, chief of Endocrinology at the 74th MDG, was cited for service as 376th Expeditionary Medical Group commander in the Kyrgyz Republic, while engaged in ground operations against Al-Qaeda terrorist networks in Afghanistan.

— Reported by 74th Medical Group Public Affairs

Reservist wins Air Force Services Award

TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. — Staff Sgt. Lynette Luginu, a member of the 507th Services Flight, was recently named the Services Air Reserve Component Airman of the Year for 2003.

Luginu has been in the Air Force Reserve since 1999. Her primary Air Force Specialty Code is food, she earned her U.S. citizenship this year and is working toward a Bachelor's degree in accounting at the University of Oklahoma.

— Reported by OC-ALC Public Affairs