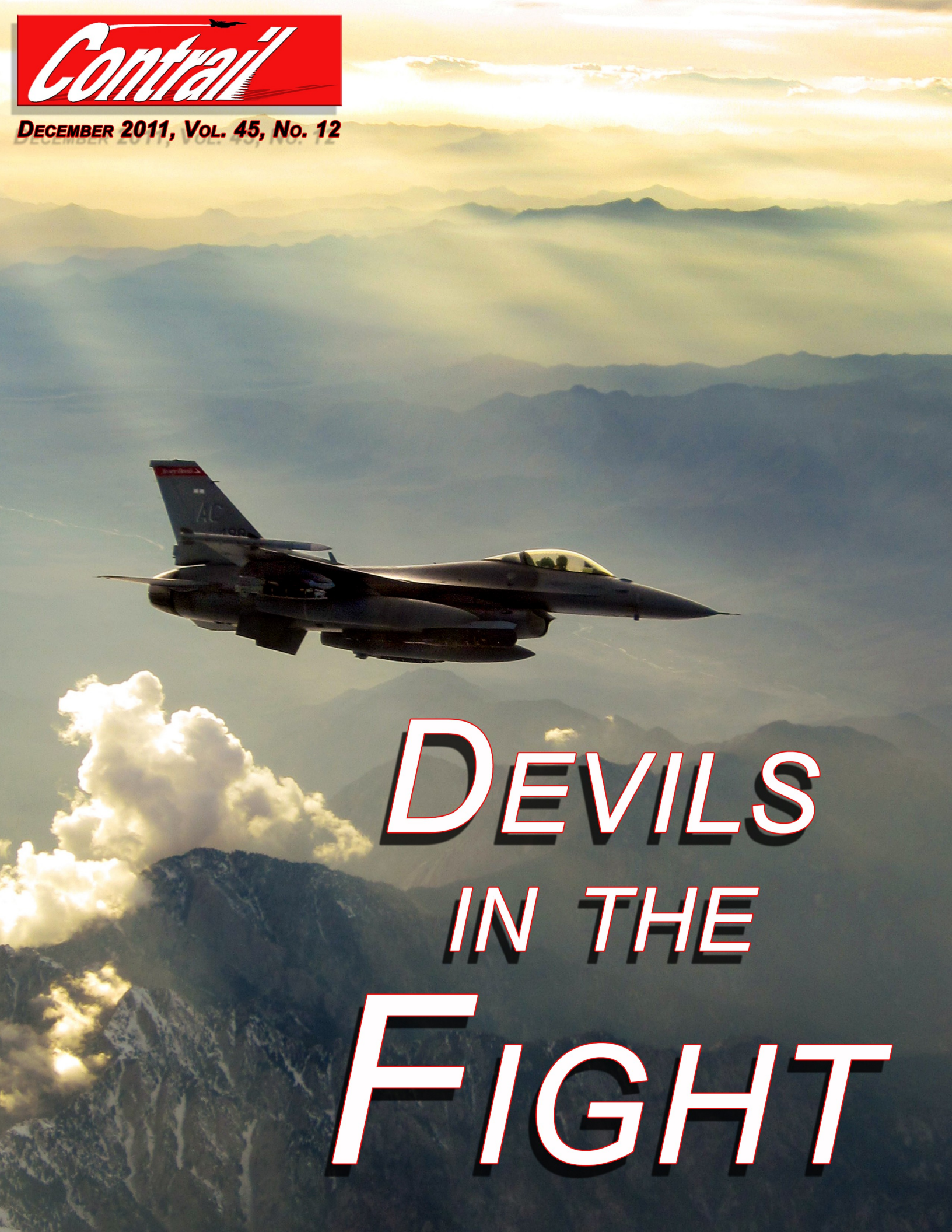
Contrail

December 2011, Vol. 45, No. 12



Devils in the Fight

Contrail

DECEMBER 2011, VOL. 45, NO. 12

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COVER: 177TH HITS BACK

A 177th Fighter Wing F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 121st Expeditionary Fighter Squadron flies over Afghanistan during a mission Nov. 11. F-16s from the 121st and F-15s from the 335th EFS dropped more than 9,000 pounds of munitions through severe weather on enemy forces trying to overrun a combat outpost in Paktika province, Afghanistan, Nov. 8. (U.S. Air Force photo by Capt. Brandon Cyr)

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

A holiday blessing

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Floyd L. White III

During the next few weeks many people will be preparing themselves for the holiday season. The month of December is the most wonderful time of the year. It is a great time of joy, reflection and thanks.

Last week we celebrated Thanksgiving and it was great to give thanks. This holiday season I pray for special blessings for all of our deployed airmen and their families. We want to celebrate them through prayer and reflection. It is my aim throughout the holiday season to pray daily for our airmen and their families. During the holiday season I request that all of us take a daily moment of silence for our airmen. We pray today for all of our airmen safe return and care for their loved ones. When they return it will be a joyous, happy occasion, but until then keep praying and be supportive of their loved ones.

Throughout the year God has blessed our command. We have celebrated joys and sorrows. However, we have worked through it together. It is my hope that our holiday prayers will carry us throughout the rest of the year and into the new year.

God Bless the 177th Fighter Wing and may you and yours have a blessed holiday season.

It's all about fabrication

Senior Airman Monica Rivera of the177th Fighter Wing Fabrication Shop, currently assigned to the 455th Fabrication Shop, works on a panel from an F-16C Fighting Falcon at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan on Dec. 2. For more about the 177th Fabrication Shop in Afghanistan turn to page 6. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

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A Message from the Wing Commander

Hello All,

As I sat down to write this month's Contrail, I looked at the December articles I had written the last two years and noticed how both of them discussed ORI's. So I am very pleased that I don't have to mention any of that this year! I'll start off by saying how glad I am to be back and many thanks to Col. Quint for taking time from his new civilian job to fill in as Wing Commander. By the way, if you see Col. Quint, wish him well as he'll be retiring effective Jan. 1. Col. Quint mentioned my trip in one of the previous Contrails and now I would like to mention our Operations Group Commander, Col. John Didonna. Col. Didonna is currently in the middle of a tour to Afghanistan where he is the Deputy Operations Group Commander. In addition to his job as a commander, he has flown many combat missions, some of them extremely demanding. He has excelled in all areas and has given the Guard a great name and he will be there when our folks arrive.

My trip to Jordan was extremely successful this year and the U.S. forces actually won the competition part of the exercise. I got to fly Block 40's from the 4th Fighter Squadron, Hill Air Force Base, Utah. I was also fortunate enough to get a checkout and then fly with the Helmet Mounted Cueing System. It's basically like having a mini Head's Up Display in the helmet visor and can be likened to something out of "Star Wars"! I'd be lying though if I didn't say that I missed our Atlantic City Block 30 jets as it's obvious we have superior maintenance and equipment. Several of the F-16s I flew had more than 7,800 hours.

Royal Jordanian Air Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Malek Habashneh, Col. Robert Bolton, commander of the 177th Fighter Wing and other dignitaries cut a ceremonial cake at Shaheed Muwaffaq Salti Air Base, Jordan, to officially open Falcon Air Meet on Oct. 18. FAM is a multi-national exercise and operational activity in Jordan that enhances regional partnerships and interoperability as well as demonstrates U.S. commitment to regional security and stability. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Asha Kin)

This year's holiday season is once again upon us and this month will be the busiest month of the year! For starters, we are sending our aviation package to Afghanistan to continue bringing the war to the insurgents. Around the same time we are deploying, our Alert team will undergo an Alert Force Operational Assessment. This is a staff assistance visit from 1st Air Force and is basically a practice Alert Force Evaluation which will follow shortly. I am sorry to say we won't be having our annual Christmas party this year as I didn't want to do it with so many folks deployed. As a substitute, we'll be having a luncheon in the base cafeteria on Dec. 22 from 12 to 2 p.m. Hope to see you there.

I want to take some time to thank all of you for another great year. All of you have lots to be proud of. We never have a shortage of volunteers to do what our country and our state ask of us. The reputation you have earned for our unit is unprecedented! For those of you deploying, take care of each other and know that your family will be in good hands back home. Jeanne Perry and our Family Support staff does an outstanding job and are always available for any of your family. For those of you staying behind, make sure you take time to thank your family and enjoy the holidays. As you enjoy the holidays, please be safe and never forget how important all of you are to our unit and your family. Please do not drink and drive. If you're going to a party, utilize the wingman concept…if you don't have a wingman or designated driver, call a taxi. If you have no other option, call your first sergeant, call the command post, or you can even call me…but NEVER drink and drive! Have a Happy Holidays!

ROBERT C. BOLTON
Colonel, NJANG
Commander

CLOSE AIR SUPPORT PROTECTS COALITION FORCES

By Staff Sgt. John Wright 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (AFNS) -- New Jersey Air National Guard F-16 Fighting Falcons assigned to the 121st Expeditionary Fighter Squadron and F-15E Strike Eagles from the 335th EFS dropped more than 9,000 pounds of munitions through severe weather on enemy forces trying to overrun a combat outpost in Paktika province, Afghanistan, Nov. 8.

According to reports, up to 70 Taliban were killed while attacking COP (Command OutPost) Margah in a large scale coordinated attack. Coalition forces were first alerted to the attack when rocket-propelled grenades began to hit the camp. Shortly thereafter, the insurgents attacked the camp from multiple positions using small arms and RPG fire.

Staff Sgt. Seth Pena, a joint terminal attack controller with the 817th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron, was responsible for calling in close air support when the fighting began. He employed weapons from Navy F-18s, who were already overhead and then immediately requested a "Dude flight" of F-15s and a "Viper flight" of F-16s from Bagram Airfield.

"I requested the Dudes and Vipers because I needed a lot of ordnance and fast," Pena said. "RPGs had already hit inside the COP and things were getting serious. There was a large enemy force moving towards us from multiple positions, and we were taking a heavy amount of small arms fire."

Due to severe weather in area, the jets were forced to fly above cloud level, which caused them to rely heavily on the JTAC for targeting information.

Maj. Todd Dyer, a 335th EFS F-15E pilot, was the flight lead in "Dude 21."

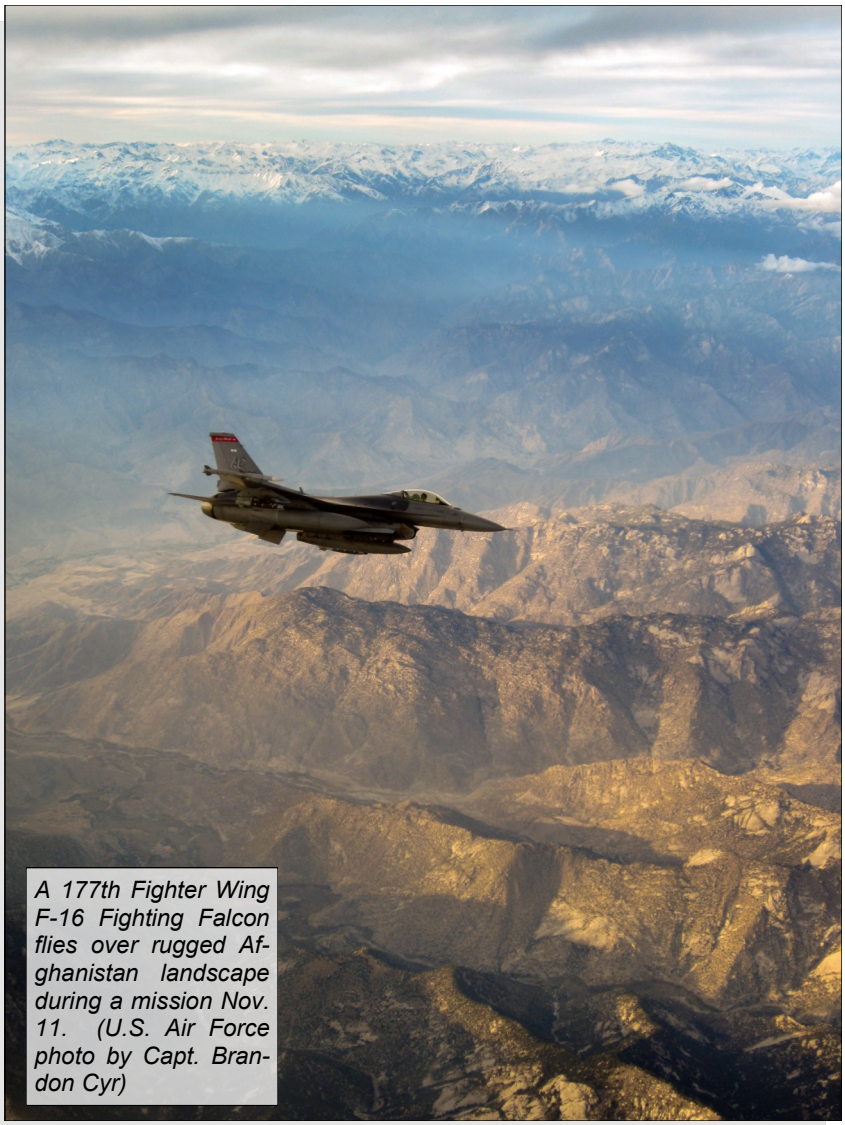
"We are able to employ precision weapons through the weather, which is one of the benefits of having GPS weapons," Dyer said. "It's a very disciplined type of attack to get weapons on target efficiently. We weren't able to use our targeting pods due to weather and had to trust what the JTAC was passing us. There was a lot of coordination and confirmation that happened in a short amount of time before we dropped, and everything worked out well."

After the Dude flight dropped their first two sets of munitions, Pena identified enemy personnel in an open area advancing on the COP and called for a 500-pound weapon that eliminated the target.

"My number one mission is to do everything I can to ensure zero coalition casualties and eliminate as many insurgents as possible," Pena said. "Where Dude flight dropped the bombs, it accomplished the ground commander's intent, which makes me feel good."

Capt. DeShane Greaser, an Army infantry commander at COP Margah, said close air support was critical to the joint fight that day.

"CAS was important to this operation because when fighters arrive on station, the insurgents can't run away fast enough," Greaser said. "On this particular night, they believed the heavy cloud cover and fog would prevent CAS from blowing them up -- it did not."



A 177th Fighter Wing F-16 Fighting Falcon flies over rugged Afghanistan landscape during a mission Nov. 11. (U.S. Air Force photo by Capt. Brandon Cyr)

Greaser's Soldiers were heavily engaged with enemy forces from multiple directions, repelling them with small arms fire and mortar rounds when the first bombs dropped.

"The initial bombs dropped effectively changed the insurgent's minds about continuing the attack." Greaser said.

The first bombs dropped had an even more significant impact to Taliban forces than was at first apparent, according to Pena.

"There was a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device heading to the COP, and after the first bombs hit, we got reports that the enemy said, 'We're turning around, there are jets overhead.'"

Pena said having fighters overhead provided the ground commanders with tremendous confidence.

"When CAS is overhead, I have a very powerful asset," Pena said. "With fighters overhead, there is no chance they're going to overrun us. The Dudes and Viper flights are my favorite to work with because they perform exactly how I need them and everything happens very fast."

Devils in the Fight: Col. John DiDonna

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

In the next few months I will be profiling members of the 177th Fighter Wing here at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

It is fitting that the first person I will be covering is Col. John DiDonna, 177th Operations Group commander, who is deployed as one of two deputy operations group commanders at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. DiDonna is also one of the first pilots to arrive here, and has been on station for several months.

"Upon my arrival, I was truly amazed at the size of and makeup of the Operations Group; 11 combat squadrons including more than 1,000 Airmen, Sailors, and Marines," said DiDonna. "In comparison, the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group is approximately the size of the entire 177th Fighter Wing. I am amazed at the work ethic, individual commitment, selfless service, and team effort of all Bagram warriors, including those Airmen currently deployed from the 177th."

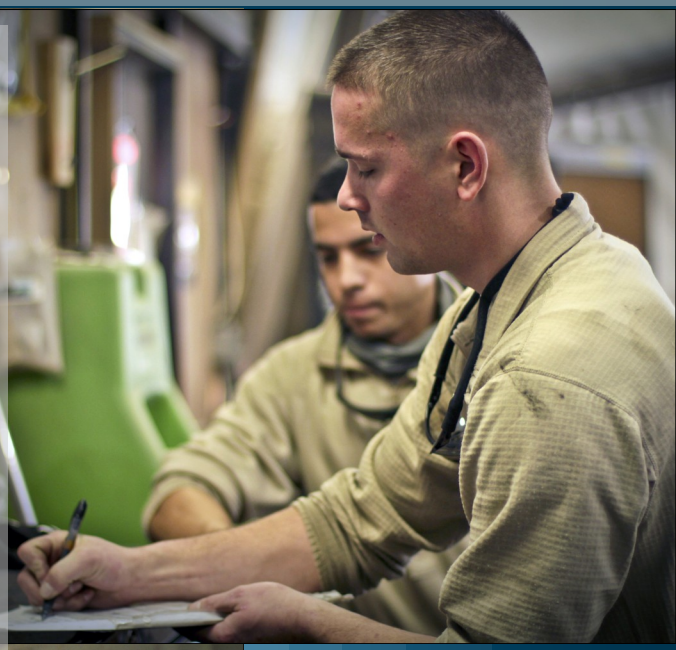
"The flying here is like none other than I have experienced in my career," said DiDonna. "The terrain in Afghanistan is ominous; rugged, mountainous, presenting unique tactical challenges. The missions can be intense, solely focused on providing Coalition forces close air support. I am truly amazed by Coalition forces and their brave dedication and relentless commitment to this counterinsurgency effort."

"I routinely inquire about family members supporting this operation from afar. I am equally astounded, hearing stories of their commitment, support, and sacrifice," said DiDonna. "Without their understanding, the intense focus required to accomplish this difficult mission would not be possible."

The men and women of the 177th who are currently supporting Operation Enduring Freedom are contributing greatly to the effort here.

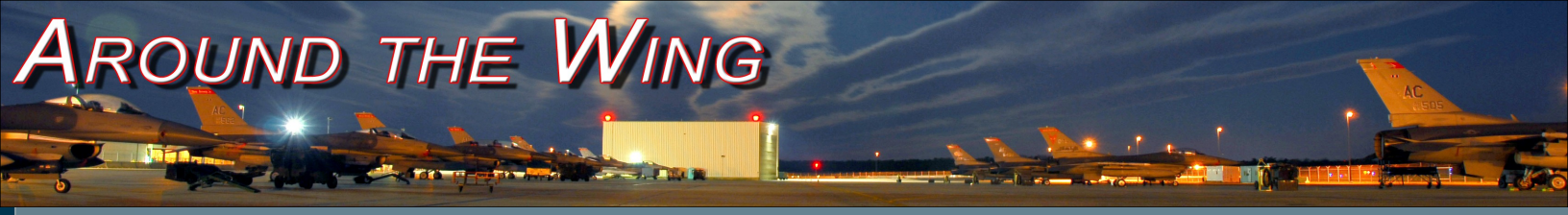
FABRICATION PUTS IT TOGETHER

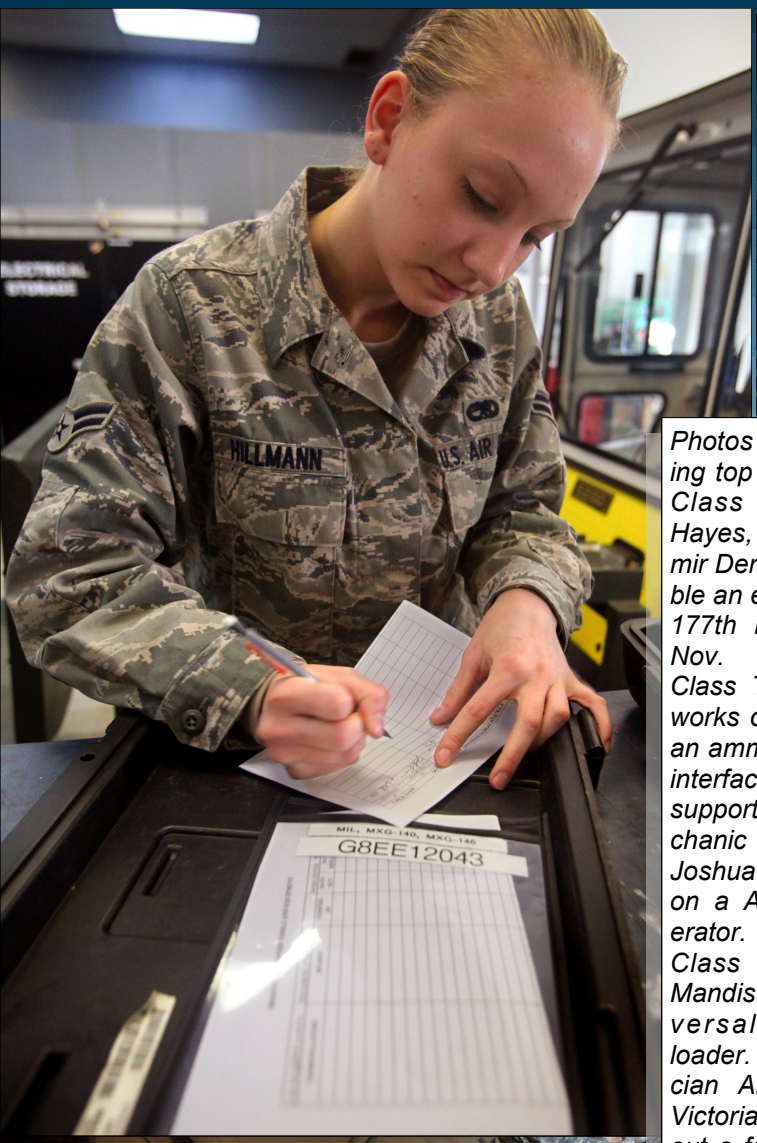
U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

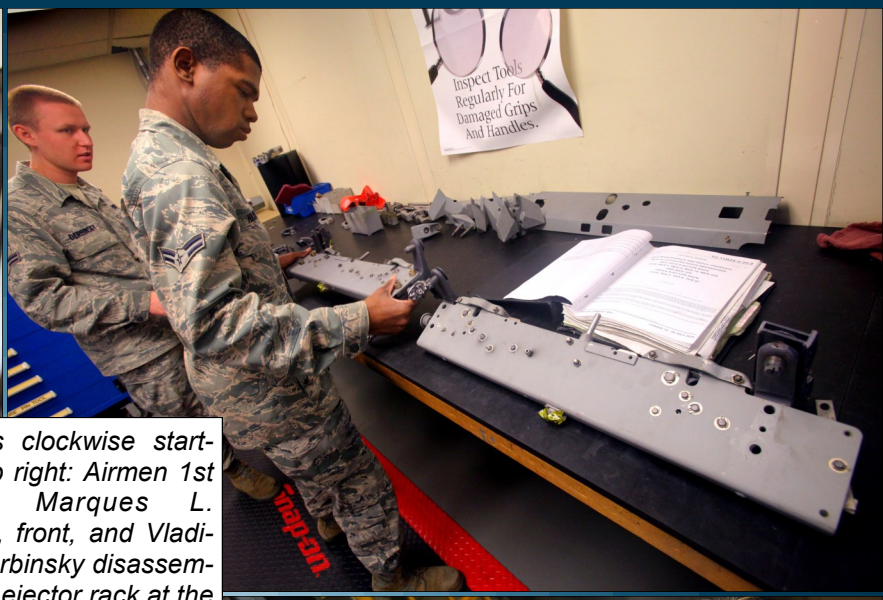


Airmen from the of the177th Fighter Wing Fabrication Shop, currently assigned to the 455th Fabrication Shop keep the aircraft flying at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Photos clockwise starting left.: Senior Airman Justino Roman works on an F-16C Fighting Falcon. Senior Airmen Ed Fryling and Justino Roman turn in tools. Tech. Sgt. John Riccio III (right), and Senior Airman Monica Rivera (left) go over operating instructions before performing fabrication work on an F-16C Fighting Falcon on Dec 2.

Around the Wing







Photos clockwise starting top right: Airmen 1st Class Marques L. Hayes, front, and Vladimir Derbinsky disassemble an ejector rack at the 177th Fighter Wing on Nov. 6. Airman 1st Class Tracie K. Ballard works on the linkage for an ammunition conveyer interface unit. Powered support equipment mechanic Senior Airman Joshua R. Powell works on a A/M32A-60A generator. Airman 1st Class Katherine L. Mandis works on a universal ammunition loader. Aircraft electrician Airman 1st Class Victoria E. Hillmann fills out a form before heading out to the flightline. (U.S. Air Force photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs.)

Deployments: Staying in touch with home

By 2nd Lt. Amanda Batiz, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Deployments are difficult on Airmen and their families. The quality of communication between the two can affect morale, which impacts how well the mission get's accomplished.

Before deploying, Airmen and their families must work out a plan to communicate and that plan should include e-mail, social media and that trusted back-up, hand-written letters.

"It may be old fashioned but there's no better feeling than getting a letter and being able to put it in your pocket and read it anytime, anywhere," said Tech. Sgt. Jason R. Hernandez. "When I was in Afghanistan it was a letter from my wife that kept me going."

And while telephones are great, in remote locations interrupted calls are frequent and sometimes internet is not available.

"There's nothing more frustrating than being on the phone with my wife or son and the call drops because of an attack happening or a storm rolling in," said Hernandez. "With e-mail I can write out a long message beforehand and cut and paste it into an e-mail while the line is still up."

Airmen will often work long hours on deployments. Coupled with adjusting to a new environment, a new country and culture, on top of performing a critical mission, the difficulties can seem insurmountable.

Despite these challenges, at the end of a long day an Airman can return to shelter and within minutes be chatting via video with their loved ones. Social media tools such as Skype, facebook and Google chat can make all the difference in motivating that Airman for the next day's set of challenges.

Everyday there are new advances in the way we communicate and more people are using social media. These sites are the easiest and cheapest ways for Airmen to stay in touch while deployed. Through smartphones, family members are always connected at home.

Some Airmen may view chatting on websites, using Skype and facebook or even video chatting via webcam as too difficult and even time consuming to set up. Until an Airman actually tries it and learns how to use different means of communication many won't see the benefit. Yet, these social media are the quickest, easiest and most efficient ways to stay in touch with family while deployed. It's all about adapting and learning. Teaching fellow Airmen and families how to use social media prior to leaving for a deployment is a part of making that important plan.

According to facebook, it has over 750 million active users of all ages ranging from teenagers to senior citizens. This example illustrates that age is not a barrier in the use of social media.

Social media is simple to use and most services are free. Yahoo, Google, MSN and Skype offer video chat free of charge in addition to instant messaging. Facebook provides an outlet to share photos and video with family members. Being a keystroke away from seeing a loved one in real time or looking at recent photos and or video from the dance recital or the little league championship baseball game that was missed can make the difference to a deployed Airman.

One of the greatest concerns with social media is maintaining operational security (OPSEC). Airmen must ensure that critical information is not compromised, this information includes but is not limited to deployments dates, times and locations. All Airmen are held accountable for any information or photographs that they post that compromises operational security.

In order to mitigate any OPSEC concerns, Airmen must complete OPSEC training. The public affairs office is also available to conduct social media training. Through OPSEC and social media training Airmen can be properly informed and make appropriate decisions about the information they share with family and friends.

Make a plan today to communicate with loved ones before your deployment that involves the use of e-mail, social media and when technology fails, hand-written letters. While it won't reduce the number of days you are gone, it will make it feel shorter.

Council presents donation to Foodbank

Members of the 177th Fighter Wing Chief's Council, Chief Master Sgts. Donald E. Harris, left, and Martin W. Schellhas present a check from the Council's fundraising efforts to Margie Barhan, executive director, Community Foodbank of New Jersey/Southern Branch on Nov. 16. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Andrew Merlock, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

Assignment: Afghanistan

Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, left, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs, interviews a Security Forces Airman at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht)

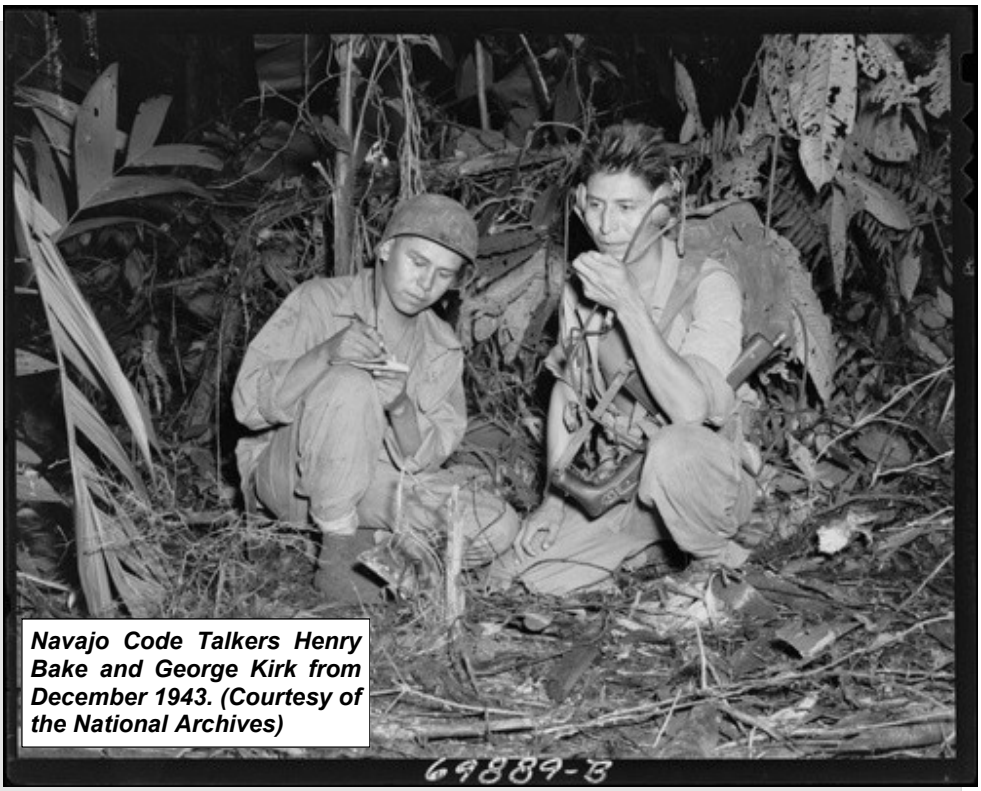
Native Americans answer call of duty

Commentary by retired Col. Gene Kamena, Air War College

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. (AFNS) -- Native Americans serving in the military have long been part of one of the largest per-capita ethnic groups in the profession of arms.

Young Native Americans have answered and continue to answer the nation's call of duty for many reasons. Some see it as a rite of passage, while others have been taught service, sacrifice and courage are virtues of value. The Native Americans serving today carry on a time-honored tradition, one continued from the time of the first settlers on this continent to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"My people honored me as a warrior," said a Vietnam veteran who is from the Kiowa tribe, according to Naval History and Heritage Command. "We had a feast and my parents and grandparents thanked everyone who prayed for my safe return. We had a special (dance) and I remember, as we circled the drum, I got a feeling of pride. I felt good inside because that's the way Kiowa people (tell) you that you've done well."



Navajo Code Talkers Henry Bake and George Kirk from December 1943. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

They have always been there; they were in the ranks of the military even before we were a country. In the early days of our nation they were our eyes and ears, serving as scouts and guides. The last Indian scout retired from the Army in 1947 at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., according to Naval History and Heritage Command.

Native Americans served in the War of 1812 and as auxiliary troops during the Civil War. Gen. Ely Parker, a Seneca Indian, wrote the terms for Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. Native American scouts served with distinction during campaigns in the western frontier and accompanied Pershing's troops in his pursuit of Poncho Villa in 1916. Teddy Roosevelt recruited Indian scouts, who accompanied the Rough Riders into Cuba during the Spanish-American War.

Despite lack of citizenship status and not having the right to vote, more than 12,000 American Indians served in World War I. More than 600 were assigned to the 142nd Infantry Regiment, seeing action in France. Many were decorated for bravery in battle.

Native Americans who served in World War I secured signal transmissions by using their native language. Joseph Oklahombi, a World War I Code Talker, captured more than 100 enemy combatants during the Battle for Blanc Mont Ridge in October 1918, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Native American Programs.

More than 40,000 Native Americans served during World War II, this time as American citizens after being granted citizenship in 1924. The now famous Code Talkers proved invaluable when they secured communications in the Pacific theater.

"It was always the warrior who was first in defending Mother Earth," said a Dakota/Lakota veteran, according to Naval History and Heritage Command. "It was his duty to be first. It is a part of traditional values, a part of protecting against any invasion that would endanger the people, our people and the land." Native Americans have a tradition of serving above and beyond the call of duty. More than 20 have received the nation's highest award for valor, the Medal of Honor, many making the ultimate sacrifice.

Still others served and sacrificed with less notoriety; during the opening stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, Army Spc. Lori Piestewa, a Hopi from Arizona, became the first female Native American service member to be killed in action. Not knowing she had been killed, Piestewa's family, tribe and community left their porch lights on to help her find her way her way home. During her memorial service, Daniel King read the following Oneida Indian warrior saying:

"When you adorn yourself with the implements of way, you are ready to kill. It is only right then you must be prepared to die as well. As Indian people, we know how to face war, we know how to sacrifice, we know how to honor, (and) we know courage. We know how to remember."

November is the time for all Americans to honor and remember the service and sacrifices of Native Americans, for they have always been there when needed.

(Dr. Roy Houchin, an Air War College professor, contributed to this article.)

The Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program

From the 177th Fighter Wing Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program reinforces the Air Force's commitment to eliminate incidents of sexual assault through awareness and prevention training, education, victim advocacy, response, reporting and accountability. The Air Force promotes sensitive care and confidential reporting for victims of sexual assault and accountability for those who commit these crimes.

Sexual assault is criminal conduct. It falls short of the standards America expects of its men and women in uniform. Specifically, it violates Air Force Core Values. Our core values and respect are the foundation of our wingman culture -- a culture in which we look out and take care of each other. Sexual assault corrodes the very fabric of our wingman culture; therefore, we must strive for an environment where this type of behavior is not tolerated and where all Airmen are respected.

Sexual assault is defined as intentional sexual contact, characterized by use of force, threats, intimidation, abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault includes rape, forcible sodomy (oral or anal sex), and other unwanted sexual contact that is aggravated, abusive, or wrongful (to include unwanted and inappropriate sexual contact), or attempts to commit these acts.

Consent is defined as words or overt acts indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual conduct at issue by a competent person. An expression of lack of consent through words or conduct means there is no consent. Lack of verbal or physical resistance or submission resulting from the accuser's use of force, threat of force, or placing another person in fear does not constitute consent. A current or previous relationship by itself or the manner of dress of the person involved with the accused in the sexual conduct at issue shall not constitute consent.

The 177th Fighter Wing Victim Advocate Team

Capt. Toni Memmelaar: Sexual Assault Response Coordinator
Capt. Laura McKendrick: Alternate SARC
Maj. Roxellen Auletto: Victim Advocate
Tech. Sgt. Grant Holway: Victim Advocate
Staff Sgt. Nicole Horn: Victim Advocate
Airman 1st Class Stephen Moore: Victim Advocate

If you have been sexually assaulted or know someone who has, please find the strength within yourself to come talk to me, Capt. Toni Memmelaar, or one of the Victim Advocates. If you are not comfortable talking in person, please call the SARC cell line at 609-385-3671.

The 177th FW

Annual Children's Holiday Party

When:
Saturday Dec. 17
11 a.m.- 2 p.m.

Where:
177th FW, Dining Hall
Bldg 400

Santa will arrive by Fire Truck!

FREE

Lunch, pictures with Santa and presents, Captain Visual, Face Painting and Crafts

Please respond by Dec. 6, by phone with the names, gender and ages of children and number of adults to Jeannie Perry at 609 761-6248

Hope to see you all there!!

News Airmen Can Use

Volunteers needed

On Dec. 14 at 11 a.m. Airmen from the 177th Fighter Wing and the 108th Wing will meet at the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home to drop off gifts and serenade the residents.

Volunteers are needed for this special event. If you are interested, you will your supervisor's permission. For more information, contact Senior Master Sgts. Tim Donovan at 761-6156 or Michael Monteith at 761-6305.

Annual dental exam

The annual dental exam will be completed by your civilian dentist.

Get a DD Form 2813 and have your dentist complete the form and return it to the clinic. Questions call 761-6240.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

DECEMBER 2011

Discover the excellence in our Diversity of Thought.

- ✓ Highlight your year of success
- ✓ Identify goals for next year

If you are a decision maker in your organization and you look around the room and everybody loks like you, you're probably doing something wrong. If everyone doesn't look like you, but thinks like you, you're really doing something wrong.

- Dr. Samuel Betances

My Nation's sword and shield

A 177th Fighter Wing F-16 Fighting Falcon is prepped for a mission from Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan on Nov. 28. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs)