

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing



**Wing deploys
troops, aircraft
to Bagram AB**



Letter to Airmen

Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force

Attention to Detail

Recently the Department of Defense learned that four non-nuclear nose cones for a ballistic missile were mistakenly shipped to Taiwan in the fall of 2006. Regardless of the results of the ongoing investigation, this situation has identified important lessons for all of the DoD as we increasingly automate procedures and systems – lessons we Airmen must absorb as members of the Joint team. These lessons follow our core values, and they illuminate the critical nature of attention to detail and checking initial entries.

Our values first and foremost encompass Integrity. We must always have the moral and intellectual courage to do the right thing and must continue to follow our moral compass in the decisions we make and actions we take. Integrity also refers to going the extra mile to ensure our work is absolutely accurate. The Air Force is made up of skilled Airmen who perform highly technical jobs. From entering target coordinates on a GPS-guided weapon to filling out data entry actions may have immediate effects, or others may rely on our entry at times well into the future. Often, many people rely on the pinpoint accuracy of just one person's work. Every action of this Air Force is critical for our Nation; as we automate more and more, any data errors become part of a larger error set.

Our values also include Service. Service here means to cross check any part of a process when you are involved. From supervisor to wingman, I need you to be the one to notice when something is not right even if it is not within your immediate purview. We all can assist each other and the rest of our Joint and Coalition forces to do it right. With the right mindset, large organizations can be adept at avoiding mistakes. We can use our judgment to question or ask for supervisory intervention, a paramount service we can offer to each other.

Our values encompass Excellence. Excellence here is about closely following the detailed procedures, and getting it right the first time. Excellence is about getting the right level of training and taking personal accountability for being ready, willing and able to execute the mission, whether administrative or operational, correctly and efficiently. Ask for help if needed. Supervisors must also provide the support needed to assist with mentoring, or cross check as appropriate.

The investigation of the mistaken shipment is ongoing and will be thorough, but all should know that as Airmen we will take ownership where appropriate. On the Goals Card is a simple statement: "Knowledge Enabled Actions with an Accountable Airmen Ethic" - this summarizes our values well. I am proud to serve with you and know that every day you bring incredible value to our Air Force, and every day, I know you are working hard to enhance that value.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael W. Wynne".
Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force

MOHAWK

442ND FIGHTER WING

'Inside * Inside * Inside * Inside'

Commentary page 2



AOR UPDATE

Wing members,
A-10s deploy
PAGE 4

SERVICES

442nd Services Flight
serves at MacDill
PAGES 6 - 7



WARRIOR REINTEGRATION

Wing seeks to ease
homecoming transition
PAGES 8-9



Stenner to command AFRC page 5
SFS, LRS desert duty page 10

January 2008 Charge-of-quarters



SENIOR MASTER SGT. TODD SIELEMAN 442ND AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

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Warrensburg, Sedalia etc.), dial (660) 238-7428. To
call toll free from off-base, dial (800) 260-0253 and
press seven after the prompt.

**COVER PHOTO: 442nd Fighter Wing
Citizen Airmen board a charter
aircraft bound for Southwest Asia
and a third deployment to Bagram
Air Base, Afghanistan. For more on
the deployment and what's hap-
pening at Bagram, turn to page
four. (Photo by Maj. David Kurle)**



442nd Fighter Wing Tip of the Spear

CAPTAIN KEITH YERSAK 442ND OPERATIONS GROUP

As the 442nd Operation's Group executive officer, Captain Yersak provided outstanding support to the group and squadron commanders, as well as 90 assigned personnel. He was entrusted with the direct management of all the group's support programs and ensured these programs were administered and 100 percent compliant with command and staff policy.

During the wing's 2007 staff assistance visit and unit compliance inspection, inspectors found zero discrepancies with the group's programs and Captain Yersak was recognized as a two-time "Top Performer."

As the group's resource advisor, he expertly managed a combined \$2.5 million budget for four years resulting in a zero end-of-year budget. As the group's emergency-management representative, he was instrumental in preparing for an Air Expeditionary Force deployment and an operational readiness exercise. Captain Yersak was selected as the wing's Operational-Risk-Management facilitator. He ensured the risk management process worked smoothly during Hawgsmoke '08 preplanning and site survey.

Because of Captain Yersak's proactive and professional work-ethic he was handpicked as the 442nd Fighter Wing's executive officer.

MOHAWK

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This newspaper is printed on recycled paper.

442nd members, aircraft deploy to Bagram again



PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

A 303rd Fighter Squadron A-10 pilot confers with a 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief prior to take off May 6, on a deployment to Bagram Air Base Afghanistan. The Whiteman pilots flew 442nd Fighter Wing A-10

Thunderbolt IIs, as well as those from the Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Wing. 442nd FW members will fly both units' aircraft during their deployment and two months later, in a mirror operation, members of the 124th will arrive to replace them.

Minnesota Vikings cheerleaders visit Bagram Air Base

By Tech. Sgt. Kevin Wallace

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan,—Historically speaking, Vikings and Afghanistan don't have much in common, but all that changed yesterday when five cheerleaders from the National Football League's Minnesota Vikings pumped up a standing-room-only crowd of servicemembers here.

The event started with songs, dancing and cheers intended to vitalize the troops' spirits, Vikings cheerleader Peyton said. Team policy is to use only cheerleaders' first names.

"We are all very glad to be here, and we are going to put on a great show," Peyton said as she warmed up before the event. "This is our last show in Afghanistan, and we want to make this a night the troops will remember."

With a promise to give the night their all, the cheerleaders went backstage and

the event coordinators began letting in the men and women who were anxiously waiting outside.

First through the door was U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Oscar Bruck, 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron phase crew chief. "I've been waiting here since 6:20 (p.m.)," said Bruck, a Marlett, Mich., native deployed from the Royal Air Force base at Lakenheath, England.

The event did not start until 8 p.m., but waiting nearly two hours didn't bother Bruck. "I wanted a front-row seat to make sure I got good photos," he said.

Good photos were not all Bruck received. He also got picked to come onstage, meet the cheerleaders and challenge 19 other servicemembers to a push-up contest.

Bruck did not win the contest, as his skills were no match for Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Gilbert Corpuz, who

knocked out 103 regulation push-ups in a minute. For his victory, Corpuz was rewarded with a Vikings calendar, autographed by all the cheerleaders.

After the push-up contest was finished, the cheerleaders performed another routine, and then they picked 10 servicemembers to join them on stage for a game of "Cheerleader Says," modelled after the classic children's game "Simon Says."

Once again, the stage was speckled with an array of U.S. uniforms, and a Polish soldier also joined the ranks. The Polish soldier and two U.S. soldiers were eliminated in the first round.

Two airmen and two more soldiers fell in the second round. Four rounds later, a tie was called as Army Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Winger and Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Billy Grant refused to be outsmarted.

Former 442nd commander nominated to command AFRC

WASHINGTON — Former 442nd Fighter Wing commander, Maj. Gen. Charles E. Stenner Jr., has been nominated for appointment to the rank of lieutenant general with assignment as chief of Air Force Reserve, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Pentagon, and commander of Air Force Reserve Command, Robins Air Force Base, Ga.

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates announced April 18 that the president had nominated General Stenner for the promotion and assignment.

The general will replace Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley as chief of Air Force Reserve and AFRC commander. General Bradley will retire in June.

General Stenner currently serves as assistant deputy chief of staff, Strategic Plans and Programs at Headquarters Air Force. He assists in the development, integration, evaluation and analysis of the U.S. Air Force Future Years Defense Program that exceeds \$682 billion, as well as the Air Force long-range plan to support national security objectives and military strategy.

From July 2003 to July 2006, General Stenner was the director of operations and then director of plans and programs at Headquarters AFRC, Robins AFB.

His joint assignments include deputy director and director of strategy, policy and plans, and director of transformation, U.S. Southern Command, Miami.

During his career, General Stenner commanded the 482nd Fighter Wing at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla., from December 1998 to May 2001, and the 442nd Fighter Wing from August 1997 to December 1998. He also served as commander of four operations groups.

He was commissioned a second lieutenant upon completing Officer Training School in 1973. (Air Force Reserve Command News Service)



Maj. Gen. Charles E. Stenner, Jr.

Sergeant wins DOD writing award

By Maj. David Kurle

An Air Force reservist from the 442nd Fighter Wing here continues to garner awards for articles he wrote about prisoners of war from World War II.

Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown won the Department of Defense's Thomas Jefferson Award for the four-part series during a ceremony May 16 at Fort Meade, Md.

Earlier in 2008, Sergeant Brown was named the Air Force's and Air Force Reserve Command's top journalist for 2007, as well as earning awards for his feature stories about the experiences of Airmen shot down and held captive in Nazi Germany.

"It really is very overwhelming and very humbling," Sergeant Brown said. "I think a lot of the credit has to go to those World War II veterans because they gave me all their stories and I just recorded them and put them down on paper."

The series was his own initiative and stemmed from his participation in a POW reunion in Kansas City. He interviewed

several veterans who had been held captive at Stalag Luft III, a German prison camp. He also visited the sites of POW camps while serving a two-week assignment in Germany.

"I was in a very privileged position being let in on these veterans' incredible stories," Sergeant Brown said. "I took a video camera to their reunion and got eight to ten hours of their recollections."

Sergeant Brown then transcribed the tapes and wrote the articles around the veterans' stories.

"I realized there were so many fascinating experiences that this was worthy of a series," he said. "The men, a vast majority of them, were willing to share the details of their captivity. I'd ask most of them one or two questions and they were off and running."

Sergeant Brown teaches Christian Morality and New Testament courses at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Overland Park, Kan., in his civilian job.

His World War II Prisoner of War series can be found on-line at the 442nd Fighter Wing's public Web site.

PA NCO's photograph recognized at exhibit

DAYTON, Ohio — Several Air Force photographers, including 442nd Fighter Wing NCOIC of Public Affairs, Master Sgt. Bill Huntington, recently found themselves in front of the cameras.

The photographers, whose work is featured in a new exhibit, "On the Other Side of the Lens ... Military Photographers in Action," were special guests at the opening May 1 at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

For Sergeant Huntington, who attended the opening and who has one of his photos of Hurricane Katrina relief operations featured at the exhibit, being in front of the camera runs against the grain.

"I'm more at home behind the scenes," he said. "My real desire is to be sure people see the great things that our Airmen are doing. Photography and writing enable me to do that."

Services Flight serves MacDill

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Susan Walthour, 442nd Services Flight

The 442nd Services Flight took to the road April 5, as 21 of its members traveled to MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., to perform annual training there for two weeks.

Working with their counterparts in the 6th Services Squadron, the 442nd Services reservists rotated through several Services areas around the base.

“Our people were able to see and contribute on how the job can get done with different experiences and teams,” said Master Sgt. Travis Stickels, 442nd SVF NCOIC. “You had contractors, active duty and our reserve unit all working together.”

One focal point for the deployment was the MacDill Inn where the Whiteman troops worked with the lodging front desk staff helping provide 24 hour check-in and check-out service. Other 442nd Services members working in lodging assisted with inventories and worked with lodging maintenance department. One laborious task included changing all the door locks on three buildings.

442nd Services members working in MacDill’s 348-seat Diner’s Reef dining facility were able to jump in and backfill positions in the storeroom. This was no

small task as the facility, whose customers include the 6th Air Mobility Wing’s mission partners, USCENTCOM and USSOCOM, annually serves about 262,000 meals.

During the deployment, most members took the opportunity to attend some classes at MacDill’s fitness center. Members of the Services team also trained in mortuary affairs and readiness.

They also rotated through the base’s honor guard where they attained a better understanding of the purpose of the honor guard. The honor guard provides military funeral honors to all active duty, retired and veteran members.

The honor guard’s area of responsibility is extensive and comprises a large geographic area throughout much of the west coast of Florida. It includes the Tampa and St. Petersburg area, south to Naples and Miami, and north to Brooksville and Leesburg. Several 442nd members also participated in some of the funeral honors at Florida National Cemetery, in nearby Bushnell, Fla., the most frequently visited site for the base’s honor guard.

In addition to normal duty assignments, the 442nd Services members tried out their green thumbs and volunteered to work with the outdoor recreation department, helping to plant more than 100 trees in the family camping area on base.

Besides performing their military duties, some of the reservists volunteered to work with a Habitat for Humanity effort.

In the old family housing area on base, soon to be torn down and replaced with new houses, they removed items that would benefit the local Habitat for Humanity organization.

Master Sgt. Ed Updyke and Tech. Sgt. Eddie Norton volunteered time to help remove stoves, water heaters and ceiling fans along with other electrical fixtures, cabinets and vanities that would be taken out of the 25 units and resold to benefit the Hillsborough Habitat for Humanity in the Tampa area.

Their efforts were not a surprise to Sergeant Stickels.

“It really doesn’t surprise me that Master Sgt. Updyke and Tech. Sgt. Norton were the first ones to raise their hand to support the Habitat,” Sergeant Stickels said. “That’s just how they are; they’re always looking out for others and are always willing to lend a hand, especially for a great cause like this.”

Officials at Habitat for Humanity were grateful for the support.

“The donated items will help us but even more than having those items, it was so great to work with Airman volunteers who came out to help us,” said Marty Ziakgrat with Hillsborough Habitat for Humanity.



(Clockwise from right) Airman 1st Class Vernon Ivy assisted MacDill Air Force Base Fitness center patrons with core exercises while working with the staff. Airman Ivy also led circuit classes.

Tech. Sgt. Sean Solum and Senior Airman Kimberly Dixon plant some of the 100 shrubs in the family camping area at MacDill

Tech. Sgt. Leslie Caw spent time cleaning and preparing the dugouts and softball fields at MacDill for the season's first all-night Softball tournament.

Tech. Sgt. Eddie Norton, who volunteered to work with the Habitat for Humanity group during the deployment, removes a stove to be sent to the community service organization.

Master Sgt. Edward Updyke worked with the storekeepers at MacDill's Diner's Reef dining facility. He also volunteered to work with the Habitat for Humanity.



Warrior Reintegration

Part one: Meeting the need

By Master Sgt. Bill Huntington

With readiness to deploy for war a hallmark of training in the Air Force, it would seem strange to think that coming home from war could negatively impact that same readiness.

However, such is the view of Col. Steve Arthur, 442nd Fighter Wing commander. He sees a growing problem for troops and their families when coping with transitions from the battlefield to the home front.

"The Army has figured out statistically that one out of six of its youngsters who come back from battle have stress-related problems when they get home," Colonel Arthur said. "In the Air Force, our Airmen have not been seeing this until recently and we are starting to see the results of the stress associated with battle."

Military-wide, problems are manifest in an ever-increasing number of stress-related disorders and escalating incidences of divorce, abuse, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and even suicide. All are indicators of the impact of stress on service members' lives and when it isn't dealt with effectively, combat-readiness can be compromised.

The Colonel also feels the roles of Airmen in battle will continue to expand as is evidenced by the Air Force's ever-increasing involvement with "in-lieu of" activities and other non-traditional missions. From his perspective, it's something that is already impacting the 442nd Fighter Wing, its members and their families

"I can only speak for the 442nd Fighter Wing," Colonel Arthur said. "And we, the 442nd Fighter Wing are starting to see the effects of those stresses."

For the 442nd FW, Colonel Arthur is aggressively taking all the steps he can to mitigate those effects and help Wing members get exactly the right kind of assistance to make the transition safely.

At the core of the Colonel's actions is the development and

implementation of a "Warrior Reintegration" program designed to proactively prevent problems caused by the transition and effectively deal with cases that do arise.

To effectively carry this program to the wing, Colonel Arthur has assembled a single team that links Airman and Family Readiness, the Chaplain's office and the 442nd Medical Squadron's mental-health office.

The team members include Maj. Edward Cullumber, a clinical social worker; Wing Chaplain (Capt.) James Buckman and Master Sgt. Vicki Chambers chief of the wing's Airman and Family Readiness office.

The team has laid the groundwork along the gamut of educating reservists in advance, assisting them and their family members during deployments, providing post-deployment interviews and assessments, conducting counseling, and encouraging the use of professional mental-health services to assist members in dealing with problems associated with the transition.

To Major Cullumber, who holds advanced degrees in social work and public administration, the need to address the issue of coping with combat-generated stress is very real.

"Statistically, individuals exposed to any kind of combat operational stress will have a reaction," he said. "Some have more severe reactions and some will have less.

"(Warrior Reintegration) is an attempt on the front end to prevent any kind of problems with negative stress reactions," said Major Cullumber, a mental-health practitioner in his civilian occupation. "On post-deployment, when people return, it's to help them reintegrate back into civilian life and to identify any kind of problems they might be having that they need to seek additional help for."

He added that, like physical illnesses, if problems can be prevented and people given the tools and information on what to look for, it would minimize problems further down the road.

Sergeant Chambers plays a key role on the front end ensuring members know what resources exist to lessen the impact of family separation. It is also A & FR's long-established record of



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TECH. SGT. JOHN VERTRESE

To the battlefield and back again. More Airmen and their families are facing difficulty adjusting to life after returning home from deployment. The Warrior Reintegration program works to make that transition more bearable.



getting to know and working with the families of 442nd FW members that will help pave the way for those in need to seek help.

“Because we really make the first contact with the families,” Sergeant Chambers said, “I think there is a special connection there that they know they are not alone; that they can call if they need something.”

Additionally, during deployment, she works to maintain contact with spouses and family members who may be experiencing difficulty dealing with long-term separation.

Even after a member seeks out a chaplain or mental-health support, A & FR stays actively engaged.

One of the team’s goals is to remove a stigma that exists about seeking mental-health care. It’s a goal they share with Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Adm. Michael Mullen.

“Good people ... are actually willing to deny themselves (mental-health) care out of the fear that doing so hurts them and their families in the long run,” Admiral Mullen said.

“Nothing could be further from the truth, and it’s time we got over that.”

That sentiment was echoed by Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne in an August 2007 “Letter to Airmen” where he also emphasized the value of a good wingman in getting help.

“It is extremely unusual for an Airman’s career to suffer negative effects from seeking help for emotional difficulties,” he said. “Getting help when you’re hurting is the right thing to do. Smart Airmen seek out help when they need it and great wingmen know when to encourage their peers to get help.”

“This whole thing really is a team effort,” Chaplain Buckman said. “You have the wingman, you have Airman and Family Readiness, you have mental health, you have on-base counseling, you have Veterans Affairs and for a lot of our people there are the clergy. It is really a team effort.”

“The entire Department of Defense structure is already starting to react to this and starting to fix some of things that are attaching stigmas to people for getting help,” Colonel Arthur said. “There is still a lot more that will have to be done and that is, in my mind, my responsibility.”

The 442nd FW’s program is designed to enable people to seek help with the assurance of confidentiality and the Wing’s Chaplain provides it; especially for those reluctant to talk with a mental-health professional.

There have been instances where wing members avoided professional mental health services because of the existing stigma associated with it, according to Colonel Arthur.

“I’m about to hire my fourth chaplain and then we’ll have four chaplains on duty here,” he said. “Everybody who goes over to battle is going to come back and the chaplains are going to talk with them about this issue.”

“They have complete confidentiality with us,” Chaplain Buckman said. “The Chaplain is the one person in the chain of command that they have that with. What I tell the guys is that it is kind of like the commercial for Las Vegas, what is said here stays here.”

That confidentiality gives the Chaplain a unique ability to suggest civilian mental-health resources for those reservists without introducing official Air Force.

“Seeking voluntary assistance is a big part of this,” Major Cullumber said. “We really strive to have the Chaplains work with people initially because that will increase the element of confidentiality.”

Major Cullumber, who as mental health care provider also employs confidentiality, sees the program as being completely operational in time for the return of wing reservists current deployed to Afghanistan.

“People who have reactions to stress should know it doesn’t mean they are mentally ill, it doesn’t mean that they are crazy,” Major Cullumber said. “It just means they have been exposed to some kind of unusual stressor and they are having a normal reaction to it.”

“This (program lets) members know that there is (help) in place,” Sergeant Chambers said. “We want to make sure (our people) are taken care of and this hopefully gets the stigma of getting help out of the way.”

Colonel Arthur’s commitment to the effort is open ended and, besides the well being of its members, the “health” of the Wing is at stake too

“We’re in it for the long term,” Colonel Arthur said. “All of us who deploy into battle will face issues with stress-related problems. If we don’t deal with this now, what we are going to see is a decrease in the combat capability of this Wing.”

“My responsibility is the combat capability of this wing,” he said. “I need to do something now that is going to allow the unbelievably high levels of combat capability that we have in this wing to continue.”

That something is embodied in the Warrior Reintegration program.

Editor’s note: This is the first in a series of articles about Warrior Reintegration. Future articles in this series will focus on the mechanics of the program, tell-tale signs of disorders related to stress, options for help and other issues.





COURTESY PHOTO

442nd Logistics Readiness Squadron vehicle operators, Senior Airman Matt Brown, Staff Sgt. Josh Burr, Staff Sgt. Craig Alexander, Senior Airman Robert Young and

Tech. Sgt. Rick Laney, pause for a group photo to commemorate their deployment to Iraq. The five transporters helped meet Kirkuk's varied transportation requirements.

442nd cops, drivers return from desert duty

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

Airmen of the 442nd Security Forces Squadron and the 442nd Logistics Readiness Squadron recently returned home after a seven-month deployment to Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The contingent made up of 26 442nd SFS and five 442nd LRS Airmen, arrived at Kirkuk last August and September then returned to Whiteman Air Force Base in March, bringing back a wealth of experiences and insights.

PRIDE IN THEIR WORK

The troops said they were proud of their work, providing base security and transportation, as they endured temperatures ranging from the 130s to the 20s, including two snow storms. The weather, however, was just one of many memories that left deep impressions on the Airmen.

A shot-up Army Humvee being brought back on base. Mortar and rocket attacks. Meeting Iraqis who worked on base but wouldn't tell anyone off base where they worked for fear of retribution. Sheep herders, "just like on 'The Little Drummer Boy,'"

according to Tech. Sgt. Craig Gall, 442nd SFS. Oil wells burning all day and all night. Caskets of Army Soldiers being loaded on aircraft for a final trip home.

"The thing I'm proudest of is that we all came home safe," said Staff Sgt. Brian Byler, 442nd SFS.

"No one got on base who wasn't supposed to," Sergeant Gall said. "We put up a hard target and never got penetrated."

The security forces searched roughly 5,000 vehicles trying to enter the base, occasionally finding an assortment of contraband that included alcohol, pornographic material, maps, knives and video cameras.

"Any kind of storage or recording device can't be brought on base," Tech. Sgt. Jeff Bousman said. "They'd try to hide cell phones in dash boards sometimes and if we couldn't get into compartments, we'd just bust them open."

"We had the master key," Tech. Sgt. Joe Erler said.

While the Airmen maintained order on base, off base was another story.

"One time we were on the perimeter of the base in a Humvee," Staff Sgt. Scott Isaacson said. "There's a road that goes by the base – Clemson – and a car bomb went off. It was supposed to kill an Iraqi general. I saw it explode. There was a big ball of fire. I was looking in that direction and saw the car hood flying off."

Burning oil wells, belching mountains of smoke, also made for quite a sight.

"All day and all night, the oil wells would be burning and you're breathing that stuff in. There were also open sewage pits, a huge lake of it that would make you throw up if you got within half a mile of it," Master Sgt. Robert Reeves, SFS, said. "It was dirty dirty dirty over there."

Dealing with the stress of rocket and mortar attacks and other threats, the Airmen said focusing on their jobs helped them keep a healthy level of detachment.

"It is what it is," Sergeant Gall said. "You just press on and do your job. You control what you can control and don't worry about what you can't control. A self-preservation mechanism kicks in. You just let things roll off your back. Keep your attitude and sense of humor, because a situation is what it is."

"When we first got there, a rocket attack was a big deal," said Staff Sgt. Phillip Werner, SFS. "Then we slowly realized that they couldn't aim and would often shoot over the base. So when an alarm would sound, you'd put your (protective gear) on and continue watching TV."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Another "big deal" at Kirkuk was the relationships the Airmen built with some of the local populace.

"You might speak with them when they came through," Sergeant Byler said. "Most of the locals in that area are Kurds and they like us. They want us there."

"They like American money," Sergeant Gall said. However, he and other Airmen added that the Iraqis desire more than just that.

"You'd be sitting in the base towers and see hundreds and hundreds of people lined up on the side of the four-lane highway, walking along or waiting to go to the police academy that was next to the base," Sergeant Byler said. "If someone came by and blew up 200 of them, the next morning there'd more another two hundred lined up."

"They live that life every day," Master Sgt. Reeves said. "It's more than just money. They want to see their country succeed."

COMING HOME

When their tour of duty ended in March, the Airmen said they were reminded of the age-old military maxim "hurry up and wait", as they began their trip home. Schedule changes, cancelled flights and going through customs multiple times, the troops worked their way from Southwest Asia to Budapest, Hungary, to Shannon, Ireland, to Baltimore-Washington International Airport and, finally, home to Whiteman Air Force Base.

"After the holidays, boredom sets in," said Staff Sergeant Craig Alexander, 442nd LRS. "I have a wife and two teen-agers and we were all very anxious to get out of (Kirkuk).

"It was very emotional," Sergeant Alexander said. "You're telling yourself on the plane ride that you'll be happy and smiling, but I was just overwhelmed when I got off the plane. About 20 people showed up from my civilian job and some people from the 442nd. It was a little embarrassing. My lips started quivering and my eyes were watering."

Sergeant Alexander said his kids were more shocked than anything at the sight of their father.

"My kids' reaction was, 'Oh, my gosh! Is this the same dad?' because I'd lost 40 pounds over there."

"We could call home pretty much when we wanted, but being away was rough," said Senior Airman Rob Long, 442nd LRS. "But you think of everyone who has it a lot worse. We were deployed with the Army and they're there for 15 months at a time. They may miss two Christmases in a row."



COURTESY PHOTO

442nd SFS member Staff Sgt. Bridget Lund patrols the perimeter of Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq. Sergeant Lund, along with more than 20 other 442nd SFS members deployed to Iraq to provide base security. According to Lt. Gen. John Bradley, commander of Air Force Reserve Command, nearly 95 percent of SF personnel at the base were reservists.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
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2nd Lt. Catherine Dunham, 303rd Fighter Squadron, points out the finer points of the A-10 Thunderbolt II to visiting middle-school students during a tour as Wright Flight 2008 landed at Whiteman Air Force Base. (Photo by Master Sgt. Christina Suratos)

TO THE FAMILY OF:



**"Many of you -- both active duty and Reserve --
have deployed to the Afghanistan theater
often for multiple tours;
and we are winning in Afghanistan because of you."
-- Condoleeza Rice, U.S. Secretary of State**