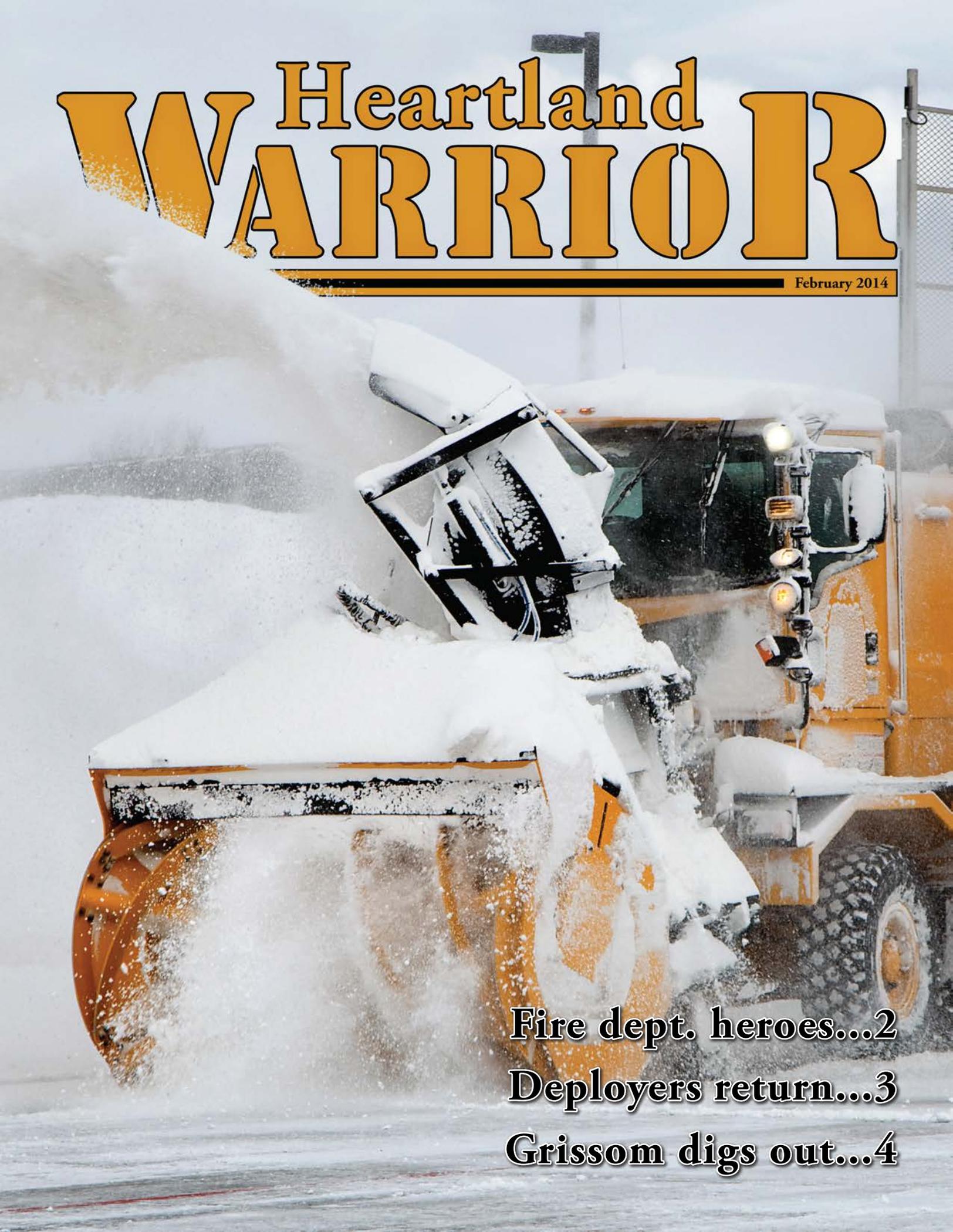


# Heartland WARRIOR

February 2014



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# Heartland WARRIOR

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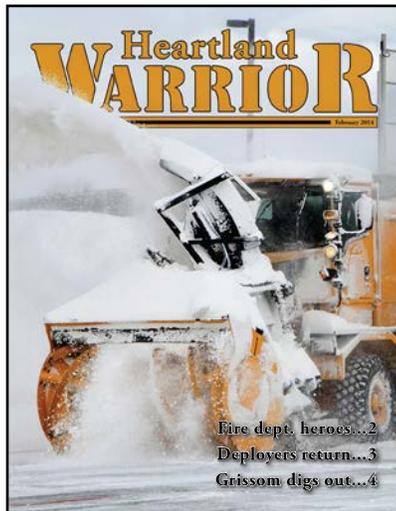
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U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew McLaughlin

## On the cover...

Dave Smith, a civilian contractor, uses an industrial snow blower to remove snow from a Grissom's airfield Jan. 25. After historic January snowfalls totaling more than 30 inches, the base's civilian contractors had to work hard to clear snow from Grissom's flightline so 434<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft could continue to take off.

# GFD heroes honored



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

Capt. James Jones, left, and Aaron Sundheimer, both Grissom Fire Department firefighters, discuss tools they use when responding to a fire at Grissom Jan. 15.

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

With paint boiling off walls and carpet melting beneath, a house engulfed in flames can only be described as hell on earth, and yet some run toward hell's inferno to save lives.

Two such men, Capt. James Jones and Aaron Sundheimer, both Grissom Fire Department firefighters assigned to GFD's Rescue 5, were recently honored for their heroic actions on the night of Aug. 25, 2012, with Department of Defense Emergency Services Heroism awards.

On that night, the GFD received a call for a house fire just outside the gate with two people trapped inside, said Chief John Ireland, GFD fire chief. Rescue 5 rolled out first with an engine and ladder company a few minutes behind.

"When you go into a fire, such as this one, the heat is 700 to 800 degrees Fahrenheit, and the visibility is zero; I mean, it's the worst conditions that you can imagine," explained Ireland. "In a five minute period you go from being dead asleep (at the firehouse) to the worst environment possible with somebody's life in the balance, and that's what these guys did."

When the midnight call came in, something complicated the situation even further.

"What's unique about this one was that it was late in the evening, and it was confirmed that there were people trapped in the residence," said Ireland as he explained there are different approaches to dealing with fires depending on what's at risk and how intense the fire is.

"We have different modes of command such as offensive and defensive, but if we know somebody's trapped inside we actually go into what's called rescue mode," he said.

Defensive mode is where firefighters work to contain a blaze, but aren't able to save property already damaged, and offensive mode is used when firefighters believe they can save property, the chief said.

"In both of these modes we require two firefighters geared up on the outside with a water source ready to go in case the firefighters get trapped on the inside," Ireland said. "However, in rescue mode there basically are no such rules."

The last, and perhaps the worst, of the modes was needed for any hope to save those trapped inside.

"When we got there, the living room was fully engulfed, and the

See 'Heroes' page 10

Heartland Warrior

# Last AEF deployment rotation comes home



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

Tech. Sgt. Dominique Ortiz, 434th Operations Support Squadron intelligence technician, right, is greeted by her mother, Diana O'Brien, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron transportation quality assurance evaluator, after returning from a deployment Jan. 20.

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

As the wheels of the Spirit of Indiana touched down on U.S. soil for the first time in more than two months, the KC-135R Stratotanker brought home with it Hoosier Airmen and the end of a long deployment cycle.

Ending that cycle, which began in May 2013, 20 Airmen from the 434th Air Refueling Wing returned to Grissom Jan. 20 after four months at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar.

Col. Paul Weimer, 434th Maintenance Group commander, was the first to shake hands with each

of the Airmen as they stepped off the aircraft and headed to a redeployment line before reuniting with their families and friends.

"All of them seemed to have a great spirit," said Weimer, who added he was proud of the job they did overseas.

Tech. Sgt. Brian Baumfalk, 434th Maintenance Squadron crew chief, who was one of the returning deployers, was one such example.

"I tried to stay positive the whole time, and it made me better," said Baumfalk. "It was a good deployment."

Weimer agreed with that assessment and said

that after talking to the returning Airmen, several conferred to him they had a great time while accomplishing a lot.

During their deployment cycle, which spanned four air expeditionary force, or AEF, periods, 138 Airmen from the Hoosier Wing supported air refueling operations that encompassed more than 2,362 hours flown on 395 sorties that refueled 306 receivers with more than 6.8 million pounds of jet fuel. Nearly 2,085 of those flight hours were considered combat hours.

For several of the returning Airmen, this deployment was their first and provided unique

experiences.

"This was my first deployment, and I got a lot of experience working on a lot of different aircraft, which was great," said Senior Airman Christopher Robinson, 434th MXS aircraft structural maintenance specialist.

For the families and friends gathered, the great part was having their loved ones back home, many of whom had missed the holidays and other special events while away.

Perhaps no one missed out on more than Senior Airman Chad James, 434th Maintenance

*See 'Deployment' page 12*

# Grissom contractors clear the way

By Staff Sgt.  
Andrew McLaughlin  
Public Affairs staff

As snow piles up, Hoosier Airmen depend on a team of civilian contractors who work hard on the ground to keep planes in the air.

During one of the snowiest months in Indiana history, Grissom's snow control team has been heading out in force with an array of vehicles to clear the base's airfield, keeping Airmen safe and the mission going.

Armed with monstrous industrial roll-over snow plows, snow blowers, straight-blade plows and multipurpose sweepers, the team has cleared more than 30 inches of snow that have fallen on Grissom's flightline this month.

The team's top priority is clearing Grissom's 12,500-foot runway and taxiway so the aircraft can continue to take off, said Marvin Plunkett, a base contractor in charge of snow control. The team is also responsible for clearing the base's 88 football fields of aircraft parking space.

"We can't close down like regular airports," explained Plunkett. "We have to keep the alert commitment open."

That alert commitment involves a portion of Grissom's 434th Air Refueling Wing aircraft being kept in a constant state of readiness, capable of launching at a moment's notice.



U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Andrew McLaughlin

Dave Smith, a civilian contractor, removes snow from the airfield at Grissom using an industrial snow blower Jan. 25. The base snow-control team has cleared more than 30 inches of snow that have fallen on Grissom's flightline in January.

Before the snow-control team can roll out with their machines, a request must be made by the base's airfield management, security forces or command post, which gets approval from the 434th Operations Group commander to deploy them.

"The snow-removal crew is amazing," said Master Sgt. Matthew Huston, 434th ARW command and control technician, who often has to make the request for the snow-control team. "Many people don't realize how big the airfield is.

"They work at it constantly," Huston added. "Without them, we wouldn't be moving right now."

This season's heavy and persistent snowfall has meant the team has had to work around the clock to keep the flightline clear, and making the job even more difficult have been the bone-chilling temperatures, said Kevin Lack, Grissom's air traffic weather supervisor. This lowest recorded temperature this month was minus 17 F and wind chills have been around minus 25 F numerous times.

"At those temperatures, anything that melts even slightly turns in to a sheet of ice," Lack explained. "It gets even more complicated because diesel fuel tends to gel when it gets that cold."

Despite these challenges, the team has remained vigilant in their efforts, fighting off the historically severe weather.

"You get it done, and you got to do it again," said Plunkett.

When Grissom isn't covered in snow, the snow-control team performs other various maintenance jobs around the base that keep it functioning.



John Smith, Garth McClain and Moe Morgan, civilian contractors, remove snow from the runway at Grissom using multipurpose sweepers Jan. 25.

# Air Force Reserve seeks to recruit recruiters



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

Tech. Sgt. Craig Ridener, 434th ARW recruiter, speaks with Indiana National Guard Pvt. 1st Class Mitchell Wooten, about opportunities in the Air Force Reserve at Grissom Jan. 15.

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

Tasked with filling the ranks, recruiters are at the start of all Airmen's careers, and now they're looking to pull from those ranks to fill their own.

The Air Force Reserve Command is now actively seeking Airmen who want to serve as full-time recruiters on active-guard and reserve tours, said Senior Master Sgt. Robert Mielke, 434th Air Refueling Wing recruiting flight chief.

"Recruit the Recruiter is a program within AFRC where we're looking for good Airmen from within the wings who want to fulfill this unique role," Mielke explained. "We're trying to get as many people as we can because we have training opportunities coming up."

The recruiters are

looking to hire highly-motivated staff sergeants, technical sergeants and master sergeants.

"As a master sergeant, you can keep your rank," said Mielke. "You used to have to take it off, but now you can come right onto an AGR tour as an E-7, providing you meet all the criteria."

Recruiters have the unique role of attracting and convincing prospective individuals to join the Air Force Reserve, and as such, are often the first impression many civilians have with the military.

And, with that higher level of responsibility comes a higher level of job satisfaction.

"The career definitely has its rewards," said Ridener. "It's been really awesome having the opportunity to go out and meet new people, tell them about the experiences I've had and help

point them in the right direction."

"I've had four AFSCs and this by far is the most rewarding job for me because you get that feel-good feeling when you have young men and women that go to basic training and come back from tech school and tell you 'thank you' for what you've done for them and their families," agreed Mielke. "You'd be hard-pressed to beat that."

"If you want something different, if you want a challenge with a higher standard, recruiting is the way to go," Ridener added. "Recruiters have to be motivated, dedicated and willing to do what needs to be done with integrity."

While the rewards may be many, so can be the challenges of a job that is often autonomous and requires a lot of flexibility.

"Recruiting is very demanding; you can put

in between 8 hours to 14 hours a day and not even realize it, so you've got to make sure you make time for your family to have a good balance," explained Ridener. "If you're married, your spouse has to be onboard 100 percent because there are going to be nights where you will be home late."

"It's not a traditional 9-5 job," added Mielke. "A lot of recruiters work weekends because that's when a lot of people that we need to talk to are out of school or off work."

Because of the unique challenges faced by these gatekeepers to the Air Force, the recruitment process of future recruiters is multi-phased.

"You fill out an application here, it gets submitted to our headquarters, and they will select applicants for an evaluation selection course where the Airman will go to Warner Robins Air Force Base, Ga., for a week to figure out if this is something they're really interested in," Mielke explained. "They'll get a lot of in-depth details about what recruiting is, and they'll find out if it's something they really want to do."

After completing an ESC, applicants can choose to continue on to recruiting technical training school at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. During the 6-week training, future recruiters are trained on public speaking, recruiting processes and selling techniques.

While some may think recruiters are natural extroverts, especially in

*See 'Recruiters' page 9*

# Six Grissom officers selected for colonel

By Tech. Sgt. Douglas Hays  
Public Affairs staff

Rooted in tradition as old as Rome itself, the rank of colonel is one that has not only commanded men throughout generations, but still commands respect today.

Six 434th Air Refueling Wing officers learned they were selected for promotion to colonel as the Air Reserve Personnel Center announced results for the 2013 Air Force Reserve Line and Non-line Colonel Promotion Selection Boards Jan. 16, 2014.

The Grissom selectees are:

- William Bray, 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron
- Hiram Gates, 434th Operations Group

- Doug Gullion, 434th Operation Support Squadron

- Gerald Malloy, 434th OG
- Stephen McManus, 434th ARW
- Bryan Runion, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron

The selection boards convened at ARPC Nov. 4, 2013, to determine those officers qualified to assume the next higher grade. Board members selected 226 of 1,840 officers considered for promotion to colonel.

A complete list of Citizen Airmen selected for promotion is available online.

The history of colonels began around 1505 when Spanish King Ferdinand reorganized part of his army into twenty units called colonelas. These consisted of about

1,000 to 1250 men further organized into companies with their commander being named a coronel.

The French, and later the British, adopted the title, and although initially retaining the original Spanish pronunciation, the British soon used the pronunciation of 'kernel' that is used today.

U.S. military colonels rank above a lieutenant colonel and below a brigadier general. The modern day insignia for a colonel is a silver eagle with a U.S. shield on its chest and holding an olive branch in one talon and a bundle of arrows in the other.

The eagle insignia led to the informal term 'full-bird colonel.'

Dates for the selectees to pin on their new rank will vary.

# Buckley addresses GCC, council holds elections



U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Mark R. W. Orders-Woempner

Col. Don Buckley, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, talks about the importance of Grissom during a Grissom Community Council meeting in Wabash, Ind., Jan. 17.

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

Upward and onward was the message delivered to the Grissom Community Council recently about the north-central Indiana base.

Col. Don Buckley, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, addressed the GCC at their general membership meeting held in Wabash, Ind., Jan. 17.

The GCC is a civilian, non-profit organization that works in partnership with Grissom to promote programs that benefit both the base and local community.

During his speech, Buckley talked about Grissom's strategic mission; its importance to the local area, nation and world; and its future before opening up to a question and answer session.

"Grissom's primary purpose is to provide a combat ready force for combatant commanders in order to execute the taskings of the National Command Authority," Buckley said. "And, we did this most recently with our last AEF deployment where we deployed 138 people down range where they flew more than 2,362 hours offloaded 6.8 million pounds of fuel.

"And, let me tell you, that's a lot of gas," he added.

Not only did the council learn about Grissom and its future, they also made some changes affecting their own future as they elected new officers.

While the majority of the GCC officers remained the same, there were some new additions. The following those elected for 2014:

- President: Dr. John Gilpin
- Vice president: Retired Col. Timothy Cox
- Secretary: John Stackhouse
- Treasurer: Brian Wright
- Kokomo Regional Director: Jean Lushin
- Kokomo Regional Director: Retired Col. Frank Faulkner
- Logansport Regional Director: Grover Bishop
- Logansport Regional Director: Jim Price
- Peru Regional Director: Retired Col. Gary Beebe
- Peru Regional Director: Retired Lt. Col. (Dr.) Gary Lockard
- Wabash Regional Director: Dr. Robert Beckett
- Wabash Regional Director: Hal Job

# Air Force changes uniform policy



U.S. Air Force photo

The Air Force listened to Airmen and updated its policy governing uniform wear Jan. 17.

**By Staff Sgt. David Salanitri**  
*Air Force Public Affairs Agency*

WASHINGTON -- The Air Force updated the policy governing uniform wear Jan. 17, with a goal of not financially burdening Airmen.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark. A. Welsh III approved several updates to Air Force Instruction 36-2903, Air Force Dress and Appearance, with many of the changes coming directly from Airmen.

During the past year, Welsh prompted Airmen to make their voice heard through the Every Dollar Counts campaign, held last spring, and suggestions made directly to him during base visits or comments to the uniform survey board itself.

"The policy changes revolve around three areas," said Col. Patrick Doherty, Director of Air Force Services who has oversight of the uniforms

and awards and recognition branch. "The first area of policy changes is focused on heritage, team building, esprit de corps and unit pride.

The second is recognizing and valuing Airmen's experiences, qualifications and job performance, allowing Airmen to wear what they have earned. The last area is a group of common sense approach inputs from Airmen in the field that senior leaders thought were great ideas."

There are dozens of updates to the AFI, including the following:

Morale T-shirts/patches representing individual squadrons that were worn in the past to increase unit pride are now authorized to wear on Fridays. Squadron color T-shirts may be worn with the ABU or flight suit when in-garrison or on-station during unit temporary duty assignments and contingency deployments. Shirts must be one color throughout the squadron,

and may have only a small squadron patch over the left chest. Wing Commanders can authorize personnel from different units to wear the same color T-shirts to facilitate esprit de corps and team building.

For example, maintainers, life support personnel and flight doctors are allowed to wear the color T-shirt of the flying squadron they support. Also, authorized is the in-garrison Friday wear of morale patches and nametags that have tasteful nicknames or call signs on flight suits. Unit commanders have approval authority for morale patches and nametag naming conventions.

Earned Air Force and other services' badges are authorized to wear, but only the command insignia pin is mandatory. This reverses a previous decision to prohibit wear of qualification badges and various patches on ABUs, to eliminate the need to remove and replace

badges for deployment or permanent change of duty station moves.

In recent years, Airmen deployed to Afghanistan wore the Operation Enduring Freedom Camouflage Pattern. The OCP is flame retardant, treated with insect repellent and also used by the Army. Following this evolution, the ABU has become primarily an in-garrison uniform, according to Air Force senior leaders.

"The increased wear of the ABU in-garrison, coupled with Airmen's long-term desires to wear the qualification badges and the command insignia they have earned, makes authorized wear on the ABU a logical step," said Lt. Gen. Sam Cox, the Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services.

A list and examples of all newly approved badges authorized for wear on the ABU is located in attachment five of AFI 36-2903.

The Air Force physical training uniform no longer has color restrictions for athletic shoes. Airmen are now also authorized to wear black socks with their athletic shoes.

Cell phones no longer have to be black, as long as they're not worn on the uniform or attached to a purse.

Changes came directly from the field and major commands, said Cox.

"The changes are the result of months of the Chief of Staff listening to what Airmen had to say about ABUs and other uniform wear policies," Cox said. (AFNS)

# Lank named Reserve's best CE manager

**By Tech. Sgt.  
Douglas Hays**  
*Public Affairs staff*

Delivering equipment and excellence, a Grissom civil engineer manager was named best in the Air Force Reserve.

Karen Lank, Air Force Reserve Command Contingency Emergency Management Facility material handler supervisor, was selected as the command's Outstanding Civil Engineer Manager of the Year in the civilian supervisor category for 2013.

In her current role, Lank heads an AFRC-run organization that acts as a central storage location for civil engineering supplies and equipment for regular Air Force and Air Force Reserve units world-wide.

"We act as a resource that units can draw upon if they don't have those assets at their home locations," explained Lank.

That responsibility includes supporting 30 prime base engineer emergency force (Prime BEEF) operations, six rapid engineer deployable heavy operational repair squadron engineers (RED HORSE) squadrons, 35 fire and emergency services units, and 25 explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) units.

To provide that support, Lank manages seven government employees and \$100 million worth of CE equipment inventory.

"Ms. Lank has been a linchpin to the success of the CEMF," said Col.



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

**Karen Lank**

Michael McCully, AFRC director of installations and mission support. "Her shop ensures all civil engineers throughout the Air Force Reserve have the capabilities they need to be trained and prepared for any situation they may encounter."

A prime example of this was when capability gaps with CE units throughout the command were identified. To reduce these, Lank and her team filled 580 orders with 49,000 items totaling \$12.3 million, getting necessary and required equipment to the deficient units.

Such responsibility requires an extreme attention to detail and perfection, which is something McCully said Lank embodies as she

had 'zero deficiencies noted' during an annual equipment accountability office visit in 2013.

"The results have been nothing short of phenomenal," McCully added. "Through her efforts, the units now have more time to concentrate on their readiness training requirements and minimize the issues that surround reportable equipment."

Those results have also translated into financial savings as well.

"Under her supervision, the CEMF has successfully saved millions of dollars in material accounting and repair costs on CE Prime BEEF equipment," McCully said. "We are extremely proud of this award and it shows

how well our folks in the command assist the citizen Airmen in their training efforts."

Lank's success is no surprise to some, especially with her experience, which dates back to regular Air Force duty when she was an inventory control specialist at Grissom from 1980-1992, with a one-year remote tour to Osan AB, Korea, in 1987.

She joined the Air Force Reserve in 1994 working in material management and retired as a master sergeant in 2008. During that time she became a contractor with CEMF in 2007 before taking on the civil service role as supervisor in 2011.

While Lank's journey with the Air Force is in its fourth decade, she said has no plans to stop now and gives much of the credit for her accomplishments to her team.

"I am very proud to be a part of this great Air Force, and I am proud to work with such an outstanding group of people that work hard to make this operation successful," she said. "This operation has come a long way since it was started in 2006, and it is nice to have the accomplishments recognized."

"I would like to continue to work at CEMF and be a part of its continued growth," Lank added.

Lank is now representing AFRC in an Air Force-level competition for this award.

# Six 434th ARW Airmen awarded medals

By Tech. Sgt. Douglas Hays  
Public Affairs staff

For their meritorious service in the Air Force, six Grissom Airmen were recently awarded medals.

## Meritorious Service Medal

Four 434th Air Refueling Wing Airmen were recently presented with Meritorious Service Medals. President Lyndon Johnson established the MSM by Executive Order 11448 on Jan. 16, 1969, as the counterpart of the Bronze Star Medal for the recognition of meritorious noncombatant service. Those who received MSMs are listed below:

- Lt. Col. Gary Lockard, 434th Air Refueling Wing
- Master Sgt. William Archer, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron
- Master Sgt. Julia McKee, 434th ARW
- Tech. Sgt. Charles Ruisard, 434th Maintenance Squadron

## Air Medal

Master Sgt. Kenneth Knight,



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

72nd Air Refueling Squadron, was presented an Air Medal. The Air Medal was established by May 11, 1942 and is awarded to U.S. military and civilian personnel for single acts of heroism or meritorious achievements while participating in aerial flight and foreign military personnel in actual combat in support of operations.

## Air Force Commendation Medal

Tech. Sgt. Joshua Dipert, 434th LRS, received an Air Force Commendation Medal. This medal was authorized by the Secretary of the Air Force on March 28, 1958, for award to members of the Armed Forces of the United States who distinguished themselves by meritorious achievement and service.

## Recruiters, from page 5

dealing with the public, Mielke cautioned potential applicants not to let their preconceived notions about the career field or themselves prevent them from investigating a career in recruiting.

"We have all kind of needs in recruiting, and just because somebody is shy doesn't mean they won't be able to get the job done; that's part of what the evaluation and selection course is for," he said. "If somebody is willing to try and overcome some of those fears, we call those blind spots in recruiting, then, we'll help them with that."

While natural extrover-

sion is not a requirement, the willingness to relocate is.

"If they come in here and tell me they only want to serve here at Grissom, chances are they're not going to be picked up," said Mielke. "They have to be willing to go anywhere the Air Force needs them."

And, where the Air Force needs recruiters may not be an Air Force base at all.

"If you're at a satellite office, which means the line recruiter is about an hour to three hours away from their actual boss, you have to make sure you have integrity and are doing the right things,"

said Ridener.

With that extra responsibility also comes flexibility.

"Out on your own, you can do what works best for you," added Ridener.

As AGRs, recruiters receive all regular Air Force pay and benefits and can retire with an active-duty retirement.

While the perks of the job, pay and benefits might be a bonus for some, Ridener reiterated the best part of the job is helping people.

"Sure, active-duty pay and retirement is awesome, but so is helping others," he added. "So, if you're that person who wants to help people and

you're a good salesperson, recruiting may be for you."

Mielke also noted that Federal civil servants, including ARTs, could take a job in recruiting for a single tour and return to their previous jobs under current regulations.

"If you're a full-time civil servant who's also a traditional reservist, or if you're an ART, you can come into our program for three years and still go back to your civil service job because it's activation," he explained.

Those interested in an Air Force Reserve recruiting career should contact Mielke at (765) 688-2020.

engine company, -- with the water source -- was still enroute," recalled Jones, a 25-year veteran firefighter. "The incident commander asked me that even though there wasn't water source on scene yet, could we make the rescue.

"I knew there were two people trapped inside and the door was already open, so I knew there was oxygen feeding the fire, but flames were coming from the living room, so they weren't in the bedroom yet, and I felt we had enough time to reach the patient," he continued.

The incident commander, Assistant Chief Kleim Tomlinson, GFD assistant chief of operations, made the call to send Rescue 5's Jones and Sundheimer in for the rescue.

"You have to make that decision, are you going to go in and make a rescue, or is this going to be a body recovery, and we went in and made a rescue," said Jones. "I think about it every day if I'd make that decision again because I'm not only taking my life into my hands, I'm taking (Sundheimer) with me."

Sundheimer didn't hesitate to follow his captain into the fire.

"You can't work in a job like this and question orders or wonder 'what if' in a situation like that," he explained.

"We train together, we rely on each other and he knows the engine crews are right behind him and will get there, get a line hooked up and have his back," said the chief.

Armed with that knowledge and their knowledge of the home, which was originally part of Grissom's original base housing, the two firefighters decided to perform a left-handed search pattern toward a bedroom, a task made all the more complicated and dangerous due to heavy smoke choking out all light.

"With the smoke, you couldn't see more than a few inches in front of your mask," said Sundheimer, who stayed closely glued to his partner as they made their way through treacherous maze seeking any sign of life.

"When we go in, he keeps in contact with me; he's always on my ankle and keeps a hold of my bunker

gear as I do a pattern," said Jones while explaining how they deal with the lack of sight. "What I mean by a left-handed search pattern is that I'm sweeping from the floor all the way to the ceiling with every part of my body on the left, and he's searching on the right."

"We're trained to this do all the way from the fire academy to our proficiency training here, so from there your training kicks in, and it's muscle memory at that point," added Sundheimer.

Their hunch to head to a bedroom and the tenacity of their search paid off as they found a patient in bed, and while the task of finding him was difficult, the task of getting him out proved to be more so.

"Once we found the patient, we had fire coming in on us, so we needed to get out, and we couldn't go back the way we came," recalled Sundheimer.

Thankfully, the firefighters saw their opportunity to get both their patient and themselves out of the blaze through a bedroom window.

"When we go in, we carry enough tools that we can break through a wall if we have to," said Jones as he showed off the ax and halligan tool they carried with them that night.

Shortly after Jones and Sundheimer were able to pull out their patient alive from the fire, an engine crew found the other entrapped person who was already dead. And, despite their heroic efforts in saving his life, the man they rescued later succumbed to his injuries.

"Our guys got there and gave him the best chance of survival because we're closer, we're on scene ready to go," said the fire chief.

"We have a 3-5 minute response time quicker than local volunteer fire departments because we are manned 24-hours-a-day," added Jones. "In this business, seconds can separate the fine line between life and death. As soon as the bells went off, we were probably there a minute to a minute-and-a-half."

While their efforts were heroic, Ireland said this call was not outside the norm for his firefighters.

"We average about 10-12 working fires a year, and on about 3 or 4 of those you actually have somebody inside or you don't know if there is somebody inside where you have to go in and do a search," he explained. "Even if we get on scene and they say everybody's out, we still do a primary and secondary search on every fire because you never know, and it's better to err on the side of safety."

And, while safety is paramount for Grissom firefighters, it's still a job that comes with inherent risk.

"In this situation they put someone else's safety over their own safety," said Ireland, saying they never take the job they do lightly.

Despite the risks, the GFD firefighters are all willing to put it all on the line to save someone.

"Everyone here wants to be a firefighter," explained Ireland. "Whether they just finished their first years' probation or they're a year out from retirement, they all want to be here doing this."

Sundheimer agreed.

"I'm a second generation firefighter; my father was a firefighter for 35 years, and I've wanted to be a firefighter all my life," he said. "It's something that you have inside of you; it's a passion that burns.

"While I'm honored by this award, and I'm grateful for it, there's not anybody here who wouldn't have done the same thing," Sundheimer continued.

Ireland agreed, saying that Grissom's firefighters are some of the best trained and best equipped firefighting professionals in the area.

"It's not just these guys, who won the award, but you have a lot of guys behind the scene who made this happen," he said. "There's the assistant chief at the scene who's running command, there's the engine crew who's protecting these guys and actually fighting the fire, and there's a lot of other things going on as these guys are doing the search.

"I'm real proud of all these guys and they do a great job," concluded Ireland. "They're true professionals, and the base and community are lucky to have them."

# CMSAF talks force Management, EPRs

By Staff Sgt. Devon Suits  
*Air Force News Service*

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. -- Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Cody addressed upcoming changes to enlisted performance reports and effects of force management during his 2nd worldwide CHIEFchat at Defense Media Activity here Jan. 9.

CHIEFchat is a recurring initiative, designed to give Airmen around the world a direct connection to the chief master sergeant of the Air Force. The chief received questions via video message, social media outlets and from members of a studio audience.

An Airman, via a video message, asked how the upcoming changes to the enlisted performance reports will affect Airmen in the future.

As you look at it today, with the current enlisted evaluation system we wouldn't have to get too deep into a discussion before we understand how inflated the system is, Cody said.

"That's why General Welsh directed the senior enlisted leadership of our Air Force to look at this and make recommendations to transform the enlisted evaluation into something that, first and foremost, values performance," Cody said.

According to the chief, rating Airmen as threes, fours and fives will be a thing of the past.

"We're not even looking at those numbers fields in the future," Cody said. "... We're looking at do you fit into this word picture; does this word picture describe you as an Airman and your performance?"

Airmen will start to see the evolution of the enlisted evaluation system once the new feedback form, or Airman Comprehensive Assessment, is released, Cody said. The new assessment will force supervisors to get to know their subordinates by asking deeper questions about finances, relationships and other things that



*U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jette Carr*

**Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Cody holds his 2nd worldwide CHIEFchat at the Defense Media Activity, Fort Meade, Md., Jan. 9.**

can impact an Airman's career.

"Most people are used to being told they are the best, even though they know they really aren't the best," Cody said. "... We're going to have to do a good job of working through that emotional response and reaction to it and realizing this is for the good of all."

The change in EPRs wasn't the only topic on Airmen's minds. Under the current force management actions, some Airmen lost the opportunity to retrain in a new career field. An Airman asked the chief via social media when these cross training opportunities will open up again.

"We suspended (cross training), but not totally ... there are still Airmen retraining but they are retraining into career fields that aren't taking those reductions," Cody said. "We will look at it again this summer ... when we start to put together (the list) for fiscal year 2015 retraining opportunities."

With a lot of things changing in the Air Force, an Airman in the audience asked Cody his advice on how current and future supervisors should handle these changes.

"We have to know our people," Cody said. "If you really want to be a good supervisor you have to

know about the people you are supervising. You have to know what's important to them, what their goals and aspirations are. You have to know what's going on in their life to the degree that you can support them, understand them and appreciate them. ... The more you know about your people, the more they will know you care about them and the more they will care about what they are doing."

Furthermore, Cody said, because of the current force management actions, it is critical that supervisors spend time with their Airmen to ensure they are not alone in this process.

Closing this session of CHIEFchat, Cody answered a question on what Airmen should say to people who have questions about joining the Air Force.

Changes in Air Force benefits and entitlements are expected due to the Department of Defense budget constraints, the chief said.

However, "It's still going to be an exceptional environment to be part of," he added. "All those benefits, all those entitlements, they may slow but they're still going to be really good, and you would be hard pressed to find anything comparable outside our Air Force. (AFNS)



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

Senior Airman Chad James, 434th Maintenance Squadron aerospace ground equipment specialist, holds his son Oakley for the first time upon returning from a deployment Jan. 20.

Squadron aerospace ground equipment specialist, whose second son Oakley was born in November while he was deployed.

James and his wife, Kaylee, planned on using mobile video messaging for him to be in the delivery room when Oakley was born; however, an

Internet outage at the deployed location prevented him from seeing his newborn until an hour-and-a-half after the birth.

Despite not being there, James said it was still special to share that moment, and even more profound when he saw his new son for the first time.

"I thought it would be

the same feeling as when I saw him online, but when I saw him in person for the first time, it was a reality check that I'm the dad of two boys now," he explained. "I'm so proud of how well my wife did while I was gone - She was amazing."

One of the most vocally excited family members

was 5-year-old Addison Karagias, daughter of Capt. Theodore Karagias, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron maintenance officer.

"I'm super-duper excited; more than everybody's names in the whole entire world," exclaimed Addison. "My nana brought me an elf, and she's still here for Daddy's (Christmas) day.

"When he sleeps, Santa is going to come, but only for Daddy," she continued.

Karagias deployed before the holidays, and so his family has been waiting for him to come home to celebrate his Christmas.

"We're going to re-celebrate Christmas," explained the captain's wife, Alexis. "We celebrated without him, but we still have our tree up, all of his presents are still under it so we can celebrate with him."

Before leaving with his family to celebrate, Karagias reflected on his time away during the holidays.

"It's funny, because I think back to eating Thanksgiving dinner with all my guys back there, and it seems like so long ago, and yet it really wasn't," he recalled. "Time went by really fast, but really slow at the same time."

Despite all the excitement in the air, Karagias expressed a sentiment felt by many of the returning Airmen.

"I just can't wait to go rest a little," he concluded.

While this was the last leg of a major AEF deployment, there are still close to 30 Grissom Airmen currently deployed throughout the world.

# Grissom announces Airmen promotions

By Tech. Sgt. Douglas Hays  
Public Affairs staff

From their first to their last, America's Airmen earn each rank.

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

**To senior master sergeant:**

- Penny Billings, 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron

**To master sergeant:**

- Jordan Winans, 434th Maintenance Group  
- Jeffrey Schlageter, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron  
- Jodie May, 434th 434th AMDS  
- Kimberly Davis, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron

**To technical sergeant:**

- Leiha Bohannon, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron  
- Logan Call, 49th Aerial Port Flight  
- Crystal Nix, 434th Operations Support Squadron  
- Russell Smith, 434th AMXS  
- Timothy Boggs, 434th Security Forces Squadron  
- Joshua Richman, 434th SFS

**To staff sergeant:**

- Eric Griffin, 434th CES  
- Edward Lawton, 434th Operations Group  
- Sarah Lindley, 434th AMXS  
- Joshua Reid, 434th CES  
- Donovan Stroud, 434th AMXS

**To senior airman:**

- Caresia Barton, 434th LRS

- Kadeen Hughes, 434th SFS  
- Trisha Norfleet, 434th CES  
- Samuel Richmond, 434th AMXS

- Kevin Sanchez, 434th MXS  
- Deyana Wadley, 434th LRS  
- Thomas White, 434th CES  
- Te Shar Williams, 49th APF

**To airman 1st class:**

- Frederick Golden, 49th APF  
- Cameron Green, 434th MXG  
- Spencer Hessman, 434th SFS  
- Ethan Schmitz, 434th AMXS  
- Kayla Yates, 434th LRS

**To airman:**

- Stephanie Acevedo, 434th Air Refueling Wing  
- Priyank Machar, 434th MXS  
- Katrina Schoenstene, 434th MXS

## TRICARE ends walk-in admin services

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces  
Press Service

WASHINGTON -- TRICARE military health plan service centers will end administrative walk-in services in the U.S. on April 1, Pentagon officials said Jan. 13.

While the 189 facilities will stop taking walk-ins, beneficiaries can accomplish any administrative task online or by phone, said Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren.

TRICARE service centers overseas are not affected, Warren said.

"The change will not -- let me repeat that -- will not affect any TRICARE medical benefit or health care service," he said. "What it will do is allow the department to save \$250 million over the next five years, allowing TRICARE to invest in



more important services."

Fifty percent of the visits to the centers are for in-and out-processing and requests to change primary care providers, and the rest involve billing-related questions, officials said. The Defense Department spends roughly \$50 million a year on these services and this type of customer service can be handled more efficiently

by phone or online.

TRICARE gets about 38,000 hits per day on its website. Officials have run tests to ensure the website and call center can handle the expected increase in volume.

The TRICARE service centers have been around since the 1990s, and contractors staff them, Warren said. "This is being driven by the fact

that technology has gotten so much better," he added. Customers who need the type of assistance that was being done in these walk-in service centers can quickly and efficiently receive help online or via phone.

Beneficiaries can get more information and sign up for updates at <http://www.tricare.mil/tsc>. (AFNS)