

Change of command - 710th medics in Germany - Under pressure

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing



**Reserve A-10 unit
forms at Moody AFB**

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Ten Soldiers I met one night

*Commentary by
Lt. Col. David Fahrenkrug
379th Expeditionary Operations
Support Squadron commander*

SOUTHWEST ASIA (AFP) —

The war in Afghanistan can often seem far away. Yet recently, the cost of war became very apparent. I did not know the Soldiers' names that night. They were simply passing through. The 10 Soldiers had finished their tour of duty in Afghanistan, but none of them were going home the way they intended. They were killed during a fierce battle near the village of Wanat in the Afghan province of Kunar. Their tour of duty cut short by insurgents determined to overrun a coalition operating base. The Taliban failed, but not without exacting a toll from American forces on the ground.

A small group of Airmen from across the base gathered that night to pay our respects and give these Soldiers

a final salute. The main ramp was a flurry of activity, typical these days, even at 1 a.m. But with the lights casting our shadows on the C-17 Globemaster III loading ramp, all of that faded away. My thoughts were only on those Soldiers and their families — their sacrifices and the loss their families must be feeling. These men died serving our country and I was humbled to be there that night to honor them. As I paid my respects, my heart ached for the families who will live with this pain for the rest of their lives.

This event demonstrates the reality of war. Airmen work so hard to overcome. These men died during an attack by a well-organized force of more than 200 insurgents. Insurgents seized an opportunity to attack a newly established forward operating base. Coalition forces were outnumbered three to one and they were not yet fully prepared to defend their base. Airpower; however, was there to make the difference. In less time than you will wait for a bus, Air

Force aircraft were overhead to identify insurgents and provide warning to other coalition forces and unleash destruction on the insurgents. The attack was defeated. Once again the insurgents witnessed the coalition's decisive advantage in fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan — airpower.

Airmen throughout Southwest Asia do everything they can to provide airpower for the defense of our forces and to defeat enemy forces who engage our troops or attack civilian populations. Airmen work tirelessly around the clock so Americans and coalition forces have the combat airpower they need precisely when they need it.

While it may be of little comfort to the families whose father, husband, or brother was killed fighting the war on terrorism, airpower did make a difference for dozens of others. The forward operating base at Wanat survived and Soldiers are alive today because airpower was there.

Uniform inspires act of honoring Airmen

*Commentary by Master Sgt. Donna Walle
56th Medical Group*

LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz. (AFP) — On a recent trip to a bookstore, I was approached by a man in his late 30s to early 40s.

He seemed nervous and upset; avoiding eye contact and shifting his weight from one foot to the other. My guard went up immediately. In 22 years of military service, I've heard some negative things said about the military, my branch of service, my choice of occupation given my gender, and the general displeasure with government policy at large. The challenge has always been not to take these statements personally.

In the early '90s at the height of Operation Desert Storm, I came up with the following response, delivered as nonconfrontationally as possible. "You seem to be very passionate about this and I take pride in helping defend your right to voice an opinion different from my own." Trust me when I say it works like a charm 99 percent of the time.

So here I was, ready with my trusty response, when the gentleman looked up at me, his eyes brimming with tears, and said, "I recently lost my brother in Iraq. I don't want to

talk about it because it's still too fresh, but it would mean the world to me if you would allow me to purchase those for you."

I was dumbstruck. I blinked back the tears welling up in my own eyes and tried desperately to keep my voice under control despite the lump quickly forming in my throat. I thanked him and walked to the waiting cashier.

When the transaction was completed, he thanked me several times. I shook his hand saying how sorry I was for his loss and thanked him for his generosity. He looked me directly in the eyes and said, with a smile spread across his face that emanated from deep within, "No, no ... thank you!"

To say I was humbled by this does not do justice to the experience itself. For that brief moment, I had the honor of representing something good and decent for this man who had suffered a deep personal loss. It reminded me once again never to take lightly what this uniform represents to those who see me wear it. For some, it can be a negative symbol of all that's wrong with the world, but for others it represents a beacon of hope and so much more.

May you wear your uniform with pride wherever you go. Always remember, you represent so much more than just the name embroidered above your right breast pocket.

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442nd Fighter Wing

** inside * inside * inside * inside **

Commentary page 2



CHANGE OF COMMAND

Col. Clemons
takes reins
PAGE 5

FLYING TIGERS

Reserve unit forms
at Moody AFB
PAGES 6 - 7



710TH MDS

Deployed reservists
fill role
PAGES 8 - 9

Wing construction page 10
Hydraulics Shop page 11

September 2008
Charge-of-quarters



SENIOR MASTER SGT. TIM STORMS 442ND MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

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COVER PHOTO: Lt. Col. Mickey Moore, Detachment 1, 442nd Fighter Wing, performs a preflight inspection on an A-10 Thunderbolt II at Moody Air Force Base, Ga. For more, see pages six and seven. (Photo by Master Sgt. Bill Huntington)

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442nd Fighter Wing Tip of the Spear

**TECH. SGT. LEO BROWN
442ND FIGHTER WING**

Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown is the embodiment of all the qualities of a 442nd FW Tip of the Spear and has been a prime mover in the successes of the Wing's Public Affairs office.

His vital input and expertise assisted the PA office in the successful launch of Wing's first-ever official public web site. This new "window" on 442nd FW provides the public with a fresh look at the wing, its mission and its historic role in the Air Force.

He plays an integral role in the planning and execution of all Wing Commanders Calls and devotes many extra hours ensuring flawless presentations. His meticulous planning is overshadowed only by his polished delivery as the Wing's primary emcee.

Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown's finely-tuned teaching skills, honed by 10 years as a high school teacher, makes him a perfect fit as the Public Affairs' primary briefer at the Wing Newcomers Flight orientation.

Always involved with continuous self-improvement, Sergeant Brown furthered his educational pursuits by earning a Master of Arts in School Leadership from Benedictine College.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MASTER SGT. VINCE McWILLIAMS

Recent deployment 442nd family affair

The 442nd Fighter Wing's recent deployment to Afghanistan turned into a family affair for some reservists as 16 members of seven wing families found themselves deployed together. Pictured in back row/front row sequence from the left are brothers and Captains Michael Larimore, 303rd Fighter Squadron, and Aaron Larimore, 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; father and daughter Tech. Sgt. Dusty Ross, 442nd AMXS, and Airman 1st Class Candy Ross, 442nd Maintenance Squadron; father and son Tech. Sgt. Elgin Cline and Senior Airman Jeremy Cline, both 442nd AMXS members; father and son Senior Master Sgt. Roy Santos and Senior Airman Jake Santos, both 442nd MXS members; uncle and niece Master Sgt. Micheal Bax, 442nd MXS and Senior Airman Heather Bax, 442nd AMXS; father, son and nephew Tech. Sgt. Vincent McWilliams, 442nd AMXS, Staff Sgt. Cameron McWilliams, 442nd MXS, and Senior Airman Trent Sims, 442nd Operations Support Flight; as well as wife, husband and brother Senior Master Sgt. Shevaun McRoberts, Master Sgt. Aaron McRoberts, and Staff Sgt. Nick McRoberts, 442nd AMXS members.

Brothers in arms cross paths in Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Rachel Martinez
455th Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Senior Airman Matthew Delgado, 21, made one last trip back home before deploying in May. He was set to deploy to Bagram, Afghanistan, and didn't expect to see his family for four months. Half-way into his deployment rotation, he was surprised when someone knocked on his dorm room door and told him his brother was waiting for him at the PX here.

Army Private First Class Jerin Delgado, 26, arrived at Bagram Airfield July 18 with his unit, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry, as they transitioned to a forward operating base in the region. The two brothers, from Cedar Hill, Texas, were able to spend a few days together.

"Of all places to run into your family — on the other side of the world in Afghanistan — how often does that happen?" said Airman Delgado. "I felt a little closer to home when my brother came."

Airman Delgado is deployed to the 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron here.

Even though he is scheduled to deploy to Iraq in 2009, he volunteered for this deployment.

"I wanted to do my part in the war against terror. I deployed here to (provide) Force Protection," said Airman Delgado, who performs F-16 maintenance inspections at his home station, Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas. "I feel my mission is very important over here. We are the first line of defense for this base."

Private Delgado is a combat medic, providing care to injured soldiers on the

front lines. Despite his brother's dangerous job, Airman Delgado said he doesn't worry too much.

"We both try not to think about it, because that makes things worse," he said. "I know my brother knows his job very well and I think that he will be fine."

Along with being brothers in different armed services, comes some rivalry.

"Oh well you know, all the normal older brother younger brother rivalry," said Airman Delgado. "I think it's standard across the board. Of course Army and Air Force - we all know of the rivalry there - but it's all in fun."

Rivalry aside, the Delgado brothers said they both signed up to serve their country - and that's what they are doing here with the added perk of serving together.

Change of command

Wing welcomes new commander Aug. 2



Led by Col. James Mackey, 442nd Fighter Wing vice commander, the wing stands in formation at the installation of Col. Mark Clemons as the wing's new

commander Aug. 2. Colonel Clemons replaced Col. Steve Arthur who will be 10th Air Force vice commander at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Ft. Worth, Texas.



Col. Mark Clemons surveys three formations of Citizen Airmen after taking command of the 442nd Fighter Wing Aug. 2, 2008. As the wing's commander, Colonel Clemons is responsible for the manning, training and combat readiness of approximately 1,200 Air Force reservists at Whiteman, two geographically separated units at Offutt AFB, Neb., and an A-10 detachment at Moody AFB, Ga. Colonel Clemons came to the 442nd after serving as the director of operations at 10th Air Force.

Tech. Sgt. Jim McGilton, a 442nd Fighter Wing crew chief, removes a decal to reveal the name of the wing's new commander, Col. Mark Clemons, during the ceremony.

PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

Piecing it together

Reservists build TFI Group at Moody AFB



The 76th Fighter Squadron's historic Flying Tiger shield.

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Bill Huntington

Moody Air Force Base, Ga. – The Air Force Reserve Command has come to the Flying Tigers at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., in the form of Total Force Integration and, if the stand up of AFRC's 476th Fighter Group is successful as planned, the effort will likely be apparent to no one except perhaps the reservists themselves.

A goal of TFI is to blend active-duty with members of the air reserve component to the point that Guard, Reserve and active-duty members would be indistinguishable from one another in all aspects of their operations. Other TFI efforts in the Air Force Reserve are currently underway at Nellis AFB, Nev., Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, and Holloman AFB, N.M.

Started in June 2007, as Detachment 1, 442nd Fighter Wing, as part of an ongoing Air Force-wide initiative to more efficiently carry out its mission, the Group will work under its own command structure but will integrate its operations with the 23rd Wing's 74th and 75th Fighter Squadrons and 23rd Maintenance Group.

The unit will include the 76th Fighter Squadron, the 476th Maintenance Squadron and the 476th Aerospace Medicine Flight.

The 76th FS will have 20 members assigned, there will be 160 in the 476th MXS, the 476th AMDF is slated to have 23 medical personnel with the rest will be assigned to the Group staff.

When all is said and done, more than 230 will be assigned to the Group.

Col. Greg Eckfeld, currently commanding the detachment, will be the Group's commander, 1st Lt. Alicia Warren, is the executive officer and Susan Sutter, is the Group's secretary.

Beside its several medical technician positions, the 476th AMDF will include flight surgeons, nurses and a dentist who will monitor the Group's medical readiness.

Most traditional maintenance disciplines, such as crew chiefs, loaders and munitions, will be assigned to the 476th MXS and will be commanded by Lt. Col. Pat Webb. Colonel Webb's "maintainers" include Capt. Melissa Tims, maintenance officer, Chief Master Sgt. Robin Chase, the MXS superintendent, Senior Airmen Tracey Robson and Jamie Losee, crew chiefs who are fully integrated into the 75th Fighter Squadron, Senior Airman Dunnuia Martin, a loader and Senior Airman Brandon Abel, munitions.

The flying operation currently has three pilots, Lt. Col. Mickey Moore, the director of operations, Capt. LaRue Russell, the director of training, and Capt. Brian Hatch who has been a mission planning cell chief with the 303rd FS at Whiteman AFB. The pilots are being fully integrated into the base's flying operations and will fly missions on the 23rd Wing's A-10Cs with the active-duty pilots as well as other Reserve pilots.

In June, Captain Russell became the first Reserve fighter pilot to fly an integrated sortie at Moody. Airman Robson was the crew chief for the mission. For the Captain, it was a great experience.

"It was very enjoyable to fly the C-model A-10 again," Captain Russell said. "The biggest challenges were remembering the things I learned about flying the A-10C and knocking the rust off."

Colonel Moore, an A-10 pilot with more than 3,700 flying hours, said flying the C-model A-10 is like the A-model but it has its own challenges.

"Flying the airplane is the same," Colonel Moore said. "The difficulty is how to employ the weapons and how to use the new 'toys' smartly. We have the situational awareness and the air sense. Now all of those things that accompany your flying abilities will marry up and we will be very good instructor pilots."

The focus of the reservists has been building up their unit and being able to fly again has been an important milestone in the process.

The unit will continue to train and build experience in the A-10C, said Colonel Eckfeld.

"We want to build a cadre of experience, both pilot and maintenance professionals," he said. "Our pilots are expected to continuously train and instruct Moody pilots."

Moody is proving to be a great operating location for the Group. The nearby range, so close that the sounds of the A-10's gun firing can be heard on base, will give the pilots an excellent opportunity to keep their skills sharp. The 23rd Wing's other flying mission with the 347th Rescue Group with its HC-130 Hercules and HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter, will enable the A-10 pilots to practice combat search and rescue exercises regularly.



Senior Airman Tracey Robson, a Detachment 1, 442nd Fighter Wing crew chief, opens an A-10 access panel under

the watchful eye of active-duty supervisor, Master Sgt. James Perdue, 23rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

The emphasis for the unit to this point has been to build up their maintenance capabilities. According to Colonel Moore as more maintainers come on board and are able to turn more aircraft with their active-duty counterparts, the unit becomes better situated to accept a greater number of pilots.

"I'd rather see them get healthy with maintenance and have them turn a lot of airplanes," Colonel Moore said. "Then we can start bringing in more pilots."

"The maintenance reservists work side-by-side with their counterparts and, according to Master Sgt. James Perdue, their 23rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron active-duty supervisor, each reservist is, "another one of the troops" on the ramp.

"For the most part, I treat them just like my guys from active-duty," Sergeant Perdue said of Airmen Robson and Losee. "Their training records are set up the same, they go to the same appointments and they are part of the same training process."

Sergeant Perdue understands the level of experience reservists can bring. When reservists passed through the F-16 maintenance course he had taught at Sheppard AFB, Texas, he felt that their presence was positive and beneficial.

"I learned from those guys," he said. "There were times when I had technical sergeants in my class who had been working the same airframe for 20 years. Airmen Robson and Losee are motivated and they (also) bring a lot of experience to the table."

"Sergeant Perdue is great," Airman Losee said. "He really takes care of us and you can't ask for too much more than that."

Airman Robson, with ten years of active-duty behind her as an F-16 crew chief, is glad for the opportunity to be working on the line again. She said one concern she had was a perception if the "older" reservists could hack it.

"Some of these guys think anything beyond 30 is old," Airman Robson joked. "But I think both (Airman Losee) and I have proven that we can handle the job."

She's quick to add that they've developed a good working relationship with the active-duty Airmen in the process.

"If we have questions," she said, "the guys here are pretty good about answering them and they've been asking us some questions too."

Conversely their active-duty counterparts on the flight line feel the reservists are a good addition.

"They fit in fine," said Airman 1st Class Dave Whiting, a 23rd AMXS crew chief. "They handle everything here the same as everyone else does and I think their being here will really benefit both sides."

"I'll take as many reservists as we can get," Sergeant Perdue added. "Especially if they are of the same caliber as the two we have."

The reservists' experiences integrating with the active-duty is helping to iron out any transition wrinkles that yet-to-be-assigned reservists might face. When an issue of how the reservists would be handled in the maintenance tracking system came up everyone worked to solve it.

"We tracked that down," Sergeant Perdue said. "Now that we have that process, we'll apply those same techniques to the next reservists."

Despite an unforeseen delay caused by an environmental impact study, TFI is a venture that's working slowly but surely at Moody and as the group grows and matures, it is proving to be just what was hoped for.

"It's different than being in a unit-equipped (organization) but different doesn't make it bad," Colonel Webb said. "It's one Air Force, one team, one fight and this really is the best way to secure a viable future for the Air Force Reserve. I recommend that people embrace it."

(Airman 1st Class Frances Locquiao, 23rd Wing Public Affairs, contributed to this article.)



PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN AMBER BRESSLER

Tech. Sgt. Shea Harkness, left, a reservist from the 710th Medical Squadron, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, helps

carry a wounded Marine from onboard a C-17 Globemaster at Ramstein Air Base Germany July 27

Two Citizen Airmen from the 710th MDS answer a

Compassionate calling

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany – Storage shelves at the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility here are loaded with bandages, syringes and pills of all sizes. The staff here isn't short on anything they need as they serve wounded troops flying in daily on C-17s and KC-135s from Iraq and Afghanistan.

They know that such items are necessary to accomplish their mission, but they also know that they have to keep well-stocked with mental strength, good humor and big hearts, especially given their clientele of young Soldiers and other military members, some of whom face enormous battles now that their combat time is over.

Two staff members on temporary duty with the CASF, Maj. Kuknomi Clarke and Tech. Sgt. Shea Harkness, both Air Force reservists with the 710th Medical Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., said they are doing one of the toughest jobs they've ever had. At the same time, they quickly add, that it's been one of the most rewarding.

The 710th MDS is part of the 442nd Fighter Wing at Whiteman AFB, Mo., but is a "geographically separated unit," located at Offutt.

Major Clarke, a registered nurse and the officer-in-charge of "Delta shift," a 12-hour stint, and Sergeant Harkness, a medical technician and in-house coordinator for the shift, said they wear many hats, depending on patients' needs, as they provide, in the major's words, "psycho-social support."

Their patients, depending on their injuries, are preparing to travel to the Landstuhl Army Medical Center, a 15-minute drive from here; or to the Ramstein flight-line for an eight-hour journey to Andrews Air Force Base, Md.

Sergeant Harkness, a former combat medic with the National Guard, said she's a jack-of-all-trades. She does everything from getting medical histories from patients and watching them for TBI – traumatic brain injury – to showing them where they'll sleep and where they can smoke.

"I have to be a mom, a medic, a big sister, a little sister, someone who will just listen," Sergeant Harkness said, adding that

one of the most important traits she and her co-workers have to show is compassion.

“Just realizing that these people have seen the most horrific things in their lives,” she said. “When I wake them up, I don’t touch them, because they’ll come up with fists ready to fight, because they’re still in battle.

“And I just want to take them to breakfast,” she said, smiling.

“You have to step back and realize what’s in their minds and remember that what they need in that moment is to know they’re safe – that they’re in the CASF in Germany,” Sergeant Harkness said.

“They really unload over a breakfast table,” she said. “My best counseling is done over an omelet. Their stories are battle-related and I try not to focus on the details – a blown-up vehicle or this person lost his leg. I just let them get that out and try to bring them back to a happier place and give them a little hope for a brighter future.”

“Some of (the wounded) have been down-range for months,” Major Clarke said. “They haven’t seen anything green – any trees – for a long time and their eyes just get big. You can see tears rolling down their cheeks. They’re young people – 18, 19, 20 years old.

“It is sad to watch those people – the amputees,” she said. Some, with both legs gone. They can give a smile. It’s heart-breaking to see and at the same time it’s rewarding, seeing them smile.”

“One sad story – I remember an amputee patient who lost both legs,” the major said. “He was trying to crawl. He looked sad, but in a way he tried to comfort us by smiling at us. He was maybe 23 or 24 years old.”

While most of the patients are young military members coming from combat, Major Clarke said there are exceptions. Their youngest patient was a three-day-old baby, born in the Middle East to a 22-year-old military member who didn’t know she was pregnant. Their oldest patient was an 80-year-old woman, a dependent of a retired member, who needed to get to the United States for medical treatment.

“One patient was three and a half years old,” she said. “A little boy from Iraq. He had 45 percent of his body burned when

some kind of propane tank blew up. He was being taken to Cincinnati, Ohio, to a burn center. We had a translator for his mom and I helped take care of her while we were waiting for transportation to the States. Her husband had been killed a year ago during the war.”

Both Citizen Airmen said they’ve seen everything from great success stories to the saddest of images.

“It’s sad, seeing the coffins with the remains of the dead,” Major Clarke said. “That’s one of the saddest things I’ve seen. They’ll have American flags spread over them. Everyone stands at attention and it’s very sobering.”

The major said it’s challenging to care for the patients and maintain a healthy emotional balance.

“I try not to remember names,” she said. “Otherwise, I get too emotionally involved. It can be sad and disturbing so I try to focus on the diagnosis and ages.”

“Being around them, we try not to show emotions too much,” said Major Clarke, who, as a civilian, works in the Omaha, Neb., Veterans’ Affairs’ hospital emergency room. “I work with critically-ill people in my civilian job. Mostly, they’re older patients and you kind of expect that. Seeing young people, it’s hard to deal with, but we have a chaplain’s assistant here and we can talk with him.”

Major Clarke and Sergeant Harkness arrived here in January and while they were supposed to leave in May, the major is planning on staying until September and the sergeant has applied to stay until January.

“I really like the people I work with here – the permanent party, the reservists who come through,” Major Clarke said. “It’s really a rewarding job, working with the young people. When my time was up in May, I wasn’t sure if I wanted to stay, but this is a once in a lifetime experience, so I extended to September.”

“I’ve asked to stay for four more months because I love what I do,” said Sergeant Harkness, who stands at 5 feet 3 inches and who said she’s helped carry around “some big ol’ 6-foot infantry men who are kinda woozy.”

“I give (the patients) 110 percent,” she said. “I leave here completely exhausted, but they’re the reason I’m here. I’m so grateful I have a job where I’m giving back to people who’ve given back so much to us.”

Tech. Sgt. Shea Harkness, 710th Medical Squadron, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, hands medical supplies to Tech. Sgt. Lazarus Brown, 435th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, while unloading patients from a C-17 Globemaster, July 27, at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. The 710th MDS is part of the 442nd Fighter Wing but "geographically separated" from its parent unit. Sergeant Harkness, along with Maj. Kuknami Clarke, from the 710th, are currently deployed to Ramstein treating and processing wounded military members and civilians from primarily Iraq and Afghanistan. Wounded warriors pass through Ramstein and get transported to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center for treatment.



PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN AMBER BRESSLER



The new building to house the 303rd Fighter Squadron is nearing 90-percent completion. If construction stays on track, the estimated completion date is March 2009,

which would be two months ahead of the original date. The state-of-the-art structure will cost \$8.3 million and replace the squadron's current, aging facility.

PHOTO BY MAJ. DAVID KURLE

UPDATE: Wing construction projects on track

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

Several construction projects on Whiteman Air Force Base are moving closer to completion, the most visible of which is a new building for the 303rd Fighter Squadron.

The building, which will be a state-of-the-art facility, is nearing 90 percent completion, according to Ken Nugent, the deputy base civil engineer with the 509th Civil Engineer Squadron. Located on Arnold Avenue, the building is between the control tower and the wing's headquarters building.

The \$8.3 million structure will offer sound deadening in its briefing room, security features and improvements in lighting, electrical, communications, heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

Col. Steve Arthur, who recently relinquished command of the 442nd Fighter Wing, said in an interview shortly before he left the wing, that the facility is designed to serve not only current fliers and their A-10s, but future pilots and aircraft as well.

"We tried to kind of look over the horizon, toward some of the security requirements of the F-35 (Lightning II aircraft)," the colonel said.

Mr. Nugent said that the building was "lagging just a little bit" behind schedule due to the weather, but that generally everything was on track for completion in March 2009.

Two other projects, mandated by Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and worth \$4.75 million, are the second of two munitions igloos and a facility in the wing's munitions area. According to Mr. Nugent, construction on both projects will begin this fall.

"I think we have a good history here at Whiteman Air Force Base with the 509th Civil Engineer Squadron working hand in hand with the 442nd," Mister Nugent said. "We've developed a great relationship and we take the 442nd projects just as seriously as we take our own."

"I have a mission and these projects are associated with that mission," Colonel Arthur said. "It's just clicking right now. It's amazing to look at the work that's involved with all these construction projects, especially considering that (our wing) doesn't have a contracting agency. We have a lot of people in this wing who had to get smart outside their fields."

Particularly, the colonel said one key player was Lt. Col. Charles French, the deputy commander of the 442nd Mission Support Group.

"We're doing real well on our facility requirements and the reason is that Colonel French gets with the points of contact for each facility, gets paperwork in order for them – this is a huge requirement – and keeps things updated," Colonel Arthur said.

Colonel French, in turn, said several wing members have played critical roles in helping the projects develop. They included Lt. Col. Stephen Chappel, director of operations for the 303rd FS; Capt. Terrell Eikner, aircraft maintenance officer with the 442nd Maintenance Squadron; Chief Master Sgts. Carol Tripp, operations superintendent for the 303rd FS and Greg Wetzel, the aircraft armament systems superintendent with the 442nd MXS; Senior Master Sgt. Ken Blanke, a munitions storage supervisor with the 442nd MXS and Tech. Sgt. Steve Miller, an aerospace ground equipment mechanic in the 442nd MXS.

Hydraulics shop works under pressure

By Senior Airman Danielle Wolf
442nd Maintenance Squadron

At 28, Benjamin Franklin published his first book, while Danica Patrick competed in her first Indy 500 race when she was only 23, and by 25, CNN's Anderson Cooper was reporting about war and famine from Nairobi, Africa.

People in their 20s have been known for some amazing accomplishments. The reservists in the 442nd Maintenance Squadron's hydraulic shop are no exception.

Made up of seven Airmen, four of whom are in their 20s, the shop works hard to support the mission. While earning a college degree, working a full-time job or both – these young Citizen Airmen dedicate their time to maintaining the unit's A-10 aircraft.

The field of hydraulics deals with necessary components that allow the flight controls, landing gear and power systems of an aircraft to function properly – powered by the pressure when liquid is forced through tubes.

These young Airmen face challenges that some more-experienced, higher-ranking individuals do not – including troubleshooting the A-10 and its individual components, as well as testing equipment.

Though most of the shop is familiar with mechanical work through personal experience, occasionally someone comes in knowing only what they were taught in nine weeks of technical training at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas.

Military members in mechanical fields often face this challenge as they learn aircraft systems in conjunction with common tool usage and safety procedures.

"As a reservist you might only work on a certain job once a year," said Staff Sgt. Marshall Huisman, hydraulic technician. "Trying to get back up to speed can be hard."

Meticulously reviewing technical orders is essential to performing a task safely and efficiently. These Airmen must stay up to date on safety procedures for working with hazardous materials and dangerous equipment such as hydraulic fluid, cleaning solvents and high-pressure testing equipment.

They use technical orders as a step-by-step guide for completing a task rather than trying to memorize each procedure.

For the hydraulic shop, discussing difficult troubleshooting concepts is also extremely valuable. The two Air Reserve Technicians in the shop have a combined hydraulic experience of 28 years.

Master Sgt. Mark Lewis and Tech. Sgt. David Frith have worked on cargo and fighter jets, giving them experiences younger Airmen in the shop draw from. While the two ARTs frequently diagnose an aircraft problem right away because of their experience, the younger Airmen must research troubleshooting guides and schematics.

"The first thing I do is look it up in the book myself," Sergeant Frith said. "There are times when being familiar with the internal parts helps."

To help the shop's newest Citizen Airmen gain experience, Air Force Reserve Command established the Seasoned Training Program – more commonly referred to as STP.

According to many shop supervisors, unit training assemblies may not provide enough time for hands-on training to gain necessary experience. Computer-based training programs, physical-fitness testing and other training classes often supersede daily tasks that help reservists develop hands-on knowledge vital to this career field.



PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. TOM TALBERT

Staff Sgt. Marshall Huisman, a hydraulic technician in the 442nd Maintenance Squadron, adjusts a fitting prior to testing the pressure tolerance on a piece of hydraulic equipment July 12.

STP was initially designed for non-prior service members returning from a three-level technical school. Each Air Force specialty code has an allocated amount of time an Airman can voluntarily spend on continuous orders learning their job and experiencing day-to-day problems that may arise.

Since the 442nd Fighter Wing implemented the program, 29 of the 32 Airmen returning from technical school in the Maintenance Group have participated, according to Master Sgt. Christina Suratos, NCOIC, Maintenance Group Training Office.

The program has since expanded to include prior service members who have cross-trained and returned from technical training as well.

"STP gave me more confidence doing my job," said Senior Airman Jessica Womrath, an A-10 crew chief. "It helped me get ahead of the game by knowing the people and the aircraft I was working with."

For these younger Airmen, spending time with more seasoned reservists is crucial to their professional development. In the maintenance field, taking advantage of every available training opportunity may be one way to compensate for the generational gap in mechanical experience.

Staff Sgt. Adrian Walker, left, and Tech. Sgt. Gerald Thompson take notes and update the 442nd Fighter Wing with critical information about a simulated chemical attack during an exercise Aug. 3 at the S-6 facility. The 442nd FW held its first of many exercises to prepare for an operational readiness inspection in October of 2009. Sergeants Walker and Thompson are Air Force reservists assigned to the wing's command post. (U.S. Air Force photo/Maj. David Kurle)

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- Michael B. Donley, acting secretary of the Air Force

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