

Heartland WARRIOR

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Heartland WARRIOR

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Any questions regarding any content should be directed to the editor at (765) 688-3348.

Staff

Col. Don Buckley.....commander
Lt. Col. Gary Lockard.....chief, public affairs
Maj. Kelly Howard.....public affairs officer
Tech. Sgt. Doug Hays.....editor
Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner.....assistant editor
Staff Sgt. Carl Berry.....staff writer
Staff Sgt. Benjamin Mota.....staff writer
SrA. Andrew McLaughlin.....staff writer
SrA. Jami Lancette.....staff writer

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

On the cover...

Airman 1st Class Tara Lees folds an American flag during honor guard training held here in March. Ceremonial guardsmen have a unique role of providing final military honors to a deceased veteran, retiree or active-duty Airman along with honoring the nation and its flag through special ceremonies at schools, sporting venues and other special events.

SFS Airmen return home



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Marta Iscoa kisses her son, Senior Airman Jessie Eastham, as she welcomes him back from a six-month deployment March 6. Eastham and 20 other 434th Security Forces Squadron Airmen deployed to the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan.

By Tech. Sgt. Mark
Orders-Woempner
434th ARW Public Affairs

Sometimes they return home under the cover of darkness, but this time Grissom made sure to give a hero's welcome to its returning warriors.

Welcomed back by cheering family and friends, 21 Airmen from the 434th Security Forces Squadron returned from a six-month deployment to the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, aboard a Grissom KC-135R Stratotanker March 6.

"This was a huge team-effort, and there are a lot of people who worked really hard for the last week to make this trip happen so we could go to Baltimore, (Md.), pick up these folks and bring them home," said Col. Christopher Amend, 434th Operations Group commander. "Yeah, they could have flown into Indianapolis and got on a bus to come up here, but to come home to Grissom on their own airplane and have the homecoming that we saw today, that's what it's all about; taking care of our people here at Grissom."

While deployed the 434th SFS

Airmen provided security for the Transit Center at Manas, which is a transportation and logistics hub at Manas International Airport, with missions including aerial refueling of coalition aircraft, airlift of supplies and equipment, and movement of coalition personnel.

"They provided perimeter security, secured the installation and they did a great job," said Senior Master Sgt. Brad Klepinger, 434th SFS superintendent.

Lt. Col. Maureen McAllen, 434th Mission Support Group commander, agreed.

"With the amount these folks do and what they go through all the time, it's amazing the amount of work and dedication that they show," said McAllen. "They're a great bunch of guys, and for about a third of them it was their first deployment."

And, while several members of Grissom's leadership showed up to welcome the troops home, it was the family members who cheered the loudest and went running to embrace their loved ones as they stepped off the aircraft.

"Words can't describe how I

Please see 'SFS return', page 11

Heartland Warrior

Jackson outlines reserve command focus

By Staff Sgt.
Katie Spencer

459th ARW Public Affairs

WASHINGTON -- Service chiefs from the Reserve and Guard components met with members of House National Guard and Reserve Components Caucus on Capitol Hill, March 14.

Leaders from each branch of service spoke about their top three priorities at the caucus-sponsored breakfast. Lt. Gen. James Jackson, the chief of Air Force Reserve and commander, Air Force Reserve Command, said the mission, manpower and modernization are the top three priorities for the Reserve.

Jackson opened up his priority list by mentioning the lack of funding for the 14,000 Department of Defense civilians the AF Reserve has on staff; nearly 10,000 of whom are dual-status Air Reserve Technicians serving in a civilian capacity when not in military status. The ARTs are essential to the everyday mission of the AF Reserve and they work to make sure the planes get in the air and the missions are successful, he said.

"The underlying principles are to remain a combat-ready, cost-effective, experienced force," he added. "We are that now, and we want to continue to be that."

Jackson spoke on retaining Airmen as part of his manpower priority.

"We need to be able to retain experienced Airmen for life," he said. "We have civilian skill sets and also capture the



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Katie Spencer

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. James Jackson, Chief of the Air Force Reserve and commander, Air Force Reserve Command, discusses his top three priorities to congress during a breakfast with the House National Guard and Reserve Components Caucus, on Capitol Hill, March 14. The NGRCC convenes annually to ensure the National Guard and Reserve components are resourced and have inputs on policy and force structure within the Department of Defense.

active duty skill sets. If we can retain that manpower and the ability to utilize it [manpower] as an operational ready-Reserve, than that is a benefit to the nation."

The last of the top three priorities was modernization.

While Jackson touched on a number of modernization issues, he focused on the use of the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account funds. NGREA is procurement funding provided by Congress directly to all reserve components to fill shortfalls in equipment provided by the services.

"We are spending money right now on the defense of large aircraft, on targeting pods and all pieces of equipment that we need for our Air Force," he said. "And the

bottom line is all of that can be paid through the NGREA funds and help the total force and the nation."

According to a position paper from the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year-2012 authorized the appropriations of \$1 billion for Guard and Reserve equipment. Without the appropriation, the Reserve Component would have only received \$325 million in the Defense Authorization bill.

"I think it is extremely important to have the leaders from Congress, the Reserve components and strategic partners here to put together a game plan and a way forward in particularly as we go through this time of sequestration and a

continuing resolution," he said.

The NGRCC convenes annually to ensure the National Guard and Reserve components are resourced and have inputs on policy and force structure within the Department of Defense.

"There is no venue, with the exception of the caucus breakfast, where you have the heads of the Guard and Reserve forces in one location, laying out in clear terms what it is that their services need to maintain readiness," said Rep. Duncan Hunter, (R-Calif.), co-chair of the NGRCC. "Given the budgetary issues facing our defense community, this is the best kind of meeting that helps Congress make sound decisions that support our men and women serving in harm's way." (AFNS)



Easter egg run cracks open fun

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

Grissom cracked open some fun by hopping into the spirit of Easter and fitness.

Nearly 30 runners took part in a three-mile Easter egg fun run that started at the Grissom Fitness Center here March 28.

During the run, participants had to stop at multiple stations, open plastic eggs and complete holiday-themed tasks such as wearing bunny ears or singing "Here Comes Peter Cottontail."

"It started off as a fun run with my regular group that comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but it seemed like such a fun idea, so we decided to open it up to the rest of the base and see what we got," said Zac Holmes, a Grissom Fitness Center instructor. "And, we had a lot more people show up than we expected."

Holmes said that the run was based off a run he had done in Bloomington, Ind., a number of years ago, but this run got more thematic when he left for vacation and some of his students took over the planning.

"The original idea was just to have different exercises in the eggs that people would draw at each station, like 25 push-ups," he explained. "But, it evolved into a much more thematic and fun event with people doing goofy things."

"The idea was to get people to laugh at themselves and have fun without feeling too embar-



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Lamar Woods, Shane Taylor, Corey Maston and Tim Wood play a version of hacky sack with a plastic Easter egg during an Easter egg fun run held here March 28. Teams had to stop at multiple stations during the three-mile run and complete holiday-themed tasks.

rassed," said Doug Hays, who helped plan the run with Debra Wilson-Strong. "People seemed to have a lot of fun."

Hays also said they had support from the Fitness Center staff as well as base leadership.

"Once the decision was made that we were going to do it, we went to Juli Phelps and Will Somers, and they really got behind us," he elaborated. "They gave us the reins to run with, or rather, hop with it."

And according to Holmes, injecting fun is key to fitness success.

"I think having other people there, involved in your workout and enjoying exercise with other people is a big thing to



Zac Holmes, Rich Percival, Chris Wiley and Corey Walters start their trek during the run. It was hosted by the fitness center and incorporated seasonal fun with fitness.

keep people motivated," he explained.

With this holiday themed run deemed a success, Hays said he expects there to be future events like this.

"I'm sure there are things we can change for next time, but it was a pretty big success, and I look forward to us doing similar things later on," echoed Holmes.

Intel specialist named 434th ARW Officer of the Year

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
434th ARW Public Affairs

From Washington to McArthur, some of America's greatest military officers defined themselves through unconventional thinking paired with decisive action.

Employing those same traits, Capt. Paul McComas accomplished vital missions and protected lives, which helped earn him the title of 434th Air Refueling Wing Officer of the Year for 2012.

McComas was a 434th Operations Support Squadron intelligence officer prior to his current assignment as an intelligence air reserve technician with the 403rd OSS at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.

Last year McComas spent six months assigned to Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., working intelligence issues around the globe.

"As a reservist, he went to AMC and quickly assumed a leadership role, becoming a go-to guy down there just like he was here," said Lt. Col. Gregory Schultz, 434th OSS intelligence chief.

"What they have there is a unit support desk that intelligence people from around the world can call," the newly promoted captain said. "As an intel person you have to find out information, and sometimes you don't always have that info at your base level, so what you do is call the help desk with a request for information."

In that same role, McComas also provided intelligence support for real-world missions with the 618th Air and Space Operations Center (Tanker Airlift Control Center).

"I provided intelligence support to the duty officer that sits at TACC working real-time intelligence support to AMC units around the world," he elaborated. "I would analyze and perform threat analyses for drop-zone briefings showing upcoming C-130 and C-17 air drops in Afghanistan."

But, when a key system went down, it was the captain's quick thinking and ability to adapt that got the mission done and helped set him apart.

The intelligence community uses a virtual map program to track surface-to-air fire against Coalition aircraft as well as other important information to assist with trend analysis and other predictive measures.

But, when that system went down, McComas sprang into action.

"The part of it that was ran by (U.S. Air Forces Central) went down, so we couldn't use it," he explained, adding that the program uses a file format called KML to display geographic data and other information. "AFCENT's KMLs went down, so I said we've got the same stuff in our old AMC KMLs to fill the void."

By applying the old KMLs to keep the mission going, McComas said he and his team not only helped out AMC, but anyone using the program around the world.

"He is never afraid to work, and if he runs into a roadblock, he tries to solve it," said Schultz. "He doesn't just stop and say he's done; he continues until



U.S. Air Force photo illustration by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Capt. Paul McComas was recently recognized as the 434th Air Refueling Wing Officer of the Year for 2012.

the job is done."

And, while the captain said he is proud of his military accomplishments, he is most proud of something that happened off duty.

"Last fall I was able to help out a woman who had an accident right in front of me on (State Road) 218 when she had a seizure," recalled McComas. "Not only did I have to call 911 to get her help, but I had to make sure no one crashed into my vehicle with my 6-month old daughter inside as it was blind on both tops of the hill.

"I managed to take command of the scene and get the woman the help she needed while maintaining the safely to my daughter," he added.

While the captain is proud of his achievements, he gave credit to both his 15 years of enlisted service as well as his mentors for his success.

"There's no way I could be as good as I am today on the officer side without first being on the enlisted side for 15 years," he said. "I made it to master sergeant, and all that time helped guide me to say if I was going to be an officer this is how I'd do it."

And, how one does it is more important than doing it, McComas explained.

"Take care of people and they'll take care of you, and if you don't know something ask," he added. "It's that simple; people make life hard, but life is really simple."

While the captain may see life as simple, that doesn't make him any less proud of his achievements or the achievements Grissom contributes to national security.

"This award is a great honor and a great way to put an end of my time at Grissom together," he said. "It makes me feel more proud of what we did at Grissom, and I miss everybody there."

McComas said Grissom was home for him and truly had a family atmosphere.

"You just feel closer with everybody at Grissom," he elaborated. "Part of it is being out in the country, but it's also the type of people that are there and the type of people who've continued to stay there because they want to be there and are very good at what they do."



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

A Grissom ceremonial guardsman pins a rifle to his leg during honor guard training here March 6. The week-long training included instruction on honor guard facing movements, flag folding, casket bearing and weapons.

TO HONOR WITH DIGNITY

Honor guard resets, seeks volunteers

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
434th ARW Public Affairs

They wear no name on their uniform, as they are a faceless representation of all Airmen, entrusted with protecting a legacy of valor and committed to honoring freedom's defenders.

These Airmen are the volunteers of base honor guards around the globe, of whom 35 have recently recommitted to that mission here at Grissom as the base resets its team.

Grissom's honor guard was temporarily reorganized in late 2012 as the team looked for a new, full-time manager and was just recently brought back online.

Charged with managing that reset is Senior Master Sgt. Tim Wood, 434th Force Support Squadron, who was hired as the honor guard

manager and recently helped train 12 ceremonial guardsmen here and is looking for more volunteers.

Ceremonial guardsmen have a unique role of providing final military honors to a deceased veteran, retiree or active-duty Airman along with honoring the nation and its flag through special ceremonies at schools, sporting venues and other special events, explained Wood.

"It's about honoring those who have come before us and honoring the flag which symbolizes the freedom for which they fought," he continued. "When I see that flag and all it represents, that means everything to me."

But honoring a nation and its defenders who have fallen is no easy task.

"It can be very difficult emotionally, mentally and physically," elaborated Wood before explaining



Staff Sgt. Ben Durr, a Grissom Honor Guard ceremonial guardsman, approaches a casket in the position of hand-off during a recent honor guard training March 5. Also pictured, from left to right, are Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Stapleton, Senior Airman Sharon Stevens, Master Sgt. Ken Knight, Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Steager, and Senior Airman Brian Humphrey.

that Grissom's honor guard is looking for those up to the task.

During a recent training, facilitators from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, discussed the difficulties ceremonial guardsmen can have when honoring a fallen brother or sister in arms while stressing the importance of maintaining military bearing and a ceremonious appearance at all times.

Grissom's base honor guard team will work in coordination with both Wright-Patterson and Scott AFB, Ill., to perform military funeral honors throughout Indiana.

And, because ceremonial guardsmen represent all Airmen to the world, their character, motivation and other attributes are evaluated before being accepted for training.

"We have to lead by example with our uniform and our character," said Wood. "We're also looking for someone that has effective communication skills, would maintain a positive image for the Air Force, and has passion and heart."

The ability to adapt quickly is

also something Wood said he looks for when selecting team members as every military funeral honors ceremony is made unique by different venues, religious rites and family requests.

"No two funerals are alike, and each has its own changes, so we need people who can think outside the box when they need to while still following the (Air Force instructions) and our high standards," he explained.

That need to be prepared for anything while still rendering proper honors was reflected in the recent training as the Wright-Patterson instructors ran students through a multitude of different scenarios ranging from a casket being loaded in a hearse backward to rifle malfunctions.

The week-long training also included honor guard basics such as unique facing movements, flag folding, casket bearing and weapons training.

"It's intense training, but it's fun at the same time," said Wood, who



Senior Airman Angela Jones performs a full dress of an American flag during honor guard training here March 4.

added that he is planning his next training session sometime in April.

Those wishing to join the Grissom honor guard should contact Wood via email at timothy.wood.2@us.af.mil.



Staff Sgt. Ben Durr and Senior Airman Brian Humphrey, both Grissom Air Reserve Base Honor Guard ceremonial guardsmen, practice a military funeral honors firing sequence with M-14 rifles during an honor guard training here March 6.

Grissom EM named best in command

By Tech. Sgt. Doug Hays
Public Affairs staff

Grissom's emergency management office was selected as the Air Force Reserve Command Col Frederick Riemer Outstanding Emergency Management Office of the Year for 2012.

"Our goal is always to be the best emergency management shop we can be," said Dan DeAngulo, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron base emergency manager.

The EM team, made up of part-time Traditional Reservists and full-time Civilians, was lauded for their proactive training, inspections, self improvement, contingency responses and exercise efforts for the year.

"A lot of what people see us do is exercise driven," said Scott Floyd, 434th CES emergency management technician. "We are the only AFRC base that is Department of Homeland Security exercise evaluation program compliant."

That level of training is vital as Grissom interacts with local, state and federal organizations, DeAngulo said.

Grissom provided chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear decontamination training for a regional FBI weapons of mass destruction special weapons and tactics team and served as a key-coordinator in nine, full-scale and three table-top exercises with local law enforcement, emergency managers and federal entities



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Doug Hays

Bob Wydock, left and Dan DeAngulo, both 434th Civil Engineer Squadron base emergency managers, perform an inventory M-42 alarms in their shop March 27. The alarms are used to sound the detection of chemical agents.

such as DHS and Department of Energy.

"People can see what we're doing and we're being asked to get involved in more and more training opportunities here," said Bob Wydock, 434th CES base deputy emergency manager.

"The more visibility we can get at Grissom the more we can get others to utilize our facilities," Floyd said. "It just shows people what Grissom can offer – and we have great facilities. Why not use that?"

Signs that trend has started is clear as the EM team coordinated a regional FBI conference with

more than 200 attendees.

During the conference they coordinated an aircraft hijack response, CBRN decontamination and live explosive demonstrations.

It's big events like this that help Grissom maintain its footprint on the area, Floyd said.

The teamwork in the office helps to make that footprint more visible.

"I'm proud of how good Bob and Scott are as emergency managers," said DeAngulo. "Both are really, talented and have a great work ethic. They are willing to take on hard projects and ensure they get done."

"We

work well together," Wydock echoed. "And we do a good job of managing things that are within our control."

Another high visibility event the EM staff spearheaded was a joint, off-base Grissom EM and Civil Air Patrol major accident response exercise.

The team deployed a mobile communications center trailer with joint incident site communications capability.

They were praised by the CAP and the Miami County Emergency Management Agency for their detailed coordinated response.

"Knowing our counterparts is crucial to improving our incident response efficiency," explained DeAngulo.

While involvement in off-base or interagency activities works to strengthen ties outside the base, the EM staff has also worked to tailor training inside the fence to help Airmen as well.

"We've tried to simplify CBRNE training—training people to the specific areas and threats they may be going to," said DeAngulo.

To do so, the EM staff is staffed on the main unit training assemblies, as well as at least one day on the alternate UTAs.

"One of our goals is to be an example for the rest of the career field," Wydock said.

And with the Col Frederick Riemer award now on their mantle, the EM staff is well on their way to making that goal a reality.



Finance classes help make ends meet

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

In today's world, making ends meet can be quite challenging, but there is help.

Grissom's Airman and Family Readiness Center recently partnered with Alice Howe, a military family life consultant and certified financial planner, to offer classes geared for the personal finances of base personnel and their families.

"She's a great asset to have come here to the base to help our people out with their finances," said Jill Marconi, Grissom A&FR director. "I really hope people take advantage of what she has to offer."

Howe, who is a native Hoosier and started her financial services career in 1988, held her first class Feb. 28 and plans to hold classes on a variety of topics every other Thursday from 10-11:30 a.m. She will also attend select unit training assemblies to hold classes for traditional reservists.

Class topics will include saving money, income sources, spending plans, frugal living, debt control, understanding credit, borrowing

wisely, reducing dept, bankruptcy and more.

"She will go over both military and civilian retirement issues with people including Thrift Saving Plans," added Marconi. "After each class she'll also do one-on-ones with people if they'd like."

And, those one-on-one sessions with civilian and military employees and their spouses afford privacy for those who are concerned about sharing their personal information.

"There's no sharing of personal info, explained Marconi. "You can ask questions if you like, but you don't have to share anything if you don't want."

Howe comes to Grissom with a wealth of experience including six years of financial service with a regional bank, helping found a wealth management firm, and five years as owner of a financial planning practice. She acquired her certified financial planner practitioner designation in 1998.

Military family life counselors are contracted by the Department of Defense to provide financial services to military members, civilian employees and their families. Not only does Howe support Grissom,



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Alice Howe, a military family life consultant and certified financial planner, talks about how servicemembers and their families can save money at the Grissom Airman and Family Readiness office March 13.

she takes care of national guardsmen, reservists and regular military personnel throughout the state.

For more information about the classes, contact the Grissom A&FR Center at 688-4812.

Amy Gilbert, 434th Mission Support Group budget technician, takes notes during a savings and investing class put on by Alice Howe, a military family life consultant and certified financial planner here March 13. Howe holds classes every other Thursday at the Grissom Airman and Family Readiness Center to help base personnel best manage their finances and will focus on topics such as spending plans, frugal living, debt control, understanding credit, borrowing wisely, bankruptcy and more.



Marconi named 434th ARW Civilian of the Year

By Tech. Sgt. Doug Hays
Public Affair staff

Serving those who serve is a common theme, but applying that principle made one civilian here an award winner.

Jill Marconi is the 434th Air Refueling Wing's Civilian of the Year for 2012.

Marconi, Grissom Airman and Family Readiness Center director, was recognized for her accomplishments during the year, including working with the Marine and Army units here to provide family services to all the organizations on Grissom.

"Serving the people who protect me and my family is very important to me," she said. "I don't wear the uniform, but I'll be here when you need me."

To that end, she maintained 100 percent contact with more than 300 families of deployed members during the year.

"If we focus on the families, that helps our deployers focus more on the mission and worry less about things at home," she explained.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Doug Hays

Jill Marconi

She maximized donations and distributed more than 125 backpacks to reserve members and their school age children to help them cope with separations.

While she does work to

make deployments as easy as possible for members and their families, she also works to ensure people know of the benefits they are entitled to as well.

"There's a difference between active-duty and

reserve benefits," she said. "I think everyone deserves the same benefits and entitlements, so I do a lot of research to find out what people are entitled to. And if I'm told no, I start asking questions."

It's that attitude that base leadership points to as they recognize her.

"Her compassion for her fellow workers and members of this unit really make her stand out," said Lt. Col. Maureen McAllen, 434th Mission Support Group commander.

"If you go talk to Jill, you come back feeling better," McAllen said. "That positive attitude is there all the time, every day – and it makes a difference."

Whether it be hosting a children's holiday party, or scheduling financial management classes for Airmen, Marconi and her staff offer a broad range of support.

"She's willing to do anything and everything to help people," McAllen said. "It's the perfect position for her – we couldn't have anyone better in that position."

In the limelight

Medals

Air Medal – Capt. Brandon Bush, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron; Capt. Joel Nickelson, 74th ARS; Tech. Sgt. Jessie Rood, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron; Staff Sgt. Erich Maul, 74th ARS; Staff Sgt. Vicki Maxwell, 74th ARS; Lt. Col. David Schmitt, 434th Operations Support Squadron; and Capt. Robin Cosand, 74th ARS.

Meritorious Service Medal – Master Sgt. Lloyd Padgett, 434th Security Forces Squadron; Maj. Bruce Everett, 74th ARS; Maj. Brian Thompson, 74th ARS; Lt. Col. Arden Andersen, 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron; Lt. Col. David Mitchell, 72nd ARS; Lt. Col. John Pannell, 434th OSS; Lt. Col. Kenneth Hatcher, 74th ARS; Senior Master Sgt. Sara Lane, 434th AMDS; Master Sgt. John Bitzel, 434th OSS; Maj. Paul Brenner, 434th CES; and Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Groszek, 434th CES.

Air Force Commendation Medal – Capt. Richard Hastings, 74th ARS; Master Sgt. Ronnie Patterson, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; and Staff Sgt. Zachary Miles, 434th Maintenance Squadron.





U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Marta Iscoa, mother of Senior Airman Jessie Eastham, holds up an American flag as she and other family members and friends of 21 434th Security Forces Squadron Airmen welcome home their loved ones after a six-month deployment to the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, March 6. Eastham is a fire team member with the 434th SFS.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Scott Fleek

Staff Sgt. Michael McClintock, 434th Security Forces Squadron fire team member, gets a good look at his son Jack, who was born while he was deployed.

ters and two sons, one of whom he had never seen.

"He's never met Jack, who was born in October," explained McClintock's wife, Claire. "It's been different, but I've had a lot of help at home from my parents, his parents, brothers and sisters.

"It's probably been harder for him to not be there for it," she added.

But the staff sergeant said the greater burden was on his wife, and was extremely proud of her for pressing forward while he was gone.

He also spent a majority of the reunion time hugging, kissing and playing with his kids while admiring his new son.

"This is so wonderful; it's overwhelming," he said. "I don't even know how to explain it."

The whole experience also seemed to be overwhelming for many of the families as they laughed, cried and embraced throughout the evening.

"It's kind of surreal, but I think once we get home it will start to feel more real," remarked Claire McClintock.

"(The kids) are excited, but I think it's been so long it will take them some time to get used to it.

"They called (my husband) into a room over there, and now the kids don't think he's coming out for six months," she joked. "But they're happy to have their dad back, and I'm proud of him and glad he's home."

feel; tears describe it better," said Marta Iscoa, a Honduran native and mother of Senior Airman Jessie Eastham. "I am very, very proud of him; I'm proud to have raised my son here and for him to serve the country that I love."

Another mother, Juanita Garcia, said she was excited to have her son, Staff Sgt. Daniel Garcia, back but wasn't looking forward to him ever going back again.

"I'm an Air Force mom, and I'm very proud of his service, so of course I'm excited, but he's staying with me for the rest of his life," she quipped. "If he goes again, I'll go with him."

Perhaps one of the most heartwarming reunions wasn't a reunion at all. Staff Sgt. Michael McClintock, was greeted by his wife, two daugh-

AF announces force structure changes

By Jennifer Cassidy
Air Force Public Affairs

WASHINGTON -- The Air Force released its plan Mar. 28 to implement force structure changes mandated by the Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act.

The bill authorized the service to complete actions approved in previous years, such as aircraft retirements, and directed execution of Congressionally-approved force structure actions.

Some changes were outlined in the Air Force's Total Force Proposal, developed in coordination with the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve. Others were congressionally-directed.

"Our Air Force continues efforts to maximize the strength of our Total Force, and we are pleased with the progress that is being made on this front," said Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley.

"This implementation plan illustrates the Air Force's continued commitment to transparency as it completes the force structure requirements directed and authorized by the NDAA."

The NDAA directs a reduction of 65 aircraft and approximately 1,400 military billets from the Air National Guard, 57 aircraft from the Air Force Reserve, and 122 aircraft and approximately 6,100 military billets from the regular Air Force.

"Working together we can combine the personnel, equipment and readiness necessary to build a total Air Force equal to all the challenges our nation faces," said Lt. Gen. Stanley (Sid) E. Clarke III, director of the Air National Guard.

The Air Force's implementation plan includes a state-by-state description of changes for each base and the associated timeline. Each major

command developed activation, reassignment, re-missioning or divesture options.

"We've developed guiding principles to ensure that as we make decisions, we continue to have a strong foundation for what is best for our Air Force," said Lt. Gen. James F. Jackson, chief, Air Force Reserve and commander, Air Force Reserve Command. "We must leverage regular and reserve component strengths and align our decisions with a commitment as one total force team."

Key principles include: ensure personnel readiness, training and retention for transitioning units to remain at the highest level practicable and minimize mission gaps for units transitioning to new or different missions. Each of the components embraces these principles.

The Air Force will apply this approach to facilitate open communication

with key stakeholders on future total force efforts. Recently, the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force created a Total Force Task Force.

TF2 will create an enduring strategic process to determine how to correctly balance the strengths of each component to sustain capabilities required to defend our nation now and into the future.

"Our active, Reserve and Guard components are increasingly integrated --training, deploying and conducting a full range of missions together as one Air Force," said Donley, "and we're committed to ensuring that our active and reserve component mix correctly balances the strengths of each component, meeting our strategic requirements and our fiscal demands as well. The FY13 implementation plan gets us on a path toward that end." (AFNS)

434th ARW announces Airman promotions

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

From their first to their last, America's Airmen earn each stripe of rank with dedication and determination.

Nearly 30 Airmen from the 434th Air Refueling Wing here recently earned their next stripe. Their names are as follows:

To master sergeant:

- Robert Delee, 434th Security Forces Squadron
- Tanisha Silva, 434th Force Support Squadron

To technical sergeant:

- David Dunlevy, 434th Maintenance Squadron

- Austin Horen, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Joseph Schluttenhofer, 434th Air Refueling Wing

To staff sergeant:

- Eric Baker, 434th Communications Squadron
- David Bryant, 434th MXS
- Angelica Colon, 434th Operations Group

- James Poole, 434th FSS
- Andrew Wray, 434th Maintenance Operations Flight

To senior airman:

- Jannis Alonso, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron
- Ragheed Azooz, 434th CES
- Jade Bess, 434th SFS
- Lance Chase, 434th CES
- Jason Hrycaj, 49th Aerial Port

Flight

- Scott Hunter, 434th AMXS
- Paul Ingram, 434th CES
- Christopher Karlson, 434th AMXS

- Jason Lowe, 434th AMXS
- Matthew Lucas, 434th CS
- George Walker, 434th CES
- Keith Wuetig, 434th Aerospace

Medicine Squadron

To airman 1st class:

- Zachary Blow, 434th MXS
- Mayzin Naing, 434th MXS
- Justin Tallman, 49th APF
- Mandy Thibeault, 434th

AMXS

To airman:

- David Holland, 434th MOF
- Kelsey McFadden, 43th APF
- Sarah Miles, 434th CES