

Southern Flyer

908th Airlift Wing (Air Force Reserve Command), Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Ala., Vol. 43, Issue 6, June 2006



Transportation drivers get second look at 'war wagon'

By Staff Sgt. Jay Ponder
908th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

A piece of Air Force history arrived at Maxwell in April. A gun truck was shipped here having completed its mission and bearing the scars of battle.

The gun truck currently sits in the transportation yard near the 25th Aerial Port Squadron awaiting finalization of plans to display it at the Enlisted Heritage Hall at Gunter Annex.

The front of the gun truck shows obvious signs of battle-damage by shrapnel and lead. The GT was driven by Air Force personnel and that is why the Heritage Hall wants to place it on display, said William Chivalette, EHH curator.

Seeing a gun truck similar to those operated while conducting convoy duty in Southwest Asia in 2004 brings forth mixed emotions for five 908th Logistics Readiness Squadron Transportation Flight members.

The five spent eight months deployed overseas supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The gun truck started out as a five-ton flatbed, said Tech. Sgt. Steven Smith, one of the deployers. The truck has a turret in the middle of the cab roof where a .50-caliber machine gun would be attached during convoys. Unlike trucks first used in the desert, this

truck is heavily armored with quarter-inch steel. The final weight, Mr. Chivalette said, is over 32,000 pounds. Mr. Chivalette, a Vietnam veteran said the GT reminded him of the old deuce and a half's used during the Vietnam era.

Sergeant Smith and Transportation Flight members Master Sgts. George Campbell and Vera Berry, Tech. Sgt. Cynthia Blais and Staff Sgt. John Traum recalled some of their experiences.

Sergeant Blais admitted that she had mixed emotions about going to the desert. "I didn't really want to be there but I was glad to be with the group I was with." Sergeant Blais continued, "I wouldn't leave home without them," she said with a grin.

And after much discussion, the group made the decision to go together. When they returned home, they were awarded the Army Commendation Medal.

"We have been together here for 15 years and we all decided to go together," Sergeant Smith said. "If any of us went, we all would and make a go of it."

Sergeant Traum helped lay LAN cable in the desert to have connectivity, "so people could talk back to their families at home," he said.

Unlike at home station where you get what you need, the Airmen learned to "scrounge" for their needs. "We had to scrounge for everything including beds and even tape," Sergeant Smith said. The dining facilities, manned by contractors, were nice, he said.

The sergeant worked at an airfield near Fallujah, assisting the Marines. The work was demanding. Working around the clock, airfield workers loaded and unloaded 17 to 24 C5s and C17s each day. "We probably carried over 150 tons of cargo per day," Sergeant Smith estimated.

The work wasn't without dangers. The sergeant said there were nearly 100 mortar round attacks on the airfield while he was there.

Convoys comprised of approximately 60 trucks traveled mostly from Kuwait City to Balad Air Base, north of Baghdad, Sergeant Smith said. If an improvised explosive device was discovered on or near a road, authorities would declare the road closed, he added.

When this happened, the convoy could be stuck at whatever base camp they were at the time. The road sometimes could be closed for several days to a week, said

Sergeant Blais, who worked in maintenance supply at Balad Air Base, where she was responsible for the ordering of all parts for the trucks.

Some of the roads were very rough, sometimes just a path in the middle of the desert," said Sergeant Traum.

Sergeant Vera Berry said of her experience driving the GT, "it was both nerve wracking and exhilarating driving the truck."

"I had never driven a GT before that," she said of her convoy experiences.

When Sergeant Berry first drove, she asked the gunner what she should do and he replied, "Stay in the middle of the road, avoid bumps and don't let anyone into the convoy."

Not allowing people to pass or intermingle with the convoy minimized possible attacks conducted from the car such as small arms fire or bombs. When they first arrived there at Balad/Camp Anaconda, the trucks were still mostly unarmored and the GTs had no air-conditioning.

"It was hectic wearing all the gear inside the truck and hot," said Sergeant Campbell, "it was 150 - 170 degrees inside the cab and a cool 130 degrees outside."

Riding inside the cab was cramped, hot, dirty and noisy, said Sergeant Traum.

The group learned fast while enduring the adverse conditions presented by the climate and the nature of their jobs. "We carried plenty of water," said Sergeant Campbell, "if a convoy went on a two-day trip, we carried supplies for a two to five day trip. We would restock with ice and water every time we hit a different camp."

Sergeant Traum said he thought the armor made a difference, especially after seeing the results of attacks on their vehicles, but armor did not deter the bad guys.

"You could see the RPG coming at you," said Sergeant Berry, "you could see it coming out of the corner of your eye."

She would then radio the vehicles following behind warning them of the RPG attack.

"When you're watching this stuff firsthand," said Sergeant Berry, "it hits you, this is real!"

A year later the small band of brothers at Transportation Flight have their memories and an inseparable bond. "The five of us are a lot closer group now," said Sergeant Traum.

Mr. Chivalette hopes the gun-truck display will be complete by end of the year.



From left Staff Sgt. John Traum and Tech. Sgts. Steven Smith and Cynthia Blais stand in the gun turret where a 50-caliber machine gun would be mounted on the gun truck.



Sergeants Blais, Smith and Traum crowd into the cramped confines of the battle-scarred gun truck.

Emotional health, stress top issues facing command

Note to readers: The following article is the first of a four-part series on testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations' Subcommittee on Defense April 26, 2006, by Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley, chief of Air

Force Reserve and Air Force Reserve Command commander.

WASHINGTON – The military commitment that reservists make has a profound effect on their families, according to Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley, chief of Air Force Reserve and Air Force Reserve Command commander.

That's what General Bradley said during his testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations' Subcommittee on Defense April 26.

"There is no denying the military lifestyle, the possibility of unexpected deployments, often into areas where there is unrest, can play havoc on a family unit," General Bradley said.

In fact emotional well being and stress brought on by the duration and repetition of deployments are among the top issues facing the Air Force Reserve.

"The command has seen a 38 percent usage of face-to-face counseling service through free developmental counseling of six sessions offered per issue at no cost," the general said. "The provider is found within 30 miles of residence rather than just at the closest military installation. In these sessions, there is a focus on grief and loss, reintegrating couples in their relationship and achieving a balance between work and life."

The general said the command needs to improve its family readiness programs by making connections with families stronger, helping them become better prepared, and having a proactive outreach program to meet the needs of units and individuals.

AFRC family readiness offices provide the following services for the families of deployed reservists:

- Family Readiness Data Card completed by member at deployment for special needs;
- Information and referral services to appropriate support agencies;
- Video telephones available at deployed site and unit site;
- Assistance with financial questions and concerns;
- A family support global communication network (FAMNET), which is available in 63 countries and does require Internet access;
- Telephone tree roster for communication to the families from the unit;
- Joint inter-service family assistance services;

- Family support groups;
- Crisis intervention assistance;
- Morale calls;
- Volunteer opportunities;
- Letter writing kits for children;
- Reunion activities; and
- E-mails.

"What is amazing is that there are 21 full-time positions throughout the Air Force Reserve to handle all these responsibilities," General Bradley said.

According to the family readiness office at Headquarters AFRC, Robins Air Force Base, Ga., family members are displaying the effects of mobilization and seeking assistance from readiness offices and organizations like One Source. In 2005 there was a 12 percent increase in usage of Air Force Reserve Family Readiness support.

In addition to mobilizations, family readiness offices are supporting reservists with operational missions. In May 2005, Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga., held a recognition event for family members and brought agencies from across the country to answer questions. A few months later, Dobbins found itself hosting displaced reservists and their families after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast.

Just as reservists are participating at far greater rates, family readiness work is a 365-day a year program, according to General Bradley.

"We now have demobilization training, and that is harder to get our arms around because members want to get home," he said. "When they finally recognize they need help, we are left scrambling to provide assistance. This is additionally harder in places like Peterson AFB, Colo., and Maxwell AFB, Ala., where family readiness is an additional duty."

"The command is currently working on how best to help meet these growing requirements," he added. "One thing that hasn't changed is that families are proud of the military member's role in fighting the war on terrorism." (AFRC News Service)



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Letter to Airmen

Honorable Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force

Wednesday, May 10, 2006

Letter to Airmen: Service Before Self

This past February, in my Letter to Airmen addressing our three USAF Core Values, I shared these thoughts on Service Before Self:

It is not the same as "service," a value also claimed by some civilian institutions and corporations. Our service requires sacrifice and commitment to our Nation. We understand we make decisions in an environment where freedoms are on the line, and lives are at stake. Service Before Self begins with duty, but it means more: It means that, in our Air Force, as we fly and fight in war and peace, going above and beyond the call of duty is not the exception—it is the rule.

It is the rule because every Airman is an expeditionary Airman, whom the Joint Team counts on every day to be trained and battle ready. Delivering sovereign options for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests requires self-sacrifice.

As I visit and work with Airmen around the world, I could not be prouder of the many ways that you sacrifice for Service Before Self, whether the mission is combat operations or humanitarian relief. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina provides a great example. Many of our critical search and rescue Airmen who had just returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom deployments immediately went to rescue Americans from rooftops in New Orleans instead of taking a well-earned leave.

Another example of such Service Before Self is the remarkable number of Air Force Reservists and Air National Guardsmen who volunteer for deployments. At great sacrifice to their families and often at the expense of their private businesses, they continue to volunteer to contribute to the fight. Their service allows our Air Force leaders to integrate them into units creating a truly seamless Total Force for the Joint Team.

Your service in the Air Force—with all the risks and sacrifices that service demands—is service to our nation, to its values, and to its dreams. The participation in "wingman" programs to enhance relationships and security to fellow airmen is yet a further example.

Everything we have done—and everything we will do—begins with an oath that changes our lives. We understand that the nation depends upon us to live up to that oath. We understand that, as we serve on the front lines of freedom, our promise to serve must come before all else.

On behalf of the Air Force, and on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you for your dedication, your devotion, and your Service Before Self. I salute you all.

Pray we all have power we need to do what God calls us to do

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Bob Anders
908th AW chaplain

A long time ago, when I was a kid, I was a member of the science club at my grade school. We met after school and did all sorts of screwy experiments.

One day our faculty sponsor brought in a small generator. When we turned the handle it would make enough power to light a small light bulb. We were all fascinated. I started dreaming about how I could get something like that and

have enough power to run a whole house. Obviously something that small would not have met the power demands of a whole house. Where would I turn, if I needed a lot more power?

That sort of question often comes up in our spiritual lives as well. Where do we go when we need more power?

The Bible has an answer for questions such as this.

In the book of Exodus, the nation of Israel was facing a battle with the Amalekites. The Israelites were outnumbered and had poor equipment. Moses went up on the

mountain side and prayed for Joshua, who was to lead the battle. Israelites did quite well at first. Up on the mountain, Moses began to get tired; his arms dropped down to his sides. When they fell down, the battle turned, and the Amalekites began to win.

Two friends stood by, when they saw what was happening, they grabbed Moses's arms and lifted them up toward heaven in prayer to God that the army may have power. When Moses' arms went up, the battle turned again back in favor of the Israelites.

This may seem a little far

fetched to some, but I'm convinced that if we want more power in our spiritual lives we need to lift our hands toward the Lord in heaven and plug into his generator.

I have had times in my life when I was too weak to lift my hands, and friends like you have come along side to lift me up.

What could possibly be more important than praying for one another that we have the power that we need to do the things to which the Lord calls us.

You are in my prayers every day.

Engineers build facilities for disabled Hawaiians

By Maj. Stacey Bouma
908th CES Engineering Officer

As part of the Air Force Reserve Command's Innovative Readiness Training program, members of the 908th Civil Engineer Squadron participated in a civil engineer project at the Helemano Plantation in Hawaii.

Helemano Plantation was created by the organization Opportunities for Retarded, Inc. to provide individuals with development disabilities a permanent, caring home, and a real-world work environment.

This project, which began in April 2006, consists of building three dormitory houses and a community center during a 12-week period. 908th CES was the first civil engineer squadron to begin work at this site. The squadron sent two teams, back-to-back, during the first four weeks of construction. The first team constructed concrete foundation pads for each of the houses and the community center. The second team worked on the vertical construction of the houses including construction and installation of all exterior and interior walls.

The IRT program enables Reservists in certain career fields to receive valuable training and practice their skills while leaving something of value behind for communities throughout the United States. Last year, the 908th CES participated in another IRT project in Gallop, N.M., constructing modular homes for needy members of the Navaho Nation.



Photo by Maj. Stacey Bouma

Tech. Sgt. Dennis Ellis works on constructing an interior wall.



Photo by Maj. Stacey Bouma

Senior Master Sgt. J. C. Collins tightens anchor bolts to secure the exterior walls of a housing unit to the concrete floor.



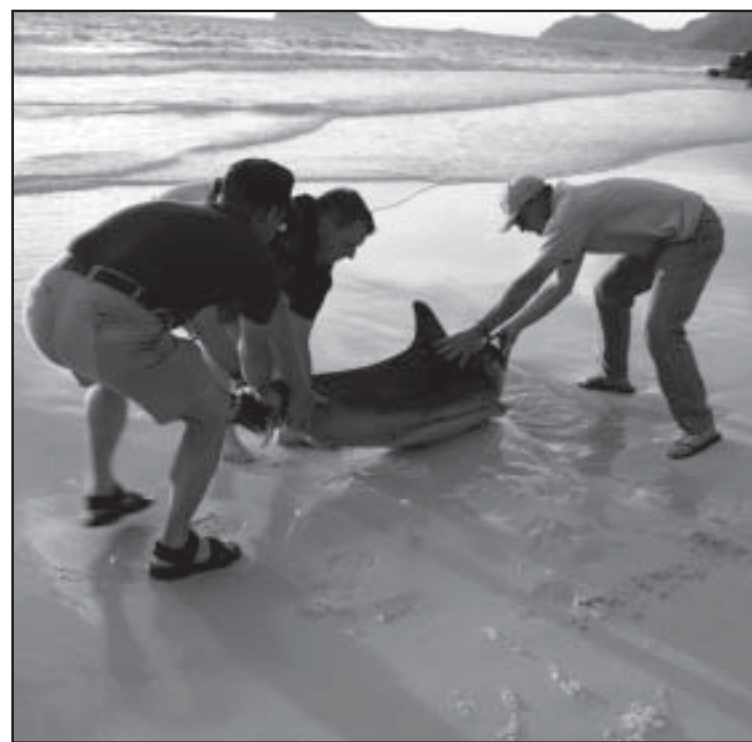
Photo by Maj. Stacey Bouma

From left, Master Sgt. Daryl Waters, Senior Airman Christopher Powell, Tech. Sgt. Eric Loper and others work on squaring exterior framed walls on a housing unit.



Photo by Maj. Stacey Bouma

From left, Tech. Sgt. David Barber, Senior Master Sgt. Don Fenn, Senior Airman Allan Jordan and Staff Sgt. Don Fykes construct framing components for the walls of a housing unit while Master Sgt. William James, kneeling, adjusts the generator being used to supply power for tools at the site.



Courtesy photo

Tech. Sgt. David Barber, Staff Sgt. Don Fykes, Tech. Sgt. Eric Loper, and Master Sgt. Herb Pfeiffer rescue a beached dolphin.

Master Sgt. Nicholas Monday, 908th LRS First Sergeant, foreground and Tech. Sgt. Mary Lacy, Finance, issue wristbands for entry and meals.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jay Ponder



Photo by Lt. Col. Jerry Lobb

Col. Underkofler presents Mayor Bright with a flag that flew over the unit's headquarters in Iraq along with a plaque in appreciation for Mayor Bright's support of the military.



Photo by Lt. Col. Jerry Lobb

908th Commander, Col. Michael Underkofler along with Montgomery Mayor Bobby Bright pose with 908th AW 1st Quarter 2006 Award winners, from left, Staff Sgt. Anita Atkinson, 908th MSF, NCO of the Quarter; Master Sgt. Theresa Murrell, 908 ASTS, SNCO of the Quarter; 2nd Lt. Mark Sanchez, 908th CES, Company Grade Officer; and Senior Airman Andrea Steele, 908th SVS, Airman of the Quarter.



Photo by Jeff Melvin

A ride on the zoo train thrilled children and adults.

Lions, tigers, bears, oh my!

For the first time ever, the 908th AW Family Day was held off-base. The annual event took place at the Montgomery Zoo, allowing 908th members and their families the opportunity to tour the zoo facilities for free while still retaining the fun-filled flavor of previous events.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jay Ponder

Foreground; Max Jones along with his dad, Robert Jones, husband of Master Sgt. Sharon Jones, 908th CES First Sergeant, and 908th MXS's Tech. Sgt. Rocky Weaver and his daughter, Shari, seem mesmerized by the antics of the chimpanzees at the Montgomery Zoo.



Photo by Jeff Melvin

Mid-level leaders graduate

Twenty-two staff and technical sergeants completed the latest session of the NCO Leadership Development Program May 12. NCOLDP is designed for mid-level enlisted personnel (E-4 minimum grade), preferably before or during the time that they are supervisors. The program offers college credit and hands-on experience in leadership and management. The graduates of the FY06 NCOLDP are: Tech. Sgts. Jonathan Griswold, Samantha Jones, and Jason Towery, AES; Karen Jackson, Donald Matheson

and Scott Walter, 25th APS; Kelvin Pinkston, LRS; Michael Smith, MXS; and Tanya Spell, ASTS; Staff Sgts. Hollie Blalock, Tyeshia Green, Latonya Hambricht and Sean Kassebaum, AES; Patrick Clark, Shatanya Cook, Cassandra Crayton, Charlie Crenshaw, Keith Daniels, Anthony Griggs, Philip Odom, Bryan E. Nichols, 25th APS; and Stephan Jones, LRS.

Long-serving security forces member becomes unit's first chief

From Airman to chief, new security forces manager has traveled long road to the top

By Tech. Sgt. James Harrell Jr.
908th SFS public affairs rep

For the first time in the 908th Security Forces Squadron's history, a unit member will be promoted to the rank of chief master sergeant. Chief Master Sgt. Curtis Coleman was promoted in May and will be the first security forces manager for the 908th Security Forces Squadron.

The Birmingham, Ala., native entered Air Force active duty in June 1980. Early in his career while stationed at Offutt AFB, Neb., he was selected to be a member of the Strategic Air Command Elite Guard. These handpicked, highly trained security policeman and women were responsible for providing stringent security for the SAC Headquarters, the personal protection for the commander and vice commander in chief of the strategic air command and their assembled staff. The Elite Guard also had a ceremonial function, acting as a official SAC representatives at military and civic functions.

After Offutt, Chief Coleman went on to serve at Kunsan AB, Korea, Eaker AFB, Ark., and Cannon AFB, N.M. before leaving active duty and joining the 908th in 1993.

During his time in the unit, he has served as a fire team leader, squad leader, NCOIC standardization evaluation,

NCOIC training and unit career advisor, and previously as operations superintendent, where he managed the unit's three mobility squads of approximately 39 personnel.

As the newly appointed security forces manager or SFM, Chief Coleman will be responsible for the supervision of operations, training, and resources for the 908th SFS, and to ensure the unit remains trained and ready to accomplish its worldwide mission.

After Sept. 11, 2001, Chief Coleman worked with unit leadership to mobilize three squads to support the war on terrorism around the world. He deployed to MacDill AFB, Fla., as team leader, serving as flight chief. In this capacity, he was not only responsible for base security operations, but security at Headquarters Central and Special Operations Commands also.

In 2005, the chief led a team to Naval Air Station, Joint Reserve Base, New Orleans, La., supporting Hurricane Katrina

security and relief operations. While there, he served as operations superintendent for joint security forces with Navy, Army, Coast Guard, Guard and Reserve personnel. Today, Chief Coleman oversees supervision of one of the Air Force Reserve's most active units, with most of its personnel deployed to various locations throughout the world.

Chief Coleman is a 12-year veteran of the City of Birmingham Police Department where he holds the rank of Sergeant.



Photo by Lt. Col. Jerry Lobb

Then-Senior Master Sgt. Curtis Coleman has his new chief's stripes pinned on by his wife, Angela, and Security Forces Squadron Commander Maj. Chris Simpson during a promotion ceremony May 7. Also in attendance were his the chief's mother, Annie M. Coleman, his son, Lonnie, and other relatives, friends, and unit members.

Congratulations to the following people:

Promotions
....to Chief Master Sgt.
Owen P. Watkins, CES

....to Master Sgt.
Matthew Denton
AMXS

....to Tech. Sgt.
Cheryle Cannady,
AMS
Terry J. Elmore II,
CES

Patrick Kowalczyk,
ASTS
....to Staff Sgt.
D'wayne Guice,
AMS
Devin Jackson,
ASTS
Sonya Myers, 25th
APS

....to Senior Airman
James Bonds, LRS
Allen Jones Jr., APS
Sandra McKay, LRS
Jarren Morgan, LRS
Victor Nguyen, LRS
Justin Proctor, AMS



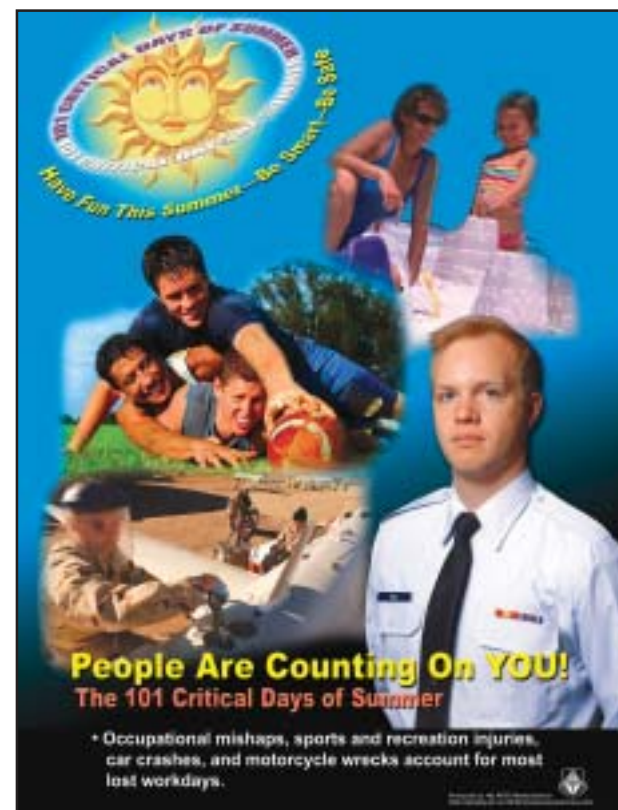
Operations Group 'make over'

Top, Lt. Cols. John Stokes, Scott Davis III, Ricky Crews, and William "Bill" Hughes share the spotlight during a combined change of command ceremony May 7, shuffling leadership positions within the 908th Operations Group. Davis replaced Stokes as 357th Airlift Squadron commander and Hughes replaced Crews as 908th Opera-



Photos by Lt. Col. Jerry Lobb

tions Support Flight commander. Ops Group Commander Col. John Jones presided over the ceremonies. Bottom left, Master Sgt. Teresa Cruger presents flowers on the 357th AS's members behalf to Colonel Davis's spouse, Kimberly, and Colonel Stokes' spouse, Sandra, daughters, Sarah and Hannah, and son, J.P.



People are counting on you

The 101 Critical Days of Summer 2006 campaign began May 26 and ends at Sept. 5. During last year's campaign the Air Force experienced 29 fatalities compared to 32 during FY04. As in past years, automobile and motorcycle accidents accounted for the most fatalities, each claiming nine lives. Alcohol, speeding, fatigue and failure to use seatbelts were the leading factors in these preventable deaths. Water safety is another area of concern. Fatigue and lack of flotation equipment led to the deaths of five Airmen in water related incidents last year. The campaign aims to increase personal awareness of risk and thereby reduce the number of summer mishaps and fatalities.

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