Changes, challenges bring exciting future

By Col. Steve Arthur

Thank you for the professional change of command ceremony and warm reception. It is a tremendous honor to be a part of the 442nd Fighter Wing, and I look forward to working with all of you. Please have patience as I learn your names and processes that make this unit so great.

The future of the 442nd FW and the Air Force Reserve Command are exciting. I firmly believe our command has the right people, in the right leadership positions, at the right time. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) initiatives created bigger fighter squadrons to allow for increased AEF commitments while reducing overhead expenses.

Gen. John Bradley’s focus on improving A-10 warfighting capability will become reality in September as we start to modify our aircraft with improved computer processing, color displays, moving map capability and data link. Gen. Richard Collin’s recent 10th Air Force Combat Planning Council placed A-10 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM), global position system guided weapons, and beyond line-of-sight communications at the top of our Numbered Air Force’s priorities. Our mission to provide combat-ready people and equipment continues to increase capability.

The transition to a 24-aircraft unit will also create new challenges. Our facilities need to expand, and we need to continue to recruit the experienced, highly skilled personnel that will support our dedication to the mission. Temporary buildings and construction sites will soon be the norm, and our recruiters will be working hard to bring new faces into the wing. I need all of you to help us stay focused on our mission, and provide world-class support to our personnel currently deployed into combat.

I am very proud to be a member of the 442nd FW, and thankful for the contributions each of you have made to the defense of our Nation.
This month’s 442nd Fighter Wing Tip of the Spear is 1st Lt. Terrell Eikner, a 442nd Maintenance Squadron maintenance officer.

Lieutenant Eikner joined the 442nd from the Air Force Reserve Command’s maintenance officer training program in June 2004. Before entering the program he served for 12 years as an enlisted guidance and control technician on B-52, H-model, bomber aircraft at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

While assigned to the 442nd MXS, Lieutenant Eikner created the Reserve Officers Association and Reserve Enlisted Association scholarship program. This program awards an annual $500 scholarship to any 442nd FW family member.

The lieutenant is a firm believer in taking care of people. In fact, he personally eliminated the backlog of more than 100 overdue awards for individuals who had deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Lt. Eikner wrote, edited, and tracked approximately 135 decorations.

Additionally, he took the reins as the Wright Flight tour coordinator; set up tours and taught history of flight classes to more than 120 inner city youth.

On the war front, he was a key leadership member of the en-route support team that deployed 14 A-10 aircraft to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Lt. Eikner is an outstanding asset to the 442nd Maintenance Squadron and September’s Tip of the Spear for the 442nd Fighter Wing.
Three members of the 442nd Staff Judge Advocate office, Lt. Col. Joe Rosa, Tech. Sgt. Linda Yeates and Staff Sgt. Kate Pina, are deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

They joined twelve other Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and active-duty attorneys and paralegals deployed in late June on 60-day orders to Task Force 134, Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I).

Task Force 134 is a joint service task force based in Baghdad responsible for detainee operations in Iraq with the three 442nd reservists working in the US Embassy … one of Sadaam Hussein’s former palaces … in the International Zone.

“Having the CRRB and CCCI offices in one of Sadaam’s palaces is ironic given that just a few years ago it was the center of his repressive regime,” Sergeant Yeates said. “We are helping the Iraqi government establish institutions based upon the rule of law, not the rule of political parties, tribes or individuals. We hope we can soon return the palace to the people of Iraq.”

The CRRB is a board consisting of MNF-I members and Iraqi government officials, and it continually meets to review the decision to detain individuals as security detainees.

“The legal basis for holding someone as a security detainee is United Nations Security resolution 1546 which says that the coalition may hold an individual based upon the capturing unit’s belief that there is probable cause to believe the individual has committed a crime or is a threat to the stability and security of Iraq or otherwise poses an imperative threat to the security of MNF-I and the people of Iraq. The CRRB usually holds those who have attacked or attempted to attack coalition forces.

The CCCI is the new Iraqi criminal court system that the coalition has helped organize and equip. The CCCI is located in the Red Zone in a former museum dedicated to the glory of Sadaam Hussein.

“We refer detainee cases to CCCI when we think we have sufficient proof to proceed,” said Colonel Rosa.

No classified material or intelligence material can be used at CCCI and once a detainee is convicted at a CCCI trial, he is moved into the separate Iraqi prison system.

“In some cases, we need to decline referral to the CCCI because we believe the Iraqi hearing or trial judges, using their own methods of evaluating evidence will not refer to trial and convict,” Colonel Rosa said. “If we refer and the case is dismissed at the investigative hearing or at trial, the affected detainee has a good chance of being released so we want to make sure we take only solid cases to CCCI, otherwise keeping them in confinement as a security detainee is the best possible outcome.”

Detainee operations in Iraq is a large and complicated mission. In addition to CCCI and CRRB, it includes all of the detention facilities around Iraq, all of the personnel required to guard and care for thousands of detainees and a transportation network to safely move them to and from court for hearings and trials.

“Ideally, hearings are scheduled shortly after an individual is detained so that our witnesses are readily available to testify in person,” Sergeant Pina said. “In many cases, some or all of our witnesses have redeployed out of Iraq, and in those cases, we are able to have them testify through video teleconferencing facilities anywhere in the world.”

“Working in a multinational forces environment is unique and exciting” said Tech. Sgt. Yeates. “Seeing all the people serving their different countries coming together to support the mission in Iraq is an amazing process. Just going to the dining hall can be an adventure by sharing a meal with someone from a different service or country. I have met so many people and listened to some great stories. I am happy I volunteered to be a part of this mission.”

Above: The Central Criminal Court of Iraq is located in a former museum once dedicated to the glory of Sadaam Hussein.
Right: The interior of the main Central Court of Iraq court room.
The Automated Lodging Reservation System (ALRS) has been upgraded and will now allow wing members to select a roommate while making a reservation.

Since May, wing members have been requested to share their thoughts and comments with the 442nd Services Flight Lodging manager to enhance the new ALRS. Hundreds of requests were collected and reviewed and upon completion of that review, the two most popular requests included to allow for a way for members to select their own roommates and to enable members who carpool stay at the same location.

After coordination with the ALRS programmers a solution was reached.

An Airman identification number has been assigned to each member. That number is given to the desired roommate to input during their reservation process. Each roommate needs to do this process to complete the roommate reservation.

Below are simple instructions to secure a reservation and have your roommate of choice. This process works the same for members who carpool.

Step by step roommate reservation instructions:
Step 1: Call the ALRS and select option seven to retrieve an Airman ID number. Be sure to have a pen or pencil handy to write down your Airman ID number.

Step 2: Both parties will call the ALRS and make their reservation. At the end of the reservation the system will ask you to input your roommate’s Airman ID number. Make sure the desired roommate’s ID number is entered and not your own.

What happens next? Upon completion the system will give you your location and dates of stay. At check-in a roster will be made available by the hotel front desk clerk to sign-in. Members must sign for their room and the roommate’s name will be listed next to your name allowing check-in faster.

It is important to note that if the roommate does not complete their part, you will still keep your reservation but a roommate will be assigned by the 442nd Lodging manager. Changing roommates at the hotel will not be allowed unless the Charge of Quarters first sergeant has been notified and approved the move.
Medics get EMEDS certification

While the lead unit for the Fort McCoy EMEDS group was the 442nd MDS, the instructors were lead by Air National Guard people from Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Michigan.

“I’ve done many exercises with Alpena,” said Lt. Col. Joanie Peterson, commander for EMEDS at Fort McCoy and the 442nd Medical Squadron’s chief of training. “They are excellent, professional and keep you motivated to a succinct schedule. And you walk away with experience that you can take with you to war, if that should happen. They give you all the tools and experience you’ll need.”

While Alpena is the lead, the cadre is also represented by instructors from Sheppard AFB, Texas, and Brooks City Base, Texas. Sheppard is the home of Reserve EMEDS, while Brooks is the active duty’s EMEDS home.

“The students get their EMEDS certification out of this and they later play a role in Patriot ‘06 as a medical field hospital and a triage to prepare them for aeromedical evacuation,” said Tech. Sgt. Chris Keller, an Alpena CRTC instructor.

The task of the EMEDS is to triage patients for them for aeromedical evacuation.

After the students have completed their training, the EMEDS system was built in 1999, replacing large cumbersome air-transportable hospitals of the past. EMEDS allows treatment from first responder to Level III medical care and is the core ground medical system used in the Air Expeditionary Force and Homeland Security.

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Sgt. Christopher E. Miller, an X-ray technologist from the 442nd MDS, said after one week of training, the guardsmen receive their certification, which is a requirement every 40 hours.

The Guard and Reserve medics worked together quickly, according to Sgt. Keller.

"I can't tell one from the other," Sgt. Keller said. "The group has gelled. They show a lot of initiative and are very willing to get out and work hard."

The first two days the group was setup the EMEDS, Wisconsin was experiencing a heat wave, with temperatures reaching 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

"It was really hot," Sergeant Keller said. "We had to make sure people took breaks and kept safety in mind."

But the one thing that has stood out for all participants is the teamwork and camaraderie the group has enjoyed.

"It's been some intense training," Sergeant Miller. "There's a lot of information they are throwing at you in the time.

They are trying to keep it as real as possible, which is going to help them to be better prepared for a deployment," he said. "The best thing is the good teamwork. Everyone has chipped in and done their part. We're all on the same page. We are a cohesive unit."

(AFRC News Service)
At right: Senior Airman Lauryn Boberg repairs a nut plate on the nose-wheel landing gear door of an A-10 Thunderbolt II at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, Aug 6. Airman Boberg is an Air Force Reserve sheet metal specialist deployed to the 455 Expeditionary Maintenance Group at Bagram from the 442nd Fighter Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. Maintenance Airmen at Bagram are working around the clock to inspect A-10 combat aircraft every 400 flight-hours in what is called a “phase inspection.” The A-10 provides close air support to U.S. and Coalition forces fighting extremists in Operation Enduring Freedom. (US Air Force photo by Maj. David Kurle)
BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – A maintenance officer deployed here from the 442nd Fighter Wing was named the top company grade officer for the month of July in the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing here.

Capt. Jason Weiser, the officer in charge of the A-10 Aircraft Maintenance Unit, received the honor Aug. 1 during a promotion and awards ceremony from the 455th AEW commander, Brig. Gen. Christopher Miller.

“I was actually surprised, with all the competition from throughout the wing,” Capt. Weiser said.

He competed against nominees from four other groups deployed throughout the Afghanistan Theater.

Among the actions credited to Capt. Weiser was the establishment of a weekly tour of the A-10 Thunderbolt II for U.S. and Coalition members deployed here. He also produced 346 combat A-10 sorties through his leadership in the 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, which resulted in full-time close air support to U.S. and Coalition ground forces.

The 442nd FW has Air Force Reservists deployed here flying and maintaining the wing’s A-10 aircraft until the end of September.

Capt. Weiser credits his impact on the morale of his maintenance Airmen with helping him get the award.

“I just try to have a positive impact on the flight line,” he said. “I try to keep the aircraft moving and everyone in high spirits.”
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Editor’s note: According to the on-line encyclopedia, Wikipedia, “in August 1969, leaders in the Palestinian left-wing organization, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, learned that Yitzak Rabin, then Israeli Ambassador to the United States, was scheduled to be aboard TWA flight 840. Two operatives, Leila Khaled and Salim Issawi hijacked the plane. The operation was successful, although Rabin was not aboard. The hijackers demanded that the pilot land in Damascus. The hostages were released and no one was injured, although the nose section of plane, a Boeing 707, was blown up.” A 442nd member, then Captain Harry Oakley, was first officer on the flight and related his ordeal for the Kansas City Times.

TWA Flight 840 from Rome through Athens to Tel Aviv began as a “routine flight in every respect,” according to Capt. Harry Oakley, a [Boeing] 707 copilot who also flies C-124 [Globemaster IIs] for the [442nd Military Airlift Wing’s 304th Military Airlift Squadron].

But the “routine” character of the flight changed abruptly over the east coast of Italy.

“The hostess opened the door,” Captain Oakley said in an interview for the Kansas City Times, “and a guy about six-feet two-inches tall carrying a .38 caliber automatic pistol in one hand and a grenade in the other burst into the cockpit. A woman, armed the same way, was right behind him. We had no doubt in our minds about what was going on.”

The highjackers identified themselves as members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

“The man didn’t speak very good English but the woman did,” Captain Oakley said. “She told us to do as she commanded or they would blow up the plane. They looked like they had the wherewithal to do it too.”

“The Captain [Dean Carter of New York] said, ‘Where do you want to go and what do you want to do?’ We were going to go anywhere they wanted as long as we had the fuel and we could do it safely.

“The woman started a little harangue about who they were. She said they wanted to make some broadcasts over Athens, Rhodes, Nicosia, Cairo, Tel Aviv, Beirut and Damascus, and she wanted to go to Tel Aviv.

“She had a little propaganda spiel written out on separate sheets of paper for each place. As we went over we got hold of the control tower and handed her the microphone.”

Fuel was a major concern for the crew.

“Under the circumstances we were pretty sure they didn’t want to land at Tel Aviv. We picked three alternates we thought they might be interested in—Beirut, Damascus and Cairo,” Captain Oakley said. Cairo would have been tight if we had to make the others.

“The woman knew how much fuel we had. They had apparently got hold of one of our manuals. But they had an exaggerated idea of our fuel.

“The woman ordered us to drop 12,000 feet and to circle the airport in Tel Aviv once while she broadcast. Approaching Israel, we called the tower at Tel Aviv and told them what we were going to do. They just sat and listened while the woman broadcast. Both of the [the highjackers] were pretty excited. That woman really cussed out the control tower people. We circled the airport once and she said to fly to Damascus. I think she was beginning to believe we were getting short on fuel.

“She pulled out a map, a TWA navigation chart. It had a line penciled from Tel Aviv to Damascus. We headed northeast. We called the Beirut tower and talked to them but headed on to Damascus. The woman told us to use the call signal ‘Mayday.’

“We told them we were very short on fuel and wanted to land immediately. They cleared us for the runway we wanted—a good runway, 10,000 feet long and 150 feet wide. The airport is brand new.

“The captain landed the plane. He really greased it in. It was just beautiful. He stopped it fast and we shut everything down. The fuel tanks were about dry. We might have been able to make it around the traffic pattern once; I don’t know.

“The cabin crew had the plane cleared in less than a minute. We stayed in the cockpit with the highjackers; then we made a quick check of the plane to make sure everyone was out, then bailed out separate exits ourselves. About 20 or 30 seconds later the highjackers came out.

“Some of the crew milled around the plane for about 10 minutes. I looked it over carefully. The highjackers walked about 80 yards away. The army was coming out on the field. They didn’t seem to know who we were. They were suspicious. Some greeted the highjackers like blood brothers but most headed toward the groups of passengers.

“Then I saw the man [highjacker] run to the plane and throw something in the front door. There was a bang, not very loud. I thought it was a hand grenade that was a dud.

“A little later — I don’t know just how long it was — he made a second trip to the airplane. He climbed up to the right galley door. When he got down, he fired two clips of bullets into the right wing. I couldn’t get the [Syrian] army to do anything. They didn’t seem to understand. Then I got an army colonel who had just arrived and he finally told his men to get the man and the woman [the highjackers]. [Then] the plane exploded. It tore off the nose.”

Captain Oakley said their treatment while they were stranded in Damascus was neither good nor bad; “They didn’t do anything against us, but they didn’t do anything to help us either.”

On the next night most passengers and all of the crew but the aircraft captain, were flown out on a chartered Italian airliner.
WASHINGTON (AFPN) — The Department of Justice has launched a Web site to protect servicemembers’ rights, said the attorney general.

Alberto R. Gonzalez, speaking to the Disabled American Veterans annual convention in Chicago, said the Justice Department has made it a priority to enforce civil rights laws for American servicemembers.

“The law recognizes that although we can never thank you enough for your service, we can take away some of the worries that Soldiers might face when they are deployed,” he said in prepared remarks.

The government promises that servicemembers’ jobs will still be theirs when they come home, and that they cannot be discriminated against by their employers because of their military service. The United States vows that servicemembers will be able to vote and that their vote will be counted. And it promises that servicemembers “will have procedural protections in civil actions, like lawsuits or property re-possessions, when serving overseas.”

The Justice Department Web site, www.servicemembers.gov, outlines the rights servicemembers have under the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

“These basic civil rights are enforced by the Department of Justice, and I can assure you that the department’s staff and prosecutors are deeply committed to these enforcement efforts,” Mr. Gonzales said. “We feel that it is an honor to serve those in uniform in this way. It is our way of saying thank you for your service.”

The attorney general said these are not just “pie in the sky” rights, but issues that directly affect people.

In one case, Justice Department officials filed its first complaint alleging that American Airlines violated rights of employees who also serve as military pilots. The case was brought on behalf of three military pilots employed by American Airlines. It states that the airline reduced the employment benefits of pilots who had taken military leave, while not reducing the same benefits for pilots who had taken similar, non-military leave, Mr. Gonzales said.

“In another vivid example of the people for whom we enforce these laws, the department recently won a consent decree from an employer who terminated employment of a serviceman named Richard White the very same day that Richard told his boss he was being called to active duty,” the attorney general said. “The consent decree requires the employer to pay back wages to Mr. White.

“What leads an employer to treat a Soldier like an inconvenience is something for a higher power to judge. But here on Earth, we have USERRA, and we’ll use it for Richard White and for soldiers like him, as often as is necessary.”

Voting is another servicemember right the Justice Department guards.

“Earlier this year, (the department) addressed long-standing structural issues affecting uniformed military personnel posted both in this country and overseas who wished to vote in North Carolina, South Carolina and Alabama,” Mr. Gonzales said.

These states had run-off elections too close to the primary elections to allow these voters to receive and return ballots. With cooperation from state election officials, the department was able to redress each of these violations.

“As the 2006 general election approaches, we will continue vigilant protection of the voting rights of servicemembers, their families and other overseas citizens,” he said.

Mr. Gonzales also addressed the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

“Thanks to this law, men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have procedural protections in place that will allow them to be less distracted by litigation back home — by someone trying to repossess a leased car, evict their spouse and children, sell their house at an auction or run up penalties on credit cards with 21-percent interest rates,” he said. “It’s hard to respond to a civil lawsuit while you’re focused on improvised explosive devices, and the law protects servicemembers for that reason.”

Enforcement of this law is a readiness and morale issue, he said.

“Men and women in uniform, like all Americans, have to honor their obligations,” he said. “However, Congress long ago decided, wisely I think, to provide protections to them against lawsuits while deployed overseas on active duty.”

Gonzales urged any servicemember with questions to go to the Justice Department Web site. Military lawyers can help servicemembers and their families navigate through the laws.
TO THE FAMILY OF:

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