Gulf Wing

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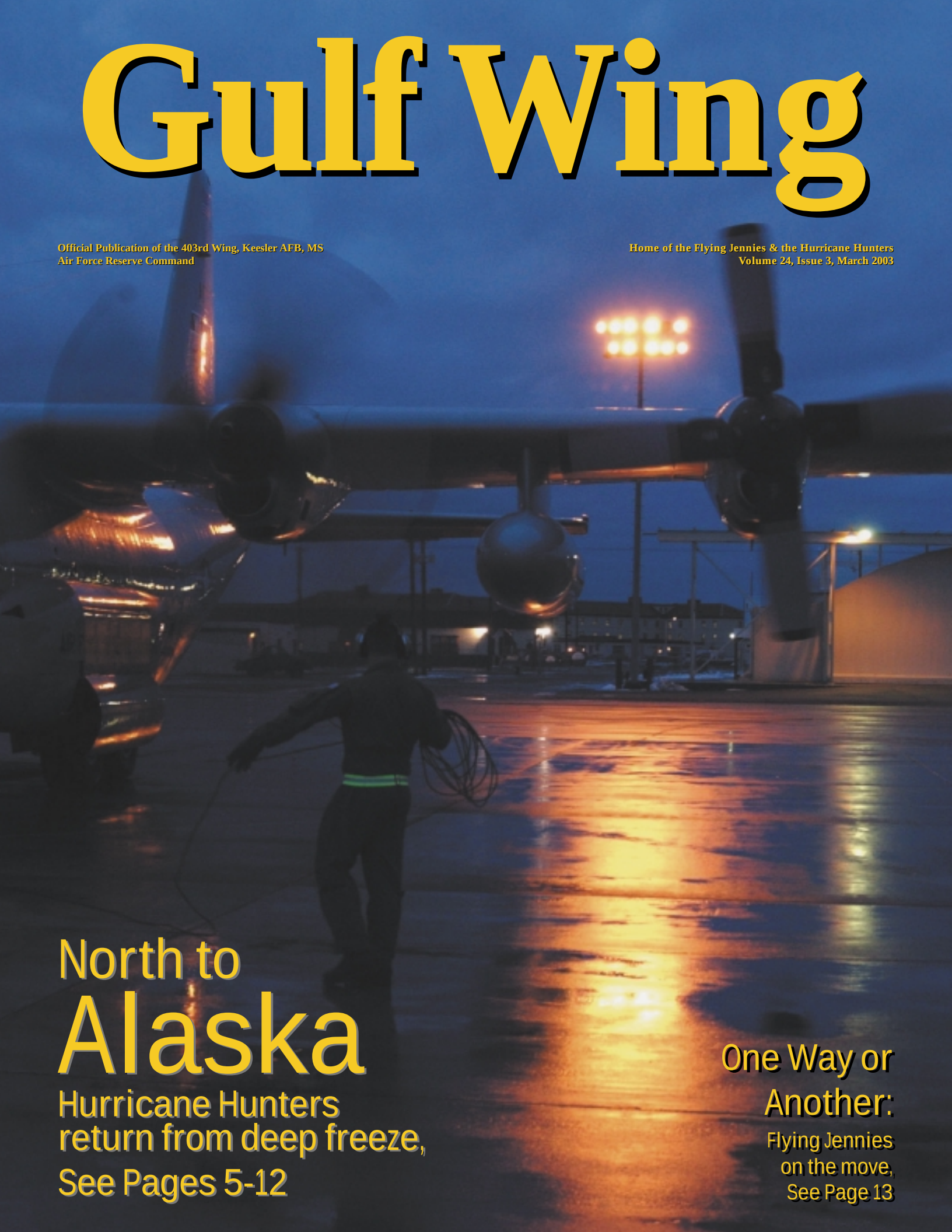
Air Force Reserve Command

Home of the Flying Jennies & the Hurricane Hunters
Volume 24, Issue 3, March 2003



North to Alaska

Hurricane Hunters return from deep freeze,

See Pages 5-12

One Way or Another:

Flying Jennies on the move,

See Page 13

MAR 2003

Cover Page

Airmen Compete for Officer Positions

The Deserving Airman Commissioning Program is allowing non-commissioned officers to earn gold bars as they stay with their units. **Read more on Page 4.**

Two-Man APS Team Tackles Tundra

It takes tons of nuts, bolts and other spare parts to keep a WC-130 in the air. When the crews are operating from a location more than 4,500 miles from home, it takes a small team of experts to make sure all those parts are moved safely there and back. **Read more on Pages 5-7.**

Maintenance Battles Icy Flightline

Long before a plane can take off, 403rd Maintenance is on the ground "kicking the tires" and "checking under the hood." During a month-long deployment to Alaska in January and February, maintenance teams traveled to our nation's last frontier to support the Hurricane Hunters in their winter missions. **Read more on Pages 8-9.**

One Way Or Another: Jennies on the Move

Tarmac, dirt airstrip, expedient landing zone — It doesn't matter to the Flying Jennies of the 815th Airlift Squadron. One way or another, they deliver their cargo and or passengers with the expertise gained from many years of tactical airlift missions. **Read more on Page 13.**

Oh Yes, It's Ladies Night Over Afghanistan

Early on Jan. 31, a KC-135 Stratotanker took off from Ganci Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, carrying more than 180,000 pounds of fuel and an all-female crew — both pilots, a navigator and a boom operator. The event marked the first all-female crew to fly an air refueling mission into Afghanistan from Ganci. **Read more on Page 17**.

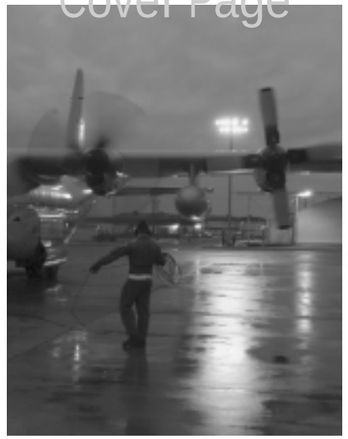


Photo by SSgt. James B. Pritchett

Alaska!

The Land of the Midnight Sun might just as well be called the Land of the Midday Moon. It's still dark outside as SSgt. Ed Scherzer prepares to board a WC-130H at 8 a.m. for a flight over the north Pacific. **Read more on Pages 10-12.**

Air Show

The Keesler Air Force Base Air Show is scheduled for April 12. The Air Force Reserve Command Jet Car will have demonstrations at 11:15 a.m. and 3:05 p.m.

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Volume 24, Issue 3

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Gulf Wing People

Photo by SSgt. Michael Duhe

Brig. Gen. Rick Ethredge, commander 403rd Wing, is flanked by his sons Brian and Chad as they button on his new shoulder boards during his promotion ceremony in February. Ethredge was officially authorized to wear his new rank Jan. 30, but decided to wait until Feb. 8 during the UTA to have them pinned on and to share the moment with the members of the wing.

Commander promoted

Airmen from the 403rd Wing gathered at Welch Theater Feb. 8 to see Col. Charles Ethredge accept a star and become a brigadier general.

Maj. Gen. James D. Bankers, commander, 22nd Air Force, Air Force Reserve Command, presided over the ceremonies.

Ethredge said during his speech that many people, including the members of the 403rd Wing contributed to his earning the rank.

In attendance were Ethredge's wife Angela and his sons Brian and Chad.

Mrs. Ethredge assisted Bankers in pinning on the general's new stars and his sons participated in the promotion by buttoning on his new shoulder boards.

His brother Don and family also came for the ceremony as well as his mother-in-law Henrietta Kennerly.

Also in attendance were several other distinguished visitors including Mr. Jim Borsig, chief administrator, City of Biloxi; Mrs. Myrtis Franke, senior staff member of Senator Trent Lott's home office; Mr. Rex Kelly, director of Public Relations for Mississippi Power; Mr. Jerry Smith, chief administrative officer for the city of Gulfport; Brig. Gen. Michael Peterson, commander of the 81st Training Wing and Keesler Air Force Base and Maj. Gen. John Regni, commander of the 2nd Air Force, Keesler AFB.

Gulf Wing Salutes

NEWCOMERS

SrA Stephen S. Brake, 403rd MXS
AB Dyrell L. Carson, 403rd LRS
Capt. Gregory P. Goergen, 403rd ASTS
Capt. Shannon D. Hailes, 403rd OSF
SrA William C. Jones, 403rd SFS
A1C Stacy T Keyes, 403rd MXS
2Lt. Helen A. McCain 403rd ASTS
TSgt. Roberta L. McQuay, 403rd ASTS
A1C Jennifer M. Reynolds, 815th AS
MSgt. Darlene S. Roberts, 403rd ASTS
SrA Chris A. Sharp, 403rd OSF
SrA Jeremy C. Williams, 403rd CES

Pay Date
March 19
Next UTA
April 5-6

Photo by SSgt. Michael Duhe

Need Tagline

Staff Sgt. Kevin Shows and Staff Sgt. Augusto Ladaban, HVAC mechanics with the 403rd Civil Engineer Squadron, take inventory of tools stored in one of the squadron's CONEX containers.

Airmen compete for officer positions

By SSgt. Michael Duhe
Senior Staff Writer

The Deserving Airman Commissioning Program is allowing noncommissioned officers to earn gold bars as they stay with their units.

Becoming an officer in the Air Force Reserve Command through the DCAP has benefits for both the unit and the airman. It allows Reserve members who want to advance their miltary careers without affecting their civilian lives to fill officer vacancies in the unit where they currently attend drills.

In the past, recruiters filled vacancies based on needs of a unit. This meant unit commanders rarely knew the person who would fill an opening.

Through the DACP, commanders are given an opportunity to select the most qualified individual while retaining members within the wing who desire a commission.

"The 403rd Wing has been using this process and has found that prior enlisted members are making great officers," said Lt. Col. Gary Flynn, deputy commander, 403rd Mission Support Group, who is making every effort to ensure the word gets out about the program and openings as they arise.

The application process takes some initiative by interested airmen. NCOs first put together an application package, take the Air Force Officer Qualification Test and then meet a board for each position they are interested in filling.

Some of the factors bearing on the selection include, but are not limited to, an applicant's potential, Reserve participation, education, civilian employment, and supervisor's comments.

Members who have earned a degree or are currently obtaining a degree can begin the process immediately. As soon as openings become known, they will be posted to the squadrons. A degree does not have to pertain to the position, but any experience in the area is helpful.

The selection criteria for DACP eligibility includes:

- A baccalaureate or higher degree.
- Cannot exceed the age of 35 (waivers may be granted).
- Agree to meet the training requirements for the training category in which assigned and remain assigned for three years (non-rated officers) after appointment.
- Agree to attend officer training.
- Achieve minimum Air Force Officers Qualifying Test scores.
- Complete a commissioning physical.

Second Lt. Shari Crenshaw is a member of the 403rd Wing who took advantage of DACP to earn a commission.

"Having served as an enlisted person with the 403rd Security Forces Squadron, I found out that the process really does work," she said. "The only advice I would give to interested people is to be patient and persistent and to trust the process."

Crenshaw recently met with unit commanders to explain DACP. As word of the program filtered through the wing following the meeting, several people called Customer Service expressing interest in DACP, she said.

For information on DACP and the application process, call the 403rd Customer Service office at 228-377-2493 or stop by and visit. The office is located on the second floor of the wing headquarters building 0223.

Black Heritage Committee offers college money

By 2nd Lt. Tim Smith
Deputy Director, Public Affairs

A college education can be a very expensive investment. For more than a decade, the 403rd Wing's Black Heritage Committee has sponsored a scholarship program to help deserving students pay for college.

BHC co-chairman, Lt. Col. Jon Rivera, chief of intelligence, 403rd OSF, said the BHC is unique to the wing and the Air Force Reserve Command.

"We are the only AFRC BHC operating and there are only a few committees in the Air Force that offer a scholarship," said Rivera.

The BHC scholarship program won't give someone a free ride to college, but it is there to help an individual trim the costs of college.

Rivera said over the years the committee has given scholarships ranging from $200 to $2,000.

The money can pay for a semester's worth of books, a meal plan, some academic fees, or any other expenses. It's money a student won't have to take time raising or earning on his own.

Rivera said the BHC usually gives out two scholarships each year. One of the scholarships is the Senior Master Sgt. Curtis Walker Memorial Fund.

"He was a branch chief here and the founding father of the organization," said BHC treasurer, Tech. Sgt. Bobby Bracy, survival equipment technician, 403rd MXG.

This community bands together each year to raise funds for college or college-bound students. Bracy said all of the money for the scholarships comes from donations. Committee members use their own money to pay for expenses associated with BHC programs.

"Take the Gospel Fest we just had," said Bracy. "Committee members got together and we spent a lot of money on it, because we take pride in what we do. We have a pool party that's usually scheduled around the July-August time frame. Those are our two largest fundraisers."

The Gospel Fest held in February netted close to $500, said Bracy. The money is normally given two months after the event during a BHC banquet.

This year's awards may be a little heftier than in the past. The BHC was not able to have its Gospel Fest until September, said Bracy. "So that money builds upon the most recent fundraiser."

To qualify for a BHC scholarship, a student must submit an essay and an official, verifiable transcript to the committee. For information about how to apply, call Bracy at 228-377-4497.

Two-man APS team tackles tundra

By SSgt. James B. Pritchett
Editor

ELMENDORF AFB, Alaska—It takes tons of nuts, bolts and other spare parts to keep a WC-130 in the air. When the crews are operating from a location more than 4,500 miles from home, it takes a small team of experts to make sure all those parts are moved safely there and back.

When the Hurricane Hunters deployed to Elemendorf AFB, Alaska to fly winter weather reconnaissance missions in January and February, the 41st Aerial Port Squadron sent along people who know how to load these things so they can be moved from one place to another.

Tech. Sgt. Steve Martin, an air transportation specialist with the 41st APS, was in charge of the aerial port mission for the second rotation to Alaska.

"Our job is the same here as it is at our home station," said Martin. "When maintenance is deploying equipment, they need us along to ensure all the loading, inspections and paperwork are correct."

This was Martin's first visit to Alaska along with Senior Airman Jason Fraser-Nash, who is also an air transportation specialist for the 41st APS.

"During the first week we were here, the 403rd Maintenance folks did not need a lot of help, so we augmented the active

Photo by SSgt. James B. Pritchett

Tech. Sgt. Steve Martin, air transportation specialist, measures the size of a prop which must be loaded on a WC-130 returning to Keesler from Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.

Photo by SSgt. James B. Pritchett

duty aerial port here at Elmendorf," Martin said. "During the second week, we began prepping loads for the redeployment."

"We did a lot of training with the active duty," said Fraser-Nash. "I gained a lot of experience working with the active duty."

Martin is a traditional reservist who has been with the 403rd for 15 years this month. Fraser-Nash is relatively new to the unit having been a traditional reservist for only one year.

"I learned a lot on this trip," said Fraser-Nash. "I've learned about 70 percent of what I know about this job in the last two weeks. I was able to pick up a lot about policies and procedures and also gained a lot of hands-on experience and familiarization with the process."

Those policies and procedures are what APS lives by when it comes to taking care of the all that equipment.

"We start by determining what the unit needs to put on the aircraft. We help them with any questions they may have about packing their containers and show them how to load pallets and fill out the paperwork before they bring it to us for inspection," Martin said.

He emphasized the importance of planning ahead. Aerial port specialists know the proper way to tie down an engine rack and the correct way to secure a spare prop as well as the standards for loading a CONEX container with tools and spare parts.

"The paperwork is very important. By completing packing lists and load lists, we are able to tell the loadmaster everything that is on the aircraft," Martin said. "This is essential in preventing a disaster. If the loadmaster has to jettison equipment due to an in-flight emergency, he knows what he can get rid of quickly. We also don't want any of the equipment to come loose during the flight. If it weighs more than it is supposed to or is improperly secured, it could cause some serious damage to the aircraft."

A day or two before they were scheduled to depart, Martin and Fraser-Nash began the process of checking all the containers to make sure everything was stowed away and labeled according to standards.

For example, one container had a label identifying it as magnetized. Martin explained, that if he was not aware of that issue, the container might be loaded on the plane near the bulkhead and that could affect the integrity of the aircraft.

"Before anything is loaded, we conduct inspections to make sure every item is ready to go. We check for leaks like hydraulic fluid, brake fluid or fuel and then weigh each item and container."

"Our main objectives are to ensure the safety of the aircraft and aircrew members and to give the loadmasters easy access to any equipment on their planes," he said.

41st APS and 403rd MXG airmen work with the active duty at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska to unload equipment from a WC-130J used to transport mission-essential equipment to the remote location.

Maintenance battles icy flightline

By SSgt. James B. Pritchett
Editor

ELMENDORF AFB, Alaska—Long before a plane can take off, 403rd Maintenance is on the ground "kicking the tires" and "checking under the hood."

During a month-long deployment to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska in January and February, maintenance and other support teams traveled to our nation's last frontier to support the Hurricane Hunters in their winter storm reconnaissance missions.

"We arrive four hours before a flight to ensure everything is ready to go," said 2nd Lt. Bo Shelton, who was in charge of the maintenance and support elements during the second rotation. "We have technicians who are responsible for inspecting all the different systems on the aircraft and skilled people standing by waiting to correct any problems that might be discovered either before or after a flight."

"It's our job to make sure the planes are mission ready when they are needed, whether we are at Keesler or anyplace else we may go," he said. "In that respect, our jobs are not that much different than they are at home. We bring everything we need to keep them flying with us from nuts and bolts to a spare engine and spare tires to tools and diagnostic equipment."

Tech. Sgt. Ernie Brady, a crew chief, discovered what seemed to be a pinhole leak on a tire during a routine inspection.

"We'll call out the expert who has the equipment to test this and see if it has to be replaced," Brady said.

Freezing temperatures provided the biggest challenge for Shelton and his people during the deployment. When temperatures drop into the teens or even lower, just getting out on the flight line can become a challenge, he said. During the first three weeks several days were marked by bitter temperatures and ice as slick as oiled glass.

"In these kinds of temperatures, everything takes a little longer," said Shelton. "Even with ice spikes on our shoes, normal day-to-day operations were slower."

In addition to their normal pre-flight routines, when it was below freezing, they also had to conduct de-icing operations on the aircraft.

"There were times when it was so cold and so icy that we were the only people on the flight line," he said. "The active duty had closed the flight line due to ice, but that's the time when our aircrews needed to fly."

Temperatures climbed up into the 40s, 50s and even low 60s for the last week of the mission. Still cold for folks who are used to the Gulf Coast, but tolerable for most of the maintenance team.

"This was my first trip here, and I'm glad it wasn't that cold," said Master Sgt. Thomas Murray

Shift Supervisor, Senior Master Sgt. Al Hardaway, said, "Everybody did a good job. We were able to get all the missions off on time and we did it safely. Bringing everyone back in one piece is very important."

"We have been safety conscious throughout the rotation," Shelton said. "Everyone did their jobs and did them safely. I can't ask for anything more than that."

Photo by SSgt. James B. Pritchett

Tech. Sgt. Ernie Brady, crew chief, inspects a tire on a WC-130H at Elmendorf AFB, Alsaska.

north to alaska

Photo by SSgt. James B. Pritchett

By SSgt. James B. Pritchett
Editor
on assignment at
ELEMENDORF AFB, Alaska

Alaska! Called the "Land of the Midnight Sun," and our "Last Frontier," could just as easily be called the "Land of the Midday Moon," at least during the winter months.

When Hurricane Hunter crews arrived at 6:45 a.m. for a winter weather reconnaissance mission, it was pitch black outside. Even the weak reflection of the moonlight was at an odd angle 30 degrees or so off the southern horizon. Two hours later, when they were ready to take off, twilight was only just beginning.

Photo by SSgt. James B. Pritchett

Winter weather reconnaissance missions have a much different flavor than the Hurricane Hunters' better-known mission.

There is no well-formed "eye" of the storm. In fact, there may not even be a storm -- just a weather pattern crossing the Pacific Ocean. The Hurricane Hunters fly synoptic patterns, huge ovals sometimes more than 3,000 miles round-trip, releasing dropsondes from 30,000 feet. Since 1998, they have been flying these frosty missions in support of the National Centers for Environmental Prediction.

The 53rd flew 11 missions from Elmendorf between mid-January and mid-February. Like hurricane missions, some of the flights lasted more than 12 hours.

Over the course of the month-long deployment, 53rd WRS crews released hundreds of dropsondes which collected valuable data during their rapid fall to the icy ocean.

Data collected by the sondes is first gathered and examined for integrity in the aircraft by dropsonde systems operators.

"The sondes fall at about 2,500 feet per minute and transmit several types of information such as wind speed and direction, atmospheric pressure, temperature and humidity," said Staff Sgt. Matt Couch, a dropsonde systems operator.

Once the crew examines the data for quality, it's transmitted to the NCEP. The NCEP requests the flight taskings, according to Maj. Kurt Nelson, an aerial reconnaissance weather officer, and the 53d WRS responds. Much of the weather coming across the Pacific is not actively monitored, except by satellite, after it leaves Japan.

"These missions are the 'human touch' needed to gather data for the current weather models," he said. "The data that's gathered isn't available from any other source."

These flights "help fill-in-the-blanks" or bolster the data in computer climate models that forecast storms and precipitation for the entire U.S.

Photo by SSgt. James B. Pritchett

(Top) It's still dark outside as SSgt. Ed Scherzer, dropsonde operator, prepares to board a WC-130H at 8 a.m. for a flight over the north Pacific.
(Right) SSgt. Matt Couch opens an atmospheric dropsonde. Twenty-six were ejected on this flight Feb. 13.

Courtesy Photo: 815th AS

An Army Humvee exits a C-130J aircraft on a dirt airstrip as an 815th AS loadmaster directs the driver. This training mission and many other routine tactical training missions keep pilots and aircrew qualified and proficient to support any contingency they may be called on to perform. The Flying Jennies have participated in several joint exercises with the Army to test the J-model's transport and deployment capabilities.

815th: One way or another

By SSgt. James B. Pritchett
Editor

Tarmac, dirt airstrip, expedient landing zone — It doesn't much matter to the Flying Jennies of the 815th Airlift Squadron. One way or another, they deliver their cargo and or passengers with the expertise gained from many years of tactical airlift missions.

Airlift is the movement of people and resources to the right place at the right time.

Organizing,training,and equipping airlift forces has been an evolving science since the 1920s. Since WWII, the 815th has performed a variety of missions; bombardment, target identification and tracking, weather recon and airlift.

The 815th first became a force in airlift as a Troop Carrier Squadron during the Korean War.

Current U.S. military doctrine calls for the quick response of airlift to meet many of the needs encountered in the opening phases of conflict. Training for these contingencies is the day-to-day mission of the Flying Jennies.

As the only flying squadron in the 403rd with pilots and loadmasters trained and qualified to fly tactical airlift missions, the men and women of the 815th have already answered the call to support operations at home and overseas since the terrorist attacks of 9-11.

"We have been flying airlift support missions for some time," according to Lt. Col. Pat Ryan, commander of the 815th AS. "We routinely fly both the C-130J and WC-130J aircraft to support routine airlift, joint training and Reserve Airlift Support missions."

There are currently seven WC-130J and four C-130J aircraft assigned to the flying squadrons of the 403rd Wing. Normally, only two WC-130Js are usually configured for weather missions. The other aircraft are flown for pilot and crew proficiency training and to support the airlift missions.

When all of the new J-models have been delivered, the 815th will have a total of eight C-130J aircraft to accomplish their missions.

"Currently, we are continuing overwater and assault training while getting our crews ready for those types of missions," said Ryan. "In addition, we have flown missions to Hawaii, Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America. We also frequently work with the Army, flying troops and equipment from Florida, Alabama and the Carolinas. This joint training affords our aircrews and Army troopers an opportunity to refine their combat procedures."

While all this is going on, the 815th is also leading the way for other units to gain experience in the J-model. Since they are on the leading edge of the J-model conversion, members of the 815th are also conducting schools for Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve Command and Air Education and Training Command pilots.

The 815th has trained active duty as well as reserve pilots and even a British officer.

"We are helping the major commands get their people trained and into position so that overall C-130J operations benefit," said Ryan.

Airmen deploy

Members of the 403rd Civil Engineering Squadron deployed in February to the U.S. Central Command Area of Operations to support the global war on terrorism and to prepare for future contingencies as may be directed.

Deserving Airmen

Upcoming Deserving Airman Boards are scheduled to meet with the purpose of identifying wing enlisted personnel deserving of a commission and interested in the following officer positions: March UTA, 403rd Operations Group, Executive Officer position; April UTA, 815th Airlift Squadron, Executive Officer position; May UTA, 403rd Operations Support Flight, Intelligence Officer position. For information, contact the MPF at 377-2493.

Toll Free Lodging Line

A toll-free number to reach any base lodging operation in the continental United States has been established by the Air Force Services Agency. The number is (888) 235-6343.

myPay Improves Service

A revamped website is providing military and civilian DoD employees with easier access and greater control over their pay accounts.

The site, formerly E/MSS, is located at https://emss.dfas.mil/mypay.asp

The site requires a PIN number to access information such as Leave and Earnings Statements.

Free Child-care

Certain Air Force people returning from overseas deployments supporting Operation Enduring Freedom are eligible for free child-care.

The Extended Duty Child-Care Program will provide the service for up to 16 hours per child under 12 years old. The child-care is available to active-duty, Reserve and Guard members and is designed to help returnees as they settle back into their home stations.

People must have been deployed for more than 30 days to be eligible and the care must be used within 30 days of returning from deployment. The service will be provided on a space-available basis. If care is not available when requested, the family child-care office will work to have it reserved for a later date.

Parents should contact base family child-care coordinators or the family member programs flight chief within their local services squadrons for information on availability and eligibility requirements.

For information, call the Keesler Family Child Care Office at 377-3189/5935/3077.

DoD Bass Tournament

The 78th Mission Support Group, Civilian Recreation Division, Robins AFB, Ga. is sponsoring the 2003 DoD Team Bass Tournament. The tournament will be held at Goose Pond Colony, Lake Guntersville, Ala. March 31-April 4.

The tournament is open to all U.S. military, active, reserve, guard, retired and their ID card holding family members, ages 16-23. In addition DoD civilians and DoD contractors holding current DoD credentials are welcome to participate.

For information on registration, cost, rules, and schedules, contact Lynne Brackett at (478) 922-4415, or e-mail Lynne.Brackett@robins.af.mil

Insurance Rates

Premium rates for both Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Family Member SGLI (FSGLI) are being reduced effective 1 Jul 03. This is an automatic decrease and no update action is required.

Members who previously elected to decline or reduce coverage must complete a certification of good health, SGLV 8285 for SGLI and SGLV 8285A for FSGLI, before restoring or increasing SGLI or FSGLI coverage.

Contact Customer Service, 377-3203/2276 for additional information.

Bypass Testing

Up to 30 hours of college bypass testing credit can be used to complete a 64-hour Community College of the Air Force degree.

CCAF credits may also be applied toward bachelor's degrees. For information, call 377-4408.

Gulf Wing Reflections

Originally printed in the February 1990 issue of the wing magazine.

File Photo

Welcome Home

Tech. Sgt. Harry Smith, a crew chief with the 403rd CAMS, his wife Cheryl and daughter Jennifer, are interviewed by a local media representative shortly after his return from Panama where he and other reservists supported Operation Just Cause.

Recycle Uniforms

The Ocean Springs-Keesler Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol accepts donations of uniforms for its cadets.

The uniforms can be from recently retired or separated military and those who no longer need their old uniforms.

The unit also accepts accessories such as belts and buckles, neckties, sweaters and service coats.

For more information or to make a donation, call CAP 2nd Lt. Marie Haberstroh, 377- 3248.

Troops to Teachers

For general information on the Troops to Teachers program, visit http://voled.doded.mil.

For information on the Mississippi Troops to Teachers program, call Chris Carey, (800) MISS-TEACH.

Education Services

Education services are available in the Wing Training Office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday of the UTA, and 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. For information, call Tech. Sgt. Brett Blanchard at 377-4408.

Don't Reveal APO

World events have Air Force postal officials re-emphasizing the need for security when using the military mail system.

In particular, postal officials are concerned that airmen might not use an appropriate amount of discretion when distributing their overseas mailing addresses.

To reduce the vulnerability of using the mail system as a means to attack military people abroad, the Department of Defense officially suspended all "any servicemember"-type mail programs in late 2000.

While the Air Force is emphasizing that people keep a short leash on their APO addresses, officials recognize that the public wants to show support for its troops.

There are electronic 'any servicemember' programs and citizens can support the United Services Organization and the Red Cross. Both organizations go overseas.

Law protects benefits

for called-up private sector employees

WASHINGTON– In mid-January, Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao unveiled updated information to help reservists preparing to be deployed understand their rights to pension and health benefits coverage available through private sector employers.

"Military reservists should have confidence that while they are serving their country on active duty their job pension and health benefits will continue for their families," Chao said.

"That is why we have developed information to familiarize reservists and family members with the federal law that protects these benefits," she said.

"Many troops will be called to serve. This represents a great sacrifice by reservists, guardsmen and employers who must carry on without the services of these valuable employees during our fight against terrorism and to preserve the freedom cherished by Americans."

"Frequently Asked Questions for Reservists Being Called to Active Duty" provides basic information about how retirement benefits of reservists are protected during service to their country.

It also describes the rights of family members to maintain health coverage, including the right to keep coverage under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, as well as the various health benefit options available to family members.

A copy of the questions and answers can be obtained on the department's website at www.dol.gov/pwba

The public also may call with questions through PWBA's toll-free employee and employer hotline at (866) 275-7922 or electronically at www.askpwba.dol.gov

AFRC News Service

Air Force identifies race, ethnic categories

By 1st Lt. Brandon Lingle
Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs

RANDOPLH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas—Mixed-race airmen are now able to identify more than one race in their official personnel files because of a change in how the Air Force records racial information. Also, each person can list his or her ethnicity.

Some race designations will automatically change to fit the new categories as part of the data conversion. The new categories are part of a government-wide effort to standardize race data.

"Everyone should take a minute to ensure their race preference is correct," said Col. Gary Smith, chief of the field activities division at the Air Force Personnel Center here.

In the past, airmen could select only one race preference, said Senior Master Sgt. Richard Knudson, superintendent of the military equal opportunity branch at AFPC. Now, they will be able to select any number of five newly designated race groups.

The revamped choices are American Indian or Alaska native, Asian, black or African-American, native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander, and white.

The easiest way for people to view and update their racial designation is on the Virtual Military Personnel Flight by clicking the "vMPF" button at http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/. Race choices and descriptions of the new categories are located on the "personal information" page under the "records review" link, Knudson said.

"Most people's current race selections will smoothly transfer into the new categories," said Knudson.

But some categories will automatically be re-designated. "Asian/Pacific Islander" will be converted to the "Asian" category, plus the former "other" and "unknown" options will be switched to the new "declined to respond" category.

The federal guidelines also ask about people about their ethnic origin, he said. Now all airmen will be asked whether or not they are of Hispanic or Latino descent.

For more information, call the Air Force Contact Center toll-free at (866) 229-7074 or DSN 665-5000 or by visiting your local personnel flight.

Program keeps pilots awake

By Master Sgt. Scott Elliott
Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON— Fatigue kills.

In the high-speed, high-stress environment of the combat aviator, it is a fact of life, and Air Force officials are doing what they can to ensure aircrew members are armed with the ability to fight an internal enemy that is potentially as deadly as a surface-to-air missile.

Those officials added that people who have been awake for 24-continuous hours react equivalent to someone with a blood alcohol content of .10, which is considered legally intoxicated in most states. A person who has been awake for 18-continuous hours has the equivalent BAC of .05.

That potential loss of motor skills is what prompted the Air Force to develop the fatigue-management program for aircrews who are tasked with extremely long missions.

According to Col. Tom Hyde, chief of "Checkmate," the Air Force chief of staff's directorate for air and space strategy development, the fatigue-management program is the pilot's set of tools to remain awake and alert during extremely long flights.

"The tools we have available are diet, exercise, sleep cycles and a medication program," Hyde said. "When you (use) all four in combination, it ends up being a reasonable and prudent approach in order to combat fatigue."

When a person is physically fit, Hyde said, the body is better able to handle stresses, including an interrupted sleep cycle, deployment and family separation.

Although most elements of the fatigue-management program are preflight, Hyde said there are some things crewmembers can do to stay alert even while strapped into their ejection seats. Those fatigue-fighting techniques include stretches, G-suit and oxygen system adjustments, and snacking.

The fatigue-management tool of last resort is a doctor-prescribed stimulant.

Only fighter and bomber crewmembers are authorized stimulants, Hyde said, because commanders have the option to augment tanker and airlift aircraft with additional pilots.

The "go pill," as it is commonly called, is a 5- or 10-milligram dose of Dexedrine. Dexedrine is the same medication routinely prescribed to treat attention deficit disorder. At the prescribed dosage, the stimulating effect of Dexedrine wears off after about four hours.

"The dosage is not too strong," Hyde said. "It's just designed to take the edge off."

Before pilots are authorized to fly after taking a "go pill," they must complete a prescribed testing protocol to determine how the medication will affect each pilot's body. The details are recorded in the pilot's medical records.

Before lengthy missions, and after consulting with their commanders and flight surgeons, pilots decide whether or not they want to take the pills with them on the mission. Then, it is up to the individual pilot as to whether or not to take the pill, Hyde said.

"When you walk out the door to fly (an) extended mission, do you have to take it with you? No," he said. "Is it advisable? Sure, but it's up to you whether or not to use it.

"It's (prescribed) under a doctor's care and with commander involvement," he said. "It's done with the full consent of the individual taking it."

Aircraft on bombing runs can approach a target at about 1,000 feet per second, Hyde said.

In air-to-air engagements, aircraft can close in on each other at up to double that speed.

"When you get an idea of how fast things are moving through space, there is a lot that can happen as a result of a one- or two-second delay in making a decision," he said.

As a former squadron and group commander who has more than 3,300 flying hours, Hyde knows firsthand how fatigue can affect a pilot at those speeds.

"If you look at those instances where, after the fact, I said 'What was I thinking?' about 80 percent of the time it could be tied back to fatigue," he said.

According to a study by the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, fatigue was a contributing factor in 101 Air Force Class A mishaps from 1977 to 1997.

A Class A mishap is defined as an aircraft accident resulting in damages of $1 million or more or the total destruction of an Air Force aircraft. An accident can also be considered Class A if it involves a fatality or permanent total disability."

"Fatigue's a killer out there," he said.

Mobilization may affect child support responsibilities

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- Mobilized reservists who have a child support order can seek assistance from their state child support agency, especially under the following circumstances:

- Level of income has changed or will change as the result of mobilization. They may be eligible for the agency to review and adjust the amount of their support order.
- Support payments are being withheld from military paycheck. The state agency can ensure the withholding is transferred to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service on a timely basis to prevent or minimize missed payments. Reservists can ask their civilian employer to tell the state agency about their deployment and to provide other needed information.
- A child support hearing is scheduled. The agency can tell the court or hearing officer about the reservist's service status and can attempt to have the hearing rescheduled.
- The child support order includes health care coverage. Children of mobilized reservists are eligible for TRICARE health coverage, and the agency may be able to help enroll them in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, a prerequisite to obtaining coverage.

Passports of people who owe $5,000 or more in past-due child support are withheld until arrangements are made with the state child support agency for paying off the debt. Some states require the debt to be paid before the passport is made available. If reservists need a passport to complete their military duties, this could create a problem for them, as well as their unit.

For more information on child support issues, mobilized Air Force reservists can contact the nearest active-duty legal office or their Air Force Reserve Command wing legal office.

AFRC News Service

Oh Yes, It's Ladies' Night over Afghanistan

By Capt. Elizabeth Ortiz
376th Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (AFPN)— In one of her songs, country singer Shania Twain croons about all the things women do these days — they are judges, politicians, doctors and soldiers, to name a few.

Not mentioned in the song, but occurring more frequently as the global war on terrorism continues, is something else: female fliers in combat missions over Afghanistan.

Early on Jan. 31, a KC-135 Stratotanker took off from Ganci Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, carrying more than 180,000 pounds of fuel and an all-female crew — both pilots, a navigator and a boom operator.

The event marked the first all-female crew to fly an air refueling mission into Afghanistan from Ganci.

"We've been really lucky," said 1st Lt. Alison, the navigator on board. Last names are being withheld for operational security. "You don't always deploy with a lot of women. The fact that we have four women on this deployment, and the fact that we make up a crew is amazing."

After living with each other in the same tent for almost two months, the women were eager to fly on the same mission.

"We've gotten along really well living together, so we were very excited to finally be able to fly together," said Capt. Waynetta, one of the two pilots on the mission.

(Clockwise from lower left) 1st Lt. Alison, Capts. Heather and Waynetta and, Senior Airman Lyndi, all from the 376th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, flew an all-female KC-135 Stratotanker air refueling mission over Afghanistan on Jan. 31.

The women, including the other pilot, Capt. Heather, and the boom operator, Senior Airman Lyndi, are all assigned to the 99th Air Refueling Squadron at Robins Air Force Base, Ga. They have been deployed here since Dec. 9.

Once inside the tanker, the women began their preflight and take-off duties with an ease borne of plenty of experience and skill. Most of them have deployed before, to places like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iceland and Thailand.

Between the four of them, they total almost 4,000 flying hours in the KC-135.

The flight path to Afghanistan traversed three of the "Stans." The country itself remains a dangerous place. Just a few days before the historic flight, coalition forces on the ground encountered the heaviest fighting since Operation Anaconda last year. Norwegian F-16s from Ganci dropped munitions in support from the air.

Once over Afghanistan, the crew got down to business, refueling F-16s from the European participating air forces of Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. Based at Ganci, the aircraft provide combat air support to coalition ground forces.

In the refueling world, the motto is, "Nobody kicks ass without tanker gas." The crew emulated that motto when the boom operator connected two moving aircraft together on a night with 1 percent moon illumination.

"It's awesome knowing that I'm having a direct impact on the mission," said Lyndi on her 17th combat mission over Afghanistan.

"The fighters couldn't put bombs on target without gas, and I'm the one who gets it to them," she said.

More than 50,000 combat missions have been flown in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

In all, Lyndi refueled 10 European F-16s during the flight, off-loading 63,000 pounds of fuel.

"I'm accomplishing something with my Air Force career," said Alison.

This is especially true in the case of OEF, an operation that more than 1,800 women support, according to the public affairs office at Central Air Forces, the air component of U.S. Central Command.

"I've always thought the greatest thing I could do with my life was to serve my country and be willing to die for it — for my family, my neighbors, people I don't even know," Waynetta said. "Now, we're here supporting troops in Afghanistan who are defending our freedom and way of life."

Basking in the early morning sunlight, the tanker headed back to Ganci.

As the snow-capped mountains poked out above the clouds, the women reflected on the significance of the flight.

"All we wanted was to fly together," said Lyndi. "I'm so excited we got to do it."

"We believe in equality," Waynetta said. "But, the fact of the matter is, we're still girls, and we're doing something our grandmothers couldn't do.

MOBILIZATION

Deployment Tax Filing Options

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- Mobilized Air Force reservists deploying overseas are not automatically excused from filing their federal income tax return, according to Air Force Reserve Command staff judge advocate officials here.

Deploying reservists have four options when it comes to filing taxes. They can file before they leave, authorize their spouse or trusted friend to sign and file for them, have their non-military or non-deploying spouse sign and file their joint tax return on their behalf, or use an extension if authorized.

Before deploying: If reservists have not received their Form W-2 in the mail, they can access it online by using a personal identification number via "My Pay Account" on the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Web site at https://emss.dfas.mil/mypay.asp .

Most active-duty locations offer a tax assistance program.

Members can electronically file their returns and opt for direct deposit of any refund into their checking accounts.

Authorizing another to file: To allow someone else to sign and file their return, reservists must:

- Be unable to sign the return because of disease or injury,
- Be absent from the United States for a period of at least 60 days before the due date for filing the return, or
- Get permission from the Internal Revenue Service office in their area to have another person file on their behalf.

They can authorize their agent to sign and file by using a special power of attorney or by using IRS Form 2848, which is available on the Web at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-fill/f2848.pdf

Filing a joint return: In this situation, a special power of attorney or IRS Form 2848 is not required. Married couples filing separate returns cannot take advantage of this option.

To find out what a state requires when reservists are deployed, they should consult with a tax preparer or a legal assistance officer.

AFRC News Service

Courtesy Photo: USAF Museum

Women Fly Into History

As early as 1930, the War Department had considered using women pilots but the Chief of the Air Corps had called the idea "utterly unfeasible", stating women were too "high strung."

Famed woman aviator Jacqueline Cochran in 1939 wrote Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt (wife of the President) to suggest women pilots could be used in a national emergency. Aviatrix Mrs. Nancy Harkness Love in 1940 made a similar proposal to the Air Corps' Ferry Command. Nothing was done until after American entry into World War II.

Facing the need for male combat pilots, the situation by mid-1943 favored the use of experienced women pilots to fly Army Air Forces (AAF) aircraft within the United States. Two women's aviator units were formed to ease this need and more than 1,000 women participated in these programs as civilians attached to the AAF. These were merged into a single group, the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program in August 1943 and broke ground for USAF female pilots who would follow in their footsteps.

TRICARE provides health care benefits information

WASHINGTON–To help reservists and their families understand their medical and dental benefits, TRICARE and the Department of Defense have assembled a variety of information products.

The products, which explain benefits for drilling reservists and those called to active duty and their families, are available by going to "Browse A to Z" on the http://www.tricare.osd.mil Web site and looking for Fact Sheets, News Releases or Reservist/National Guard Information.

The fact sheets include "Medical and Dental Care for Reserve Component Members and Their Families," "Transitional Health Care Benefits for Service Members and Their Families," "TRICARE Reserve Family Demonstration Project," "TRICARE Dental Program," and "TRICARE Prime Remote."

News releases are "What the Reserve Component Needs to Know About the TRICARE Dental Program" (Nov. 5, 2002); "DOD Provides Transitional Health Care Benefits for 60 or 120 Days" (Aug. 2, 2002); and "TRICARE Explains Health Care Benefits For Guard and Reserve; Announces New Demonstration Project Enhancing Family Member Benefits" (Nov. 27, 2001).

Another resource on the TRICARE Web page is the "Reserve Component Health Care Benefits Brochure."

"Frequently Asked Questions on Reserve Component Health Care" is available on the Web at www.defenselink.mil/ra/mobil/pdf/medical.pdf.

To receive benefits, reservists need to ensure the eligibility information on them and their families is up to date in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. If "loss of eligibility" appears in their DEERS records, reservists and their families are unable to make appointments, get prescriptions filled or have claims processed correctly.

To correct an error, the sponsor and his or her family need to update the information in DEERS, as well as in the sponsor's military personnel records. TRICARE officials suggest that sponsors visit the nearest ID card issuing facility and military personnel flight to ensure that their DEERS information is current and correct. For more information about DEERS or to update an address in DEERS, visit www.tricare.osd.mil/deers/

AFRC News Service

Defending against biological agents

By Col. Terrell Hebert

Commander, 403rd ASTS

During this past February UTA, we learned that our nation's terrorist threat level was elevated to "HIGH" and that our force protection level also required higher vigilance.

We recently learned declassified information from Secretary of State Colin Powell that our troops will be subjected to weapons of mass destruction should the Iraqi commanders come under attack from coalition forces. We have received renewed threats from Osama Bin Ladin. These threats are indeed serious, and the potential for devastating casualties is high especially for certain biological warfare agents.

Fortunately, with the use of our medical countermeasures either developed or under development, many casualties can be prevented and our fighting forces conserved. With the development of homeland defense, similar technologies can be used in the defense of our families, and indeed advanced contingency planning is underway. These are not popular topics, and no one is happy to become familiar with them, but we have much yet to do in terms of educating ourselves.

At the 403rd ASTS, we have held several briefings regarding the Anthrax immunizations that are underway, and are prepared for the Smallpox program. Unfortunately, there is more to contend with. The following highlights some concerns regarding the biological threats we must face from information taken from a Medscape article written by Dr. David Relman, of Stanford University.

Why the Concern?

Continuing political and military instability focuses sharp attention on the known capabilities and assets of nations such as North Korea, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Iraq, for example, admitted to the development of nearly 400 missile warheads, bombs, and rockets armed with botulinum toxin, anthrax, and aflatoxin, which were released for use by forward-deployed commanders during the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War.

The fate and whereabouts of these weapons and even larger stockpiles of weaponized agents remain uncertain. Certainly, the combination of an unstable and despotic Iraqi leadership with ties to well-organized terrorist organizations, and recurrent Iraqi military humiliation by the United States increases the level of concern, as do recent political developments in the wake of the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Of even more concern is the recently publicized history of massive biological weapons development in Russia beginning in the early 1970s and continuing into the 1990s. The agents purportedly stockpiled included Bacillus anthracis; variola virus (smallpox); various viral hemorrhagic fever agents; and a variety of nontraditional agents, including biological response modifiers. The disintegration of the Russian state infrastructure may have led to the defection of key personnel to hostile nations and organizations.

With respect to non-state-sponsored biological and chemical terrorism, Japan's Aum Shinrikyo cult reminds us of the potential capabilities of such organizations. The Aum cult produced botulinum toxin, B anthracis spores, and Coxiella burnetii, in addition to the nerve gas sarin and a wide array of other biological and chemical weaponry.

This cult visited Zaire during the 1992 Ebola fever outbreak, in an attempt to obtain Ebola virus samples for cultivation and weapon development. The cult's terrorist activities caused the deaths of 12 people from sarin gas exposure; anthrax was also used, but unsuccessfully.

Closer to home, in 1984, devotees of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh infected 751 people in Oregon with Salmonella typhimurium by intentionally contaminating local self-service salad bars. In 1996, a disgruntled hospital microbiology laboratory technician in Dallas intentionally infected 12 coworkers with Shigella dysenteriae. The deliberate distribution of B anthracis spores through the U.S. mail system in 2001 and associated cases of anthrax highlight the vulnerability of modern society and difficulties in defining origins and scope of the act.

Defending Against the Threat

On the subject of defense against biological weapons, as with many complicated, rapidly evolving issues, there is good news and bad news. **The good news:**

- Coordinated networks of epidemiologists, public health officials, clinicians, and laboratory investigators have begun to address infectious disease problems that are relevant both to the current health of the civilian population and to potential bioterrorism events. The anthrax outbreaks of September-October 2001 have further motivated the strengthening of public health infrastructure.
- Microbial detection technology and strategies are advancing significantly. A wide range of novel and sensitive methods are under investigation in the public, academic, and private sectors.
- Treatment and prevention countermeasures have received renewed attention and funding in an effort to identify new targets and pathways for intervention. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense has made biological warfare defense one of its top military priorities.

The bad news:

- Most of this relates to the sophistication and effectiveness of naturally occurring microorganisms as pathogens. Organisms that cause such infections as anthrax and smallpox have evolved shrewd strategies for rapid growth within humans, effective spread, and persistence in the environment. Determined efforts to package and disseminate these organisms will unavoidably present major challenges to our health and our health care system.
- Response by individuals and organizations at the local, regional, and national levels is not yet optimized.
- Engineered or modified biological agents present even more formidable challenges and problems.

Conclusions

The threat of a biological attack against a civilian population is now recognized as a current and ongoing danger. It has been considered serious enough to warrant the creation of an unprecedented civilian medical stockpile of medicines and vaccines against likely biological weapons. On the military side to we have trained extensively for this. The 403rd has accomplished numerous Anthrax briefings, is prepared to brief and administer the Smallpox program, and has prepared deploying airmen with all required immunizations. In March, we will start Cipro ground testing for aircrews. On the civilian side, our emergency procedures are now rapidly evolving, but there is much left to be done. We must look to our defense and keep our vision clear. We are reminded in Proverbs: 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Photo bySSgt. James B. Pritchett

Sunset Begins

A WC-130J arrives at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska at about 2:30 p.m. just as the sun begins to set on the Chugach Mountains. The aircraft was loaded up with equipment, tools and spare parts for the redeployment to Keesler after the Hurricane Hunters finished their winter weather reconnaissance mission Feb. 14.

Gulf Wing Go-Getter

Each Month the Gulf Wing is printed for people of the 403rd Wing like Staff Sgt. Darren Bannister of the 815th AS.

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