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3rd Wing E-3 Sentries fly south to Guam for COPE NORTH



Australian airmen guide a Royal Australian Air Force F/A-18 Hornet aircraft into position Feb. 1 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, while a U.S. Air Force E-3 Sentry is idle in the background. Cope North is an annual air combat tactics, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercise designed to increase the readiness and interoperability of the U.S. Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force and RAAF. (DoD photo/Leading Aircraftman Craig Barrett, Royal Australian Air Force)

Battle wounded sergeant major's road to recovery

By Staff Sgt. Jeffrey S. Smith
4-25th ABCT PAO

Sgt. Maj. Michael L. Van Engen, operations sergeant major with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, and 28-year veteran with several combat deployments, recently shared his story about his combat injury and his long road to recovery.

It was just after lunch on a clear summer day June 1, 2012, at 1 p.m. Van Engen was escorting an Afghan Army VIP who was fielding some important equipment for the fight against insurgency when the initial explosion struck.

A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device carrying approximately 1,500 pounds of explosives detonated, breaching the exterior perimeter barrier of Forward Operating Base Salerno in Khost Province, Afghanistan. A large mushroom cloud overshadowed the scene. Rubble started raining down on Van Engen and everyone around.

Moments later, a white van approached the blast site. Ten insurgents dismounted and entered the base, laden with AK-47 rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and suicide vests.

Van Engen said he could hear a lot of gunfire after the explosion, so the first thing he did was make sure the VIP was safe.

After he took care of the VIP, his main responsibility was the 1-501st Inf. Tactical Operations Center, which is where he went next.

"The pressure from the explosion caved in several of the doors, and it caved in my office," Van Engen said.

He said he checked to make sure everyone in the TOC was OK, and they were. He

► See VAN ENGEN, A-3

Airmen of 962nd AACS train with U.S., Australian and Japanese forces at Andersen Air Force Base

By Air Force 1st Lt. Matthew Chism
JBER Public Affairs

Continually, military members are called upon to participate in exercises at home or abroad, but to what end?

Ex-er-cise: something performed or practiced in order to develop, improve or display a specific capability or skill.

Exercises are more than a chance for Airmen to practice the mission; an exercise also represents an opportunity to showcase abilities and develop working relationships, which extend beyond cultures, backgrounds and languages.

During the last two weeks, the 3rd Wing's 962d Airborne Air Control Squadron from JBER has been developing, improving, and integrating capabilities alongside other U.S. Air Force, Australian and Japanese assets during Cope North 2013 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

Cope North is a tri-lateral large-force exercise hosted by Pacific Air Forces to promote regional security and stability of the region by increasing combat readiness and interoperability of U.S. Forces, Australian Defence Force, and the Japan Air

Self-Defense Force.

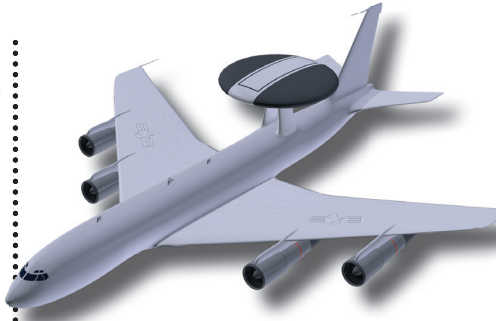
"Here in Alaska we are a part of the air defense mission, and we support the capability of crisis and threat response in the Pacific Theater of Operations," said Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Erickson, 962d AACS commander. "During Cope North, we are able to facilitate an environment, in coordination with our international partners, which allows us to share information to decision makers. This provides those on the ground and in the air the best possible situational awareness."

The 962d AACS members who are participating in the exercise said there is clear communication with everyone involved.

"Our folks will be working hard to maintain a clear picture with all of the friendly forces which include Pacific U.S. Air Force, Australian and Japanese assets," said Air Force Capt. Walter Goss, 962d AACS navigator/assistant director of operations. "That support will extend throughout the exercise from the humanitarian portion and combined training missions."

During the humanitarian portion, the operations-focused squadron honed their

► See AWACS, A-3



The E-3 Sentry Airborne Warning and Control System is built on a B-707 jetliner platform and features an integrated command and control battle management, surveillance, target detection, and tracking platform. The aircraft provides an accurate, real-time picture of the battlespace to the Joint Air Operations Center. The 30-foot diameter radome, suspended by two 11-foot struts, houses an AN/APY-2 Radar with a range of more than 250 miles. The E-3 began operations in March 1977.



The 36th Wing is the host agency at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, and uses the Team Andersen concept to provide peacetime and wartime support to project global power and reach from the base's vital location in the Pacific. Andersen Air Force Base is home to the 36th Wing, Air Mobility Command's 734th Air Mobility Support Squadron, Naval unit Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Twenty Five (HSC-25) and several other tenant organizations.



An F-16C Fighting Falcon assigned to the 18th Aggressor Squadron, Eielson Air Force Base, flies an air-to-air combat mission in support of Cope North 13 near Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Feb. 12. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Matthew Bruch)

Air Force grease monkey is also jumpmaster

By Air Force Staff Sgt. William Banton
JBER Public Affairs

On any given day, more than 100 Army airborne paratroopers may be lined up in the back of a C-17 Globemaster III awaiting a final safety inspection before being cleared to exit the aircraft toward a drop zone thousands of feet below.

The important job of ensuring the safety, proficiency and qualifications of all military parachutists exiting belongs to jumpmasters.

The jumpmaster is a position which usually brings to mind Army paratroopers or Air Force tactical air control party members, but rarely the image of an Air Force mechanic.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Ashley Windle, a vehicle and vehicular equipment specialist with the 3rd Air Support Operations Squadron, has the unique experience of being both an Air Force vehicle mechanic and a jumpmaster.

"I had always wanted to do the pararescue, combat controller, TACP thing, but I had bad hearing," Windle said. "So it was kind of luck as well that I got this job. I had to get a waiver, and it took a while to get that."

Windle, a veteran parachutist since 2008 who has performed more 50 jumps, is still able to recall his first jump.

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Alaska's military producing outstanding results

Editorial by Air Force Lt. Gen. Stephen Hoog
Commander, Alaskan Command

I'd like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my fellow Arctic Warriors for your efforts and excellence during the past year.

Your individual and unit accomplishments continue to impress me, and demonstrate you are the finest joint base in the world with the best trained, most innovative, and most capable Soldiers and Airmen in our nation.

Last year, we sent thousands of you across the globe on deployments, and you made us proud. The 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, brought the fight to Afghanistan for a third time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with a force of more than 3,500 Soldiers, and we're happy to have them back home.

The focus now is reset operations to maintain ready units, strong families, and arctic tough leaders. The 3rd Wing and 673d Air Base Wing sent almost 900 Airmen to 66 different locations last year, covering every corner of the world.

Last summer the 90th Fighter Squadron provided a forward presence in the Pacific



Paratroopers of 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, conduct a training parachute assault from a 517th Airlift Squadron C-17 Globemaster III into Malamute Drop Zone on JBER, Nov. 13, 2012. (U.S. Air Force photo/Justin Connaher)

for a Pacific Command theater security package at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, while the 962d Airborne Air Control Squadron has been deploying rotating crews to Central Command.

While many of you executed missions downrange, JBER continued to raise the bar at home with a banner year. Early in the year, the joint hospital opened the Fisher House and the Traumatic Brain Injury unit to take

even better care of our Soldiers, Airmen and our families.

This summer we hosted the largest ever Arctic Thunder open house, with the Army's Golden Knights parachute team, the Air Force's F-22 Raptor demonstration team and Thunderbirds, and more than 70 other aerial demonstrations.

With such consistently high performance, it's no wonder the 673d Air Base Wing was awarded its first Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and the 3rd Wing received PACAF's Safety Special Achievement Award.

Those unit awards are propped up by a long list of individual accomplishments and awards garnered by our outstanding service members, and I want to thank each of you for the critical roles you play in providing combat readiness to answer our nation's call.

As we continue into 2013, keep up the great work and tradition of excellence that you and your units have forged.

I want to encourage you to take care of yourselves, your families, and each other, not only so we can continue to capably serve and execute the mission, but so that we can better enjoy this next year together in this beautiful state. Cinde and I sincerely wish you and your families the best, and thank you for your service.

Carter describes 'crisis of readiness' during Senate testimony

By Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Looming spending cuts and the lack of a budget for the fiscal year present a readiness crisis for the Defense Department, Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter told the Senate Appropriations Committee here Feb. 14.

Major across-the-board spending cuts will take effect March 1, triggered by a "sequestration" mechanism in budget law, unless Congress acts to stop them. Meanwhile, the government is operating on funding from a continuing resolution that expires March 27.

Carter said he and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta have repeatedly warned of devastating effects of sequestration on the nation's defense and everything the Defense Department does.

"We've been talking about this for 16 months now, and now the wolf's at the door," he added.

But sequestration's potential effects are only part of the fiscal difficulty the department faces, the deputy secretary said.

"The continuing resolution poses a different problem for us," he said. "We have enough money in the continuing resolution. The problem is that it's in the wrong accounts, and, in particular, the operations and maintenance part is very much short."

That, he said, causes problems for what's

left of the fiscal year.

In the near term, Carter told the senators, the continuing resolution and the potential effects of sequestration have created what Defense Department leadership calls "a crisis in readiness." During the next 10 years, he added, "if the budgetary caps, triggered at the same time sequester is triggered, are sustained, we're not going to be able to carry out the new defense strategy crafted under President [Barack] Obama's leadership just one year ago."

Carter said the Pentagon understands the department needs to make a contribution to the country's fiscal situation and its resolution.

"But both a strategic approach to defense spending and efficient use of the taxpayer dollar are undermined by sequestration," he said. "And what's particularly tragic is that sequestration's not the result of an economic recession or an emergency."

Rather, he said, the problem is the collateral damage of political gridlock.

"For our troops, for the force, the consequences are very real and very personal," he added.

Carter said while the president has indicated he intends to spare military compensation from sequestration, troops will feel its impacts "very directly in other ways."

"Between now and the end of the year, we will need to sharply curtail training in all of the services," he explained. "For example,

a brigade combat team that has returned from Afghanistan that is used to being at tip-top readiness ... can't train."

The Army reports two-thirds of its brigade combat teams will be at reduced readiness by year's end and similarly affecting the other services as well, Carter told the committee.

He also said misconceptions exist about "much maligned" DoD civilians, who face unpaid furloughs that would reduce their pay by 20 percent during the rest of the fiscal year.

"A lot of people think that DoD civilians are people who wake up in the Washington suburbs, get in a car, and drive up [Interstate] 395 and come to an office building here," Carter said. "They're not. Most of them work in depots. They fix airplanes. They maintain ships and overhaul ships."

Carter said 86 percent of DoD civilian employees don't even live in the Washington area, and 44 percent of them are veterans.

"On or around April 1, we will need to begin to furlough many of them," he said, "and to do that for up to 22 days, which is the statutory limitation."

Carter said if that happens, he will return a fifth of his own salary to the U.S. treasury, noting he cannot be furloughed because he is a Senate-confirmed presidential employee.

"There's a real human impact here," Carter said. "And in addition to the military and civilian personnel, the effects will be

devastating on the defense industry, upon which we depend."

The quality of the U.S. defense industry, Carter said, is second only to the quality of its people in uniform, and that combination makes the U.S. military the greatest in the world.

"And a technologically vibrant and financially successful defense industry is in the national interest," he added.

Carter said even subcontractors — often small businesses — will feel the effects of sequestration, of the longer-term budget cuts, and even of the "prolongation of uncertainty."

"And above all, sequester will cause a spike in program inefficiency by stretching out programs and driving up unit costs," Carter said. "So for the force — military, civilian, our industry — the consequences are very direct and devastating."

The deputy defense secretary closed his testimony by appealing for a de-triggering of sequestration and a passing of appropriations bills for the Defense Department and all federal agencies.

"The cloud of uncertainty hanging over our nation's defense affairs is already having lasting and irreversible effects," Carter said. "Ultimately, the cloud of sequestration needs to be dispelled and not just moved to the horizon. The magnificent men and women of the Department of Defense and their families deserve no less."

▼ From WINDLE, A-1

"It was easy, it was with my supervisor and he was doing his jumpmaster upgrade, so it was pretty much he and I," Windle said.

For Windle, one aspect of jumping never changes.

"Even now, I mean I have 50 jumps, but I always have that little bit of nervousness and ask what I forgot," Windle said. "Especially now as a jumpmaster, because [I'm] responsible for those five, six, or ten Airmen."

Usually on Army posts, the vehicle maintenance jump position Windle fills is intended to help maintain the mechanical needs for the respective brigades by providing on ground support.

"As a vehicle mechanic, we are supposed to deploy in the contingency environment as a whole package," Windle said. "Like when [we] went to Iraq or Afghanistan, they usually took every body, so they would have a base for what to do."

With encouragement and support of his leadership and the perseverance to continue after failing the jumpmaster school the first time, Windle began the process to turn standard parachutist position into something more.

"I failed it the first time, because I just couldn't get the Jumpmaster Parachutist Inspection portion," Windle said. "But the second time I went, I tested out



Air Force Staff Sgt. Ashley Windle, right, ensures members of the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, exit a C-17 Globemaster III safely as they jump into Donnelly Training Area Sept. 21, 2012. Windle is a vehicle mechanic and jump master assigned to the 3rd Air Support Operations Squadron. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech Sgt. Brian Ferguson)

the first day."

The JMPI is the process in which the jumpmaster ensures the parachutist is rigged up properly

and there are deficiencies in the chute itself before the jump.

As jumpmaster, Windle's job begins when the jump is scheduled.

"I'm coordinating with the air crew and going to briefings making sure that they understand what our training objectives are and making

sure we can work with them on theirs," Windle said. "Then I'm scheduling all the support we need, medical and all the additional support we need on the DZ."

The jumpmaster also helps coordinate the prejump, which is hosted up to a day before the actual jump.

During the pre-jump, the jumpers are briefed on everything from reviewing a mockup to discussing the safety and emergency procedures.

On the day of the jump, the jumpmaster inspects the aircraft checking to make sure the cable and seating are set up correctly.

They also inspect the floor of the aircraft, checking to make sure no obstructions exist and the aircrew has all of their gear strapped down.

The process for Windle is a very meticulous and exciting process.

"The excitement's there because I'm a vehicle mechanic doing this and the responsibility of being about to put a couple of people out of a plane," he said. "If they exit and they get away from the aircraft fine, OK, good, but there is always that doubt of 'what if the chute wasn't rigged right?'"

"There is a lot of responsibility on your shoulders and that's what's awesome about it," Windle continued. "I like the 'here's your responsibility, you get these ten guys out.'"

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National Guard conducts major search-and-rescue exercise

By Sgt. Edward Eagerton
Alaska National Guard

In a remote area northeast of Bethel, the Alaska National Guard conducted a major search-and-rescue exercise Feb. 6 to 10 to test the recovery operations for a simulated B-737 plane crash.

"The purpose of the mission was to test the arctic sustainment package by deploying it out of an aircraft with a team who can handle a mass-casualty situation in an arctic environment," said Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Patrick Gault, a pararescueman with the 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard.

In the frigid early-morning hours of Feb. 7, about 25 volunteers from the Alaska National Guard, tasked to roleplay as crash survivors during the exercise, were transported by a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from the Army Aviation Operations Facility #2 in Bethel to a remote frozen region northeast of their location.

There, an element of Alaska National Guardsmen were pre-positioned to support the operation. Tucked in a patch of trees to protect them from the wind and snow, two 10-person tents were set up to house the support element, or "white cell."

As for the "survivors," their sustainment package (to include food and shelter) was to be dropped in, along with Guardian Angels from the 212th Rescue Squadron and Soldiers from C Company, 1st Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

The mission began when the 11th Rescue Coordination Center received word that a 737 went down, with an unknown number of

survivors, in a remote area that first responders couldn't reach by road.

According to the plan, rescue personnel were to be inserted by a C-130 Hercules airplane into the area, locate the survivors of the crash, assess the situation, and coordinate for the delivery of additional support personnel and equipment to sustain the survivors. The weather, however, does not always work in the favor of the mission.

As the day wore on, the sky and the ground began to blend in a windy haze of snow and fog. With the clouds getting lower and the snow getting thicker, the window of opportunity to drop the pararescuemen and equipment was vanishing as quickly as the horizon.

On the drop zone, the concern escalated. Air National Guard Capt. Jay Casello, a combat rescue officer with the 212th Rescue Squadron, using both a radio and satellite phone, communicated with a C-130 Hercules from the 144th Airlift Squadron of the Alaska Air National Guard about the situation on the ground.

The C-130 Hercules airframes are capable of dropping personnel and equipment at low altitudes, but by the time the plane arrived over the drop zone, the weather had become so inclement that they were forced to turn back to Bethel.

Heavy snow and freezing rain at JBER delayed the departure of the C-17 Globemaster III, flown by crews from the Alaska Air National Guard's 249th Airlift Squadron. The C-17 was to drop additional rescue personnel, as well as the sustainment package.

When the C-17 showed up, night had fallen on the drop zone. Casello communicated with the crew of the plane, who were

loitering above the site at 24,000 feet. He radioed up that the ceiling was within limits to drop the personnel and equipment.

The crew of the C-17 then began its descent through the clouds to get a visual confirmation of the drop zone, but by the time it completed its descent, the snow had picked up and the cloud ceiling had dropped.

The plane, in low light and heavy snow, began making passes over the drop zone.

Then, with great elation, the voice over Casello's radio called out, "we're coming in hot." The drop was on.

Over a number of passes, the bundles were pushed out at low altitudes, the chutes having just enough time to deploy. After the equipment, the troops jumped into the night, ready for the mission.

They packed their chutes and deployed the gear—tents, heaters, fuel, all-terrain vehicles and rescue equipment. From the drop zone, pararescuemen went to work locating the survivors.

"It's very critical to get this equipment set up quickly," said Pfc. Dillon Gilroy, a scout with C Company, 1-297th RSS. "We have patients who are hypothermic or have broken limbs."

The survivors had been given cards that described their wounds. When the pararescuemen arrived at the site, the "survivors" began their act, screaming and moaning until they were found; one cried for her lost baby.

Moving through snow at times waist-deep, the pararescuemen began treating the wounded, relocating them in a central spot and transporting them back to the tents until they could be extracted.

Throughout the next day and a half, the Alaska National Guardsmen kept the survivors fed and warm. The Soldiers from the 1-297th RSS then began to prepare the equipment for sling load operations by bundling up the gear, securing it in cargo nets, and attaching the loads to HH-60 Pavé Hawk helicopters of the 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard and a UH-60 Black Hawk from B Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard.

The survivors were extracted from the scene in groups based on the severity of their wounds and flown back to Bethel.

With the mission complete, the participants were able to assess the mission and learn from it to better prepare for a real-world situation, should it ever arise.

Exercises like this prepares the units to respond, Gault said.

"Usually when we do rescues here in Alaska, we have two- to four-man teams, and we're able to help just a few people," Gault said. "When you have more than 10 patients, you need to involve a lot more people and equipment. This exercise helps us bring all of that together and employ them to see what works and what doesn't work."

Members of the Coast Guard and participants from the University of Alaska Fairbanks also participated in the exercise.

"The biggest challenge is a lot of different agencies working together, and that creates a lot of gaps in communication sometimes," Gault said. "Closing those gaps and making everything fairly fluid to get everybody to work together, when we don't work together all the time, is the most important part."

▼ From AWACS, A-1

communication practices with the other participants.

"Cope North is a great test of our interoperability, which is extremely important in the Pacific," Erickson said. "Joining with our sister squadron from Kadena Air Base, [Okinawa, Japan] and our international partners in the region, we are working together as one team... comparing tactics, techniques and procedures."

Goss explained this exercise provides an opportunity to exercise capabilities used during the unit's wartime mission.

"In wartime, we feed a picture to the Combined Air and Space Operations Cen-

ter," Goss said. "This provides coordination between all of our partners as we work deconfliction and additional radar coverage. Our wartime mission is dynamic, so we strive to maintain proficiency, especially within our core competencies."

Whether in an exercise abroad like Cope North or a home station one like Red Flag-Alaska, the 962d AACS has to accomplish a number of things before the squadron's E-3 Sentry Airborne Warning and Control System can get to work.

"When we send our Airmen out to a large exercise, we check their readiness as if it were a real world mission tasking," Erickson said. "It takes a lot to get a team ready to go out the door while still maintaining the readiness of the squadron for a real contingency.

Our mobility folks do an outstanding job."

Members of the mobility staff "coordinated the mandatory training, processed information to the Joint Mobility Center and completed Installation Deployment Readiness Center processes for approximately 30 Airmen from the squadron," said Staff Sgt. Eric Mackey, 962d AACS mobility noncommissioned officer.

Goss also explained an aircrew executes scenario-specific training to prepare them for their upcoming missions.

"The aircrew completes simulator missions prior to leaving for a deployment to replicate likely scenarios and enhance crew coordination," Goss said.

All of that work culminates in a prepared crew, but what about the plane?

"The maintenance intensity here is remarkable. The maintainers want the planes to fly as badly as the aircrew does," Goss said.

"Our maintainers are always on top of things, installing new software updates that allow us to communicate with even the newest systems," Erickson said. "962d [Aircraft Maintenance Unit] maintainers work hard to keep these very complex 35-year-old aircraft flying, and my hat goes off to those men and women."

"These men and women work through location restraints and remain extremely operations focused," Goss said. "In our squadron there is no division when it comes to the mission. There is no 'us and them,' it's we, and it's an amazing environment to work in."

▼ From VAN ENGEN, A-1

went on to other buildings where he found several Soldiers disoriented and confused. He instructed them to get organized and then went back to the TOC to gather his fighting gear. Then he moved out in the direction of the firefight.

Getting very close to the fight, Van Engen said he observed Spc. Paul Hedge, an infantryman with the 1-501st Inf., lying on the ground. Hedge had been shot in his legs and was bleeding. Recruiting the help of some Soldiers in the immediate area, Van Engen directed Hedge to be moved to safety and medical treatment.

Van Engen said Hedge is still in the Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, fighting to keep his legs.

Van Engen continued to move toward the fight with the help of Spc. Gino Hinojosa, another paratrooper with 1-501st Inf. who pulled squad for Van Engen with a M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon machine gun.

Van Engen said he saw several dead insurgents lying on the road with RPGs at their side. The insurgents were wearing Afghan military uniforms and had suicide vests strapped on, which made them appear very large.

"They looked very big," he recalled. "They looked pregnant because they had their suicide vests on, but they were all lying dead on the road."

When he realized they were strapped with explosives, he started to move back.

It was then he came under enemy fire and was struck by a bullet in his foot.

"I was already moving, I just guess I wasn't moving fast enough. I looked down because I realized the bullets were coming in from below me, not from above...I didn't see the bullet, but I saw my foot explode," Van Engen said. "I put weight on it one time, and I fell down... As I fell down bullets just came flying everywhere."

"They hit me in the arm; hit me in the body a couple times. I realized I wasn't going to be able to fight back, so I jumped, and jumped, and jumped, and got behind Spc. Hinojosa."

Using his SAW, Hinojosa shot and killed the insurgent.

"What I just recently found out was Hinojosa was shot also," Van Engen said. "I think he got a ricochet in the leg."

Hinojosa had been shot while moving to his fighting position to pull security for Van Engen.

"They dragged me off," Van Engen said. "They did not drag him back. He stayed and fought... pretty amazing. That guy is a great American. He's got a bullet in his leg right now."

Van Engen was transported to FOB Salerno's base hospital on a large all-terrain vehicle, which stopped several times on the way to pick up more casualties.

"There were a lot of casualties in the hospital," Van Engen said.

At that time, the fight was still going on. In addition to the ground fire, OH-58 Kiowa Warrior helicopters came in and began firing down on enemy insurgents.

Van Engen said it took about 15 to 20 minutes for all of the insurgents to be killed, and the whole base was on high alert for many hours after the attack.

UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters began evacuating the wounded people out of FOB Salerno to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

Van Engen was flown to Bagram where medical staff performed surgery on him immediately to clean out his wounds and stop the bleeding.

Van Engen had been shot several times. The most severe injury was his foot. He was also hit in the arm by a bullet which required medical treatment, and the rest of the bullets impacted his body armor and gear.

While at Bagram, Van Engen called home to tell his wife what happened.

She had been notified he was hurt in some way, but that was all she knew before he called.

"With a big lump in my throat, I told her I was coming home. That was the first time I ever had to do that, so I felt bad and disappointed in myself. It just felt terrible," Van Engen said.

Van Engen stayed at Bagram that evening. The next day he was flown out of Afghanistan to Germany, where he was treated at a hospital for several days.

He said there were a lot of casualties at the hospital in Germany. They were from different armed services and were coming in from all across the theater of operations.

"I was there for three days, and I had three different roommates during that period of time," Van Engen said. "There were Marines and guys from other units who I didn't know...A Marine officer was there. There was a private first class from the Helmand Province in Afghanistan. They were from all over."

"You just can't get used to these guys who get hit by IEDs," he said.



Sgt. Maj. Michael Van Engen, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, rests in a hospital bed after having foot surgery at the 673d Medical Group Hospital. (Courtesy Photo)

"They get hurt pretty bad."

Van Engen's next stop was Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

Van Engen was there for about three weeks. His wife was there when he arrived. Two days later, his parents came to visit him.

Doctors at Walter Reed performed all of his major surgeries. They used an aluminum frame to attach stainless steel rods, which ran through his foot and toes to stabilize the bones. Several pins in his heel helped to further stabilize his foot.

Van Engen said he is very happy with the medical treatment he has received.

"Walter Reed is a great hospital," he said. "The doctors are phenomenal. What they did really helped. They treat you really well. I liked it...It felt like I had my own personal doctor there."

Van Engen's next transition point was Joint Base Lewis-McChord's Madigan Army Medical Center in Washington.

His last trip was back to Alaska where he has continued his recovery with a few subsequent surgeries and physical therapy rehabilitation.

Medical professionals with the 673d Medical Group Hospital and the 725th Brigade Support Battalion Medical Facility at JBER have been providing continuing treatment and therapy.

During a two-month span, he underwent further surgeries to clean out his wounds and remove the frame and pins from his foot.

Along with removing the

frame, doctors took a patch of skin from his upper leg to use as a skin graft to cover the holes left by the rods and pins.

"I got a big red square where they sewed it on my foot. It looks like mesh," Van Engen said.

It took 30 days before he was able to walk after his last surgery, and then another 30 days before he could put a boot on.

"The hard part is all of the scar tissue from your ankle not moving for three months, and the rods going through the bones," Van Engen said.

All of the hardware has been removed from his foot, and the bones that run through his foot have consolidated into one clump. The consolidation has left him with no flexibility in his foot.

A large part of his recovery is physical therapy which he goes to twice a week.

Van Engen said his wife and two children have given him a lot of support. He said their support has meant a lot to him and has made a big difference.

"My marriage is much better now," he said. "My wife, she came to Walter Reed. She took care of me, hand and foot. She showed how much she really cared for me."

Van Engen is 47 years old and has served in the Army for 28 years. He has multiple deployments, including Desert Storm, Kosovo, two Iraq deployments, and two tours in Afghanistan.

"I've spent two and a half decades in the Army without being hurt, and now that I am hurt, I can't

do a lot of the things that the young soldiers do," Van Engen said. "It does make me feel guilty. It makes me sleep a little different I think."

He said he used to run about 15 miles per week, but now he uses machines like elliptical trainers and walks a lot with his dog.

Van Engen, who learned about Army medical research programs while he was at Walter Reed, volunteered to participate in a study for traumatic brain injury. He is a test subject of a Soldier without TBI. He has flown out to Walter Reed once so far in support of the research project and is scheduled to go through a series of tests and examinations over the next five years to complete the study.

For now, Van Engen remains cautiously optimistic with respect to his ongoing foot recovery.

"My goal is, within a year, to try to be better," Van Engen said. "Every time I see the podiatrist, he looks at my foot and he just doesn't know what to do with it to make it any better."

Even with the challenges he faces, Van Engen said he remains focused.

"It's like with anything else, if you have a positive attitude and you work really hard at trying to get better, you will get better," he said.

Van Engen said he plans to stay in the Army until his Date Eligible for Return from Overseas is up in July 2014.

At that point, Van Engen will have completed more than 30 years of service.

MilPDS upgrade

The Air Force will upgrade and transfer Military Personnel Data System to the Defense Information Systems Agency March 4 to 27.

During the upgrade, MilPDS will not be available. Officers and enlisted Airmen getting promoted in March will experience pay delays because of the upgrade.

Airmen are authorized to sew on their new rank on their respective promotion dates, but will not receive an increase in pay until their promotion is updated in MilPDS and processed by Defense Finance and Accounting Services.

For more information about personnel services and programs, visit the myPers website at mypers.af.mil or call Military Personnel at 384-0338.

JBER tax centers open

Volunteers are on hand to help with forms 1040EZ and 1040 tax returns; complex filing may be best taken to a professional. However, volunteers' training does include how to deal with the Alaska Permanent Fund.

Customers will have to gather the following documents before visiting a center:

- Proof of identification (military ID)
- Social security cards and birth dates for taxpayer and all dependents
- Last year's federal income tax return
- Wage and earning statements from W-2's, W-2G's and 1099-R's
- Interest and dividend statements
- Bank routing and account numbers for direct deposit
- Amounts paid to daycare providers and day care providers' tax identification numbers.

JBER tax centers are open until April 17.

The JBER-Elmendorf tax center is located at building 8517, the People Center.

They will be open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Walk-ins are welcome (ap-

pointments take precedence) or you can call 552-3912 to make an appointment.

The JBER-Richardson tax center is located in building 600 on the 3rd floor. Their appointment line is 384-1040, and walk-ins are also welcome.

The tax center will be open Monday through Wednesday as well as Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and 1 to 8 p.m. on Thursdays.

Scholarship opportunity

The Richardson Spouses' Club is now accepting applications for scholarships.

To be eligible applicants must attend high school within the Anchorage School or Mat-Su Districts, attend an Alaska accredited home-school program, or attend any accredited college.

Application deadline is Feb. 28.

For more information and to download the application to apply, visit <http://frsc.shutterfly.com>.

Scholarship opportunity

The Air Force Aid Society will be accepting applications for the Gen. Henry H. Arnold Education Grant for the academic year 2012 to 2013 until March 9.

Eligible spouses will have an opportunity to receive up to \$2,000 to fund their college education. To apply, please visit www.afas.org/Education/ArnoldEdGrant.cfm.

AER scholarships

Army Emergency Relief annually provides scholarships for Soldier family members.

With an average award of more than \$2,400, these scholarships relieve some the financial burden associated with pursuing higher education.

Applications for the 2013-2014 academic year scholarships will be available until May 1 at www.aerhq.org.

For more information, call 384-7478.

Brain injury classes

Every Tuesday from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., the JBER hospital Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic will

host education and peer-coping strategies class for spouses and partners of service members affected by TBI.

For more information, call 580-0014.

Pharmacy volunteers

The 673d Medical Group Pharmacy needs volunteers to provide the best possible customer service to beneficiaries.

Pharmacy volunteers can help perform such critical tasks as bagging, shelving and handing out medication.

For more information on how to volunteer, call 580-6807 or email christina.mcquaide@elmendorf.af.mil.

Find housing

Visit the Automated Housing Referral Network at www.ahrn.com, or www.ahrn.org/mobile if using a mobile device, to find housing before packing up.

Sponsored by the Department of Defense, the website listings include available community rentals, military housing, shared rentals, temporary lodging and military for sale by owner listings.

Listings include property descriptions, pictures, maps, links to local schools, and contact information.

Service members who would like to rent their homes, sell their homes, or are looking for another service member as a roommate in their current homes, may post an ad free of charge on the site.

For more information, call the 673d Civil Engineer Squadron Capital Asset Management Office at either 552-4439 for JBER-Elmendorf or 384-3088 for JBER-Richardson.

Giant Voice testing

Giant Voice mass notification system testing occurs every Wednesday at noon. If the announcement is difficult to hear or understand, please call 552-3000.

If the announcement is difficult to hear or understand in any base housing area, please contact JBER at [Facebook.com/JBERAK](https://www.facebook.com/JBERAK).

Public Health hours

Public Health closes the first Thursday of the month from 1 to 4:30 p.m. and the third Thursday of the month from noon to 4:30 p.m. every month. For more information, call 580-4014.

Dining facility survey

ARAMARK is conducting a survey to evaluate how the contractor can better offer dining service to JBER.

The 17-question survey can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/bm5koz6>.

Arctic Watch

The JBER Antiterrorism Office encourages all personnel to be vigilant against threats and report suspicious activities to iWatchArmy at 384-0824 or Eagle Eyes at 552-2256.

Rental Partnership

The Rental Partnership Program at JBER is available to all eligible active-duty members and consists of two options.

The first option, RPP Plus, includes utilities and sometimes cable costs providing an easier budget with a set rental payment year round.

The other option, RPP 5 Percent below market, saves the member five percent off the rental fee that other tenants pay however utilities are paid for by the tenant.

Both options are made available with no deposits or fees to the member with the exclusion of pet fees as applicable.

This program is designed to provide active-duty military personnel, enlisted and officers, accompanied and unaccompanied with affordable off-base housing.

An allotment must be executed under either option of the RPP for the rental payments which is made directly to the landlord resulting in more trouble-free transactions.

JBER-Elmendorf can see RPP officials at the Capital Asset Management Office, Building 6346, Arctic Warrior Drive, or call at 552-4328 or 552-4374 for further information and assistance regarding this program.

At JBER-Richardson, visit the Housing Management Office, Building 600, Richardson Drive, or call at 384-3088 or 384-7632.

Utility allowance changes

Starting last month, the utility allowance will be adjusted for all Phase I (Sunflower- those units on Fairchild Avenue, Dallas, Silver Run and Chugach housing areas) and Phase II (Moose Crossing, Denver, Houston, general officer housing and Dayton housing areas) metered housing units to reflect decreases or increases in electricity and natural gas rates Aurora pays to the government and a local provider, respectively.

The Phase I and II utility allowance is a portion of the basic allowance for housing that Aurora sets aside to cover the gas and electric utility costs for each house. Aurora pays for each resident's water and sewer costs regardless of the usage. The utility allowance encourages energy conservation.

In accordance with the agreements between Aurora and the Air Force, Aurora is required to annually adjust the utility allowances based upon actual metered usage data and current utility rates.

Aurora will continue to read utility meters monthly and provide a statement reflecting actual consumption, quarterly allowance amount and the resulting balance of the account.

As is currently the case, when the credit balance of an account exceeds \$250, Aurora will issue a refund check.

Conversely, if an account reflects a debit balance in excess of \$250, residents are required to make payment to Aurora in the amount of the account balance.

In addition, each account is annually reconciled and adjusted to zero at the end of June.

This means during July, residents will either be refunded any accumulated credit, or invoiced for any amount owed regardless of the dollar amount.

For more information about the utility program, please contact the Aurora Utility Staff at 375-0508 or Aurora Office at 753-1023.

Financial fitness is critical, especially these days

Don't let federal budget troubles crash your party

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Sheila deVera
JBER Public Affairs

With the looming budget cuts across the Department of Defense, service members, families, and DoD civilians may face a higher risk for potential financial crises.

Sequestration is set to kick in on March 1 by a bill passed in January. If Congress fails to override the provision built into the budget law, it would mandate \$500 billion in across-the-board defense spending cuts over 10 years in addition to \$487 billion in cuts mandated over that period by the 2011 Budget Control Act.

The budget cut will slash about a third from the armed forces with the remaining two-thirds taken from spending on modernization, compensation and readiness. As many as 800,000 DoD civilians may be furloughed one day a week.

"The biggest thing with the sequestration is the timing," said Douglas Armon, Army Community Services Personal Financial Readiness program manager. "If it does happen, it will happen within 30 to 40 days."

To alleviate any financial burden for service members and their families as they prepare for the changing economy, ACS and the Military and Family Support Center offers resources and educational tools designed to enhance your financial readiness and money-management skills.

"We are here to help and willing to go any extent to help service members," added Armon.

Armon stressed the importance of looking at expenses and living beneath one's budget so as to make the most out of the budget.

"If you have to take a 20-percent cut today, what is in your budget you cannot live without?" asked Armon.

With the 1.7 percent pay increase for 2013 and a 1-percent pay increase beginning 2014 under the proposed DoD budget, the pay increase will not keep up with the net inflation, said Armon.

"If each household income remains the same, but the cost of goods goes up, at some point a lot of service members and their families will turn to their credit card to off-set their spending," he said.

According to Armon, it will not impact immediately, but we may see the price of goods increase in the summer.

“If you have to take a 20-percent cut today, what is in your budget you cannot live without?”

"If people don't change their lifestyle, they will use their credit card to fund their expenses; and the long term effect is that they will remain in debt," said the Oregon native.

Robert Hill, financial readiness program manager, also advises service members to create a budget and try to stick with it.

"Hold off on making larger purchases for several months, and pay off debt as soon as possible," said Hill.

To be financially fit, Hill recommends everyone learn how to budget within their means. He further added that it may be a struggle at first, but as long as you don't incur any new debt, you should be fine.

Furthermore, Armon also recommends having three to six months of living expenses put into savings, for emergencies. If you are already saving, increase the amount.

"The easiest way to save money is to set it up on autopilot by setting up an allotment to your savings account," said Armon.

Another way to save money is to look at your debt and assess your expenses. If you are able to break down each expense, you see first-hand what can be cut down. Also, if you don't have an obligation to a car payment or credit card, put the extra income into savings.

However, if you are in debt, Armon recommends four strategies.

First, pay off debt from lowest to highest amount owed.

When a small debt is paid, put the money toward the next-highest debt.

Second, look at the interest rate – paying off the debt with the highest interest rate immediately; in the long term, this will allow you to save more money.

Third will be the high-minimum-payment credit cards. By paying off the highest minimum payment, you will have more available cash on hand.

Fourth is a strategy Armon calls 'pain theory.' Paying off the debt collectors who are constantly requesting payment will alleviate stress.

Living within a budget does not have to be extreme.

By making smart decisions and getting involved with the ACS and Family Readiness Center's classes to help establish a budget and how to invest, you can become debt-free.

For more information on financial planning or to find specific classes, please contact, Army Community Services at 384-7509 and the Military and Family Support Center at 552-0630.

SAVE

YOUR GREEN



Change how you think of money. Calculate how much money you make (net) per hour. Is that 32-inch flat-screen TV really worth 30 hours of your time? When you see a purchase as a trade for time, it can make a drastic difference.

- **What are your goals?** Some people are willing to save on food, clothes and fun to spend time with the children. Don't spend on things that aren't important to you.

- **Why are you buying that?** If you're buying things just because "everyone else" has one, you can cut those expenses.

- **Peer pressure works both ways.** Surround yourself with people who are what you want to be like.

- **Pay more than the minimum.** This cuts down on interest and principal.

- **Be honest when you budget.** Make allowances for the things we don't like to admit we spend money on.

- **There is free or low-cost entertainment available.** Check the Community Calendar for upcoming events. Free concerts, activities at the library, and other goings-on can save money.

- **Leverage your promotions.** When you get promoted or get a raise, put that increase into your 401K or thrift savings plan. You won't miss money you never saw.

- **Track expenses using financial software.** By categorizing expenses, you can point out problem areas – like restaurants, gas, or clothes – and target those for cuts.

- **Have an emergency account** and build up three to six months' of expenses saved in it. Don't touch it, not even to pay off debt, unless it's a dire emergency.

- **Be realistic.** If you've been in debt for five years, it's going to take longer than five years to get out.

- **Track your debts in a spreadsheet** – monthly payments, interest amounts, balances, and a grand total of all of the debts. Update it monthly so the decreasing amounts motivate you.

- **Above all, don't give up.** Like losing weight, it takes commitment and time. Change is difficult and takes a change in mindset – but if you want to do it, you can.

Check your student aid: Schools required to sign DoD memo

Students need to ensure their tuition assistance is still valid

By David Vergun
Army News Service

Effective March 1, Soldiers will no longer receive tuition assistance if their college or university has not signed the Defense Department's "Voluntary Education Partnership" memorandum of understanding.

Soldiers who already received tuition assistance, or TA, funding for courses can complete those courses even if they extend beyond March 1.

They just can't sign up for new courses after March 1 if the school has not signed the memorandum or MOU, according to Pamela Raymer, Ph.D., chief of the Army Continuing Education Division.

As of Feb. 14, of the 3,000 schools in GoArmyEd, the Army's enterprise system for accessing TA and other educational services, 2,153 schools have signed the MOU, Raymer said.

About nine percent of Soldiers using TA are enrolled in schools that are not signatories to the MOU.

Many of those are National Guard Soldiers and candidates in ROTC programs, Raymer said.

Soldiers should, as soon as possible, visit <http://www.dodmou.com>, to see if their school has signed the memorandum, Raymer urged.

If the school has not signed, then Soldiers should make arrangements to transfer to another educational institution that has signed the MOU.

Also, Soldiers are encouraged to speak with their unit education



Soldiers from the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade and other deployed units wait patiently in their seats to receive their degrees during the Kandahar Education Center graduation ceremony on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, May 23. (U.S. Army photo/ Sgt. Daniel Schroeder)

counselor, she said. Counselors can be found at 89 active Army education centers, 16 Army Reserve Readiness Command education offices and 54 National Guard education offices.

Soldiers might wish to check with their school administrators to see if the school intends to sign the MOU, but Raymer said that is not something a Soldier would be required to do, as the Army and DOD have been work-

ing hard to reach out to those schools.

While the new requirement could negatively impact Soldiers attending a school that is not a signatory to the MOU, the intent of the memorandum is to protect the Soldier, Raymer said.

Examples of the protections that schools in the program must provide are adherence to the Service members Opportunity College, or SOC, principles,

which include:

- maximizing transfer credits
- greater consideration of college credit for military experience and academic testing
- minimizing residency requirements
- adopting policies banning inducements for enrollment
- refraining from high-pressure recruitment tactics to eliminate aggressive marketing to Soldiers.

The MOU does not impact the

Montgomery G.I. Bill or Post 9/11 GI Bill, so Soldiers attending a school that does not sign the MOU can still use those options.

According to the Army's Continuing Education Division, in fiscal year 2012, 201,000 Soldiers used TA, which disbursed \$373 million to them.

Of those Soldiers using TA, 2,831 earned associate degrees, 4,495 earned bachelors and 1,946 received graduate degrees.

Forty days of changes: Lent offers a season for improvement

Commentary by
Cindy Sena-Martinez
Director of Religious Education

I have pondered the Christian season of Lent (which began on Feb. 13 with Ash Wednesday), and connected it with a military member and family with regards to a life of continuous adjustment, readjustment and change.

The more I reflected on both topics, the more I found there were similarities: (1) a significant beginning, (2) planning, preparing, and reviewing steps to be taken, (3) making changes that were at times painful and difficult, and (4) learning to live with the new.

Ash Wednesday, for most Christians, marks the beginning of the 40 days of Lent leading to Easter. The cross of ashes placed on the forehead of the believer is a reminder that life on Earth passes (ashes to ashes, dust to dust).

The symbol of ashes is also meant to humble our hearts as we begin a season of fasting, abstinence, prayer and reflection.

It is the reception of ashes on Ash Wednesday that is significant because it marks the beginning of a new Lenten journey.

For the military member, the significant beginning would be the receipt of orders – orders that create a separation from one's current duty station to a new duty station.

Although we know this is part of the military life, it is still one that creates added stress, separation, and tasks to an already busy schedule. Receiving orders marks the beginning of a time of planning, organizing, preparing and reevaluating one's life.

Every year, millions of Christians begin Lent by reflecting on what obstacles are in the way of their relationship with God.

Is it not making time for God? Is it being overwhelmed by finances? Is it our relationships? Is it neglecting one's health or being overly concerned about one's appearance? Is it the addictions that keep us enslaved to a destructive way of life?

Whatever it is, Lent is a good time to reflect and reconnect with God by letting go of these vices. Sometimes it may even lead one to seek professional help in addressing some of these obstacles.

Orders to a new duty station can offer the same opportunities to reflect. Decisions must be made whether it is a temporary duty or a permanent change of station move because although they are different, both require attention.

Should we move ourselves or not? Buy, rent, or live in military housing? Continue business as usual? Begin an inventory of our life? Is it time for a change in friendships or lifestyle?

Regardless of the type of separation you are faced with, this change is an opportunity to reflect on what is and is not important.

Change is difficult. It can be frightening, consuming, nerve-racking, and even painful, but it can also be life giving and freeing. One major hurdle in change is that change requires "me/I" to "do something" different or more.

An example might be, "I" spend too much time playing video games and I neglect my family, so I must put a limit on my game playing time. I must do this for my family.

Once you have identified that "something" to be either left behind or significantly altered, you have overcome half the difficulty.

The remainder of the change requires a step-by-step process. Will it be difficult? Yes, for many. Will it be painful? Yes, for some. The reward is that you will not be alone on this journey.

During Lent, Christians journey as a people of God, as a community of faith, as a family, and as a child of God.

The same is true during a military separation. There are many resources available here at JBER to help you with changes that occur.

Whether it is in conjunction with a move, medical concerns, issues in your marriage, your finances, or reconnecting with your

faith, the military has resources to help you.

We arrive at our new destination or our spouse returns from deployment. We have lived through an experience of abstinence, reflection, prayer and fasting.

We have survived the time of transition and/or separation and begin to settle into a routine. We made a plan and a commitment to make this a new beginning with new experiences.

We are closer and stronger as a family with a renewed commitment to make new memories worth remembering for the rest of our lives. We continue to use the resources the military provides.

We replace the old unhealthy habits with new healthier habits and live out each day as it unfolds before us knowing where we came from and looking to where we eventually want to be.

The Christian arrives at the end of Lent with Holy Thursday followed by Good Friday, and then, the long awaited day and season of Easter.

For those who engage in the experience of Lent – fasting, reflecting and praying – it is no surprise that by Easter we have drawn even closer to our God.

We are closer than we were on Ash Wednesday because we committed ourselves to take Lent day-by-day, allowed those who

were journeying with us to assist us by keeping us true to our word, and remained focused on what is truly important.

When we reflect back to Ash Wednesday, we realize how necessary the practice of changing habits is to maintaining and growing a relationship.

We have a lifetime to build our relationships with those who matter most: God, spouse, children, and ... (prioritize the rest of this list based on what you hold most valuable, trusting that the first three are firm in their right order).

Second Corinthians 5:17 says it best for Christians, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!"

We do not know what the future holds. We hold a vague map with some inkling of direction but how it all unfolds is unknown.

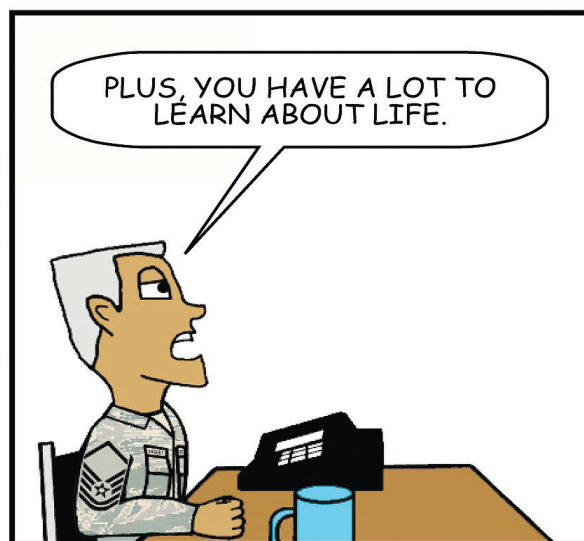
We can accept that change itself is not the difficulty; rather, we acknowledge that how we approach change makes all the difference.

I encourage you to take 40 days or 24 hours or an entire year to make that transition/transformation.

In fact, take as long as you need and, remember that, although they must be gained through perseverance, the greatest virtues are humility, patience and trust.

AIRMAN ARTLESS

by Ben Schneider



airmanartless.com

FSS EVENTS

Movie Night
at the
Arctic Oasis

Free Movie and Popcorn
February 22 - 6 p.m.

Bldg. 9497 • 552-8529

Black & White MASQUERADE Ball

FEBRUARY 23 • 9 P.M.
FREE ADMISSION

Chill 384-7619
BLDG. 655

JBER Elmendorf Outdoor Recreation Center
Bldg. 7301 • 552-2023

JBER Richardson Outdoor Recreation Center
Bldg. 794 • 384-1476

X-Country Ski Lessons
February 24 • 1 p.m. • \$10
(Ages 13 & up)
Weather and Trail conditions permitting. Sign up required.

Snowmachine Safety Classes
February 26 • 12 - 1:30 p.m. & 5:30 - 7 p.m. • \$40
Bring cold weather gear, helmet provided.
Course must be completed in order to rent snowmachines. Cost of class will be deducted from first snowmachine rental or tour attended. Sign up required.*



& ACTIVITIES

Community Happenings

ARCTIC WARRIOR

February 22, 2013 B-3

FRIDAY Snow Sculptures

The Ship Creek parking lot across from the Comfort Inn is where individuals and groups carve eight-foot by eight-foot blocks of snow into dazzling sculptures from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Vote for the People's Choice award before judging starts on Feb. 24.

For information, visit www.furrondy.net.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY Cash and Cline

Get crazy and walk the line with these classics by Johnny Cash and Patsy Cline at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts.

Live music by Jamie Hartford who wrote the Walk the Line soundtrack, and athletic choreography by Gilmer Duran help explore the character, humor and culture of the good old days starting at 7:30 p.m.

For information, call 263-2787.

FRIDAY THROUGH MARCH 3 Fur Rendezvous

This long-standing Anchorage tradition is the high point of the end of winter.

Sled dog races are on for this year. There's also a parade, outdoor races, the Running of the Reindeer and many more events that draw tourists from around the world.

Events take place mostly in Anchorage's downtown area.

For information, visit www.furrondy.net.

WEDNESDAY Polar Bear Day

Join the Alaska Zoo and H2Oasis Indoor Waterpark for an event celebrating polar bears.

Polar bear games and door prizes are included and by the time you're done swimming like a polar bear, you'll know all about them.

For information, call 341-6463.

MARCH 2 Iditarod Ceremonial Start

World-class mushers and their teams start their trip toward the Bering Sea – all 1,049 miles of it – in downtown Anchorage, snow-pack permitting, at 10 a.m.

See off the dogs as they start

the Last Great Race.

For information, visit www.iditarod.com.

Miners and Trappers Ball

Everyone is invited to the 63rd annual tradition that features world-class beards and Alaska State Champion mustaches. Break out the costumes and come to the Egan Center at 7:30 p.m. for this classic Alaskan ball.

For information, call 274-1177.

MARCH 9 Singin' the 70s

Go back to Saturday Night Fever, Queen, Barry Manilow, Fleetwood Mac and ABBA at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts starting at 8 p.m. Break out your disco duds, as the choarus and pops orchestra celebrate the decade in song.

For information call 263-2787.

MARCH 16 Ladysmith Black Mambazo

For 45 years, this South African group has blended the harmonies of their native country with the stound and sentiments of gospel music.

Check them out at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts at 7:30 p.m.

For information call 263-2787.

MARCH 28 THROUGH 31 The Great Alaska Sportsman Show

Alaska's biggest sports and outdoors show, this gala at the Sullivan and Ben Boeke arenas has gear for hunting, fishing, camping and so much more. Visit March 28 from 4 to 9 p.m., March 29 from noon to 8 p.m., March 30 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and March 31 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For information, call 562-9642.

ONGOING AER scholarships

Army Emergency Relief is taking applications for scholarships.

Scholarships are available for dependent children or spouses of active duty, retired and deceased Soldiers. Applications are available at aerhq.org along with instructions and other information.

For information, call 384-7478.

Discovery chapel classes

Soldiers' Chapel hosts classes

for all ages, from elementary school through adults, Wednesday evenings.

A free meal begins at 5:45 p.m.; classes last from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Nursery care is provided.

For information, call 384-1461 or 552-4422.

Protestant Women of the Chapel

Christian women are invited to meet with Protestant Women of the Chapel, who meet Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. at Soldiers' Chapel. Child care is available.

For information, email jber@pwoc.org or call 384-1461.

Wired Cafe for Airmen

The Wired Cafe is located at 7076 Fighter Dr., between Polaris and Yukla dormitories.

The cafe has wireless Internet and programs throughout the week for single Airmen living in the dorms.

There are free homestyle meals Fridays at 6 p.m. at the cafe.

For information, call 552-4422.

Model railroading

The Military Society of Model Railroad Engineers meets at 7 p.m. Tuesdays and 1 p.m. Saturdays in basement Room 35 of Matanuska Hall, 7153 Fighter Drive.

Anyone interested in model railroading is invited.

For information about meetings, work days, and shows, call 952-4353, visit their site at www.trainweb.org/msmre or email bjorgan@alaska.net.

Wildlife Wednesdays

This science lecture series takes place at 7 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month at the Alaska Zoo Gateway Lecture Hall.

Through April, learn about different wildlife topics and enjoy coffee or tea.

This series is aimed at older audiences, not children – university students and scientists especially.

For more information, call 341-6463 or visit alaskazoo.org.

Borealis Toastmasters

Conquer your fear of public speaking with Toastmasters.

This safe, friendly club helps

build confidence through presentations, feedback and listening.

Meetings are every Thursday in Room 146 of the BP building from 7 to 8 p.m.

For information, call 575-7470.

Road Warriors running

Stay fit with a group who can help you stay motivated right here on JBER. Military, family members and civilians alike are welcome to train and get involved with running, biking and swimming.

For events and information, check the Road Warriors (Alaska) Facebook page or call 384-7733 or 552-1361.

Experience the Aurora

It's the next best thing to the Alaska winter sky – and more comfortable than being out in a parka.

Stay warm and enjoy the Anchorage Museum's planetarium provides an immersive show that explains the science behind the Northern Lights.

For more information, call 929-9200 or visit anchoragemuseum.org.

Scholarship opportunities

The Air Force Aid Society is now accepting applications for the Gen. Henry H. Arnold Education Grant for the 2012-2013 academic year.

Applications will be accepted through March 9.

Eligible spouses will have an opportunity to receive up to \$2,000 to fund their college education.

To apply, please visit www.afas.org/Education/ArnoldEdGrant.cfm or call 552-9647.

Scholarship opportunities

The Richardson Spouses' Club is now accepting applications for scholarships.

Applicants must attend high school within the Anchorage or Mat-Su school districts, or attend an Alaska-accredited home-school program or an accredited college. Applications are due by Feb. 28.

For information visit <http://frsc.shutterfly.com>.

Sing-along at the zoo

Pre-school-aged children can explore the world of the Alaska

Chapel services

Catholic Mass

Sunday

9 a.m. – Soldiers' Chapel
10:30 a.m. – Elmendorf Chapel I

Monday through Friday
11:40 a.m. – Soldiers' Chapel
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
11:30 a.m. – Elmendorf Chapel Center

Thursday

11:30 a.m. – Hospital Chapel

Confession

30 minutes before Mass at the chapel in which Mass is being celebrated, or anytime by appointment. Call 552-4422 or 384-5907

Protestant Sunday Services

Joint Liturgical Service

9 a.m. – Elmendorf Chapel 2
Traditional Service

9 a.m. – Elmendorf Chapel 1

Contemporary Protestant Service

11 a.m. – Soldiers' Chapel

Gospel Service

Noon – Elmendorf Chapel 1

Contemporary Protestant Service

5 p.m. – Elmendorf Chapel 1

Zoo's animals through interactive music. Children can sing along or play with the instruments for kids.

Sing-alongs are at 10:30 a.m. Mondays at the coffee shop greenhouse.

For information, email klarson@alaskazoo.org.

Night at the Fights

The Egan Center hosts boxing every Thursday night with several fights each night.

Doors open at 6:30; and fights start at 7. For information, visit thursdaynightfights.com.

Polar Express
Arts & Crafts



Information,
Tickets & Travel



Polar Bowl



Arctic Oasis
Community Ctr



FSS-OPOLY

Customer Appreciation February 17 - 23

February 22-23

Polar Bowl Bowling Center

FREE Daily prize drawing ticket with bowling game purchase.

5 prize drawing tickets with 1 hour lane rental.

February 22

Information, Tickets & Travel (ITT)

FREE Prize Drawings and refreshments.

Enter to win a 2 piece luggage set.

Willow Military/Family Support Center

FREE Popcorn and complimentary gift.

February 22

Polar Express Arts & Crafts/Auto Hobby

1/2 Off wood shop fees.

\$5 Off Pick & Paints.

1/2 Off Multi Craft Sitting Fee.

February 22

Iditarod Dinning Facility

FREE Cake courtesy of Aramark until gone.

Information, Tickets & Travel (ITT)*

FREE Drawing for Luggage Set.

JBER Library • 7 p.m.

FREE Movie Snowdogs.

Two Rivers Youth Center Open House

5 - 7 p.m.

FREE Hotdogs, burgers, fries & ice cream

FREE Open forum/dating violence prevention for youth 12 & up.

February 23

Polar Express Arts & Craft

2 for 1 Frame Class 10:30 a.m.

FSS-OPOLY GAME OVER

February 23 • Noon - 3 p.m.

Arctic Oasis Community Center

FREE Hot dogs, chips & small drink courtesy of Aramark for first 500 customers.

Prize drawings.

FREE 18 hole mini golf for first 100 customers.



FREE ADULT JIU JITSU INSTRUCTION



TUESDAYS
THURSDAYS
5:30 P.M. - 7 P.M.
ARCTIC
WARRIOR
COMBATIVE
TRAINING
ACADEMY

BLDG. 802
CALL 384-0292
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Little League Baseball/Softball Registration



Now through April 5

Ages 5 to 15.

All participants must

be Youth Center members

and a current sport physical!

Season runs April 22

through June 30

\$65 T-Ball - Ages 5 & 6

\$75 - Ages 6 and up

Kennecott YC 552-2266
Two Rivers YC 384-1508

Kenai Peninsula American Heroes Family Adventure

A parent/youth adventure for those with deployed family members in 2012.

March 11 - 15

\$150 includes 1 parent + 1 youth
11 years old and up.

Fishing basics 101, challenger mission, cultural dancing/camp, salt water ice fishing, winter survival skills, parent/youth hands-on activities.

Call: 384-7482 • 227-5052

Or Email Susan Dedioniso: susan.dedioniso@elmendorf.af.mil

Petersville Snowmachine Guided Tour

February 23 • 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. • \$150

Bring cold weather gear and lunch.

Helmet provided. Transportation included.

JBER Richardson Outdoor Recreation Center

Bldg. 794 • 384-1476

Check out the February Alaskan Adventurer

(or go online)

For a coupon at Arctic Oasis
\$2 off a purchase of \$5 and more.

Coupon not valid for food purchases at Paradise Cafe

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!



<http://www.elmendorf-richardson.com>

Birth Announcements

B-4

February 22, 2013

ARCTIC WARRIOR

FEB. 3

A son, Sean James Dana-her, was born 20.5 inches long and weighing 7 pounds, 8 ounces at 12:33 p.m. to Tracy Renee Danaher and Air Force Capt. Kevin Haden Danaher of the 90th Fighter Squadron.

FEB. 4

A son, Joshua D. Lewis, was born 22 inches long and weighing 8 pounds, 10 ounces at 11:51 p.m. to Renae M. Lewis and Air Force Maj. Denis C. Lewis of the 962nd Airborne Air Control Squadron.

FEB. 5

A daughter, Addison Ruthie Disston, was born 20 inches long and weighing 8 pounds, 7 ounces at 2:58 p.m. to Tracy Marie Disston and Spc. Peter Hamilton Disston of the 6th Engineer Battalion.

A son, Jaxton William McClure, was born 20 inches long and weighing 8 pounds, 10 ounces at 7:34 a.m. to Cynthia McClure and Senior Airman Shawn McClure of the 773rd Logistics Readiness Squadron.

FEB. 6

A daughter, Pascale Elizabeth Kirby, was born 19.5 inches long and weighing 6 pounds, 7 ounces at 5:17 p.m. to Caroline Jane Kirby and Air Force Maj. Matthew Timothy Kirby of the 212th Rescue Squadron.

A daughter, Arabella Bren Long, was born weighing 6 pounds, 3 ounces at 2:06 a.m. to Montana Bren Long and Sgt. Brian Wayne Long of U.S. Army Alaska.

A son, Jermaine Paul Sterling Jr., was born 22 inches long and weighing 9 pounds, 5 ounces at 3:25 a.m. to Terelle Nicole Sterling and Sgt. Jermaine Paul Sterling of the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment.

FEB. 7

A son, Ignacio Troy Ellis, was born 19 inches long and weighing 6 pounds, 2 ounces at 3:45 p.m. to Blanca Estela Ellis and Spc. Michael Stephen Ellis of U.S. Army Alaska.

A son, Demetrik Rey Jaramillo, was born 20.5 inches long and weighing 6 pounds, 12 ounces at 3:19 a.m. to Pfc. Reynece Marquee

Jaramillo of the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and Louie Rey Jaramillo.

FEB. 8

A daughter, Hannah MaeLee-Ann Averett, was born 20 inches long and weighing 6 pounds, 13 ounces at 9:40 a.m. to Brenda Lee Ann Averett and Pfc. Terrell Micah Averett of the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment.

A son, Avery Kai Medina, was born 20.5 inches long and weighing 7 pounds, 15 ounces at 6:30 a.m. to Melissa M. Medina and Spc. Jose A. Medina of the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 501st Infantry Regiment.

A son, Jack Almeron Reed, was born 20 inches long and weighing 6 pounds 13 ounces at 12:20 p.m. to Jenna A Reed and Air Force Maj. Jason A. Reed of the 353d Combat Training Squadron.

FEB. 9

A daughter, Lelah Danielle Almestica, was born 20 inches long and weighing 7 pounds, 1 ounce at 9:06 a.m. to Delmon Korto Almestica and Sgt. Daniel

Almestica of the 6th Engineer Battalion.

FEB. 11

A son, Josiah Montay Nasir Ricks, was born weighing 8 pounds and half an ounce at 3:05 p.m. to Spc. LaShonmonique Dajanee Ricks of the 17th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion.

FEB. 12

A son, Hudson Mark Adamek, was born 19 inches long and weighing 5 pounds, 14 ounces at 10:37 a.m. to Margaret Mary Adamek and Sgt. Douglas George Adamek Jr. of the 4th Quartermaster Company.

A daughter, Everleigh Gloria Hubbard, was born 19.5 inches long and weighing 6 pounds, 1 ounce at 9:36 p.m. to Starleigh Arce Hubbard and Army Staff Sgt. Terrel Joseph Hubbard of the Warrior Transition Battalion.

A son, Aiden Joshua Harley Nash, was born 22 inches long and weighing 7 pounds, 14 ounces at 4:54 a.m. to Ashton Nicole Nash and Pvt. Joshua Alan Nash of the 6th Engineer Battalion.

FEB. 13

A son, Samuel Xavier Sosa, was born 21 inches long and weighing 8 pounds, 10 ounces at 3:21 a.m. to Kristyn Marie Sosa and Sgt. Saul Sosa of the 59th Signal Battalion.

FEB. 14

A son, Sharod Navair Bowman, was born 20 inches long and weighing 7 pounds, 8 ounces at 2:11 p.m. to Spc. Shanee Marie Bowman of the 2nd Engineer Brigade and Sgt. Rogie David Bowman of the 4th Quartermaster Company.

FEB. 15

A daughter, Anna Jane Vickery, was born 19.5 inches long and weighing 7 pounds, 1 ounce at 11:54 a.m. to Candace Franklin Vickery and 2nd Lt. Raymond Daniel Vickery of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment.

FEB. 16

A daughter, La'shiyah Tra'Neveah Tyre, was born 19 inches long and weighing 6 pounds, 6 ounces at 2:49 p.m. to Airman 1st Class Shy'veika Ka'eelitte Tyre of the 673d Air Base Wing.

Plan now to help your loved ones cope when you're gone

Commentary by Airman 1st Class Alexander W. Riedel
Defense Media Activity

Last year, I dealt with the deaths of two people close to me.

In September, my father passed away unexpectedly at the age of 59, due to an illness. The man I thought indestructible suddenly was gone.

Almost exactly two months later, a long-time friend also passed away in the hospital of complications during a routine surgery. Only a few weeks before, the young athlete had celebrated his 25th birthday.

All I wanted during that time was to retreat and deal with my grief. However, my family was left not just with the emotional pain, but also the dreadful duty of arranging funeral proceedings and disposal of my father's personal belongings. Needless to say, I didn't like the tasks at hand.

Even while living in a clean household, my father's financial and legal documents were only haphazardly filed in unmarked binders, threatening to come tumbling off the shelf in an avalanche of paper. His bank information was hidden in a random cabinet, and nothing was labeled or sorted in any distinguishable order or system.

After I returned to my own apartment, I quickly realized my own passing wouldn't make it much easier for my survivors. While I am a tidy person, my apartment is still full of individualized organization that sometimes even makes my wife wonder where I filed the last utility bill.

My friend's passing especially sent the frightening message that while death at any age is tragic to family and friends, it can happen to anybody, any time.

I invite you to consider this: If you were to die, how long would it take people to find the things that matter? Are your important documents easily accessible, and does somebody know where to find them?

Luckily, a few simple steps can make a big difference to those left behind.

Why your will will matter

According to the Air Force Legal Assistance website, a last will and testament is a legal document you use to dispose of your property at your death. It may also name people to do important jobs, such as a personal representative or executor of your estate, a trustee if you have established a trust, and guardians for minor children.

One of the worst things about my dad's passing was that he did not leave instruction or wishes. For my family, this meant we had to discuss how and where my dad would have liked to have been buried, what to do with his car, furniture and the rest of his possessions.

If my father had had a will, those questions would've been answered for us and the "next steps" would have been expedited.

The most important part about creating a will is simply starting one. A will does not take effect until your death and can be discarded and renewed after changes.

Almost as important as creating and maintaining a will, however, is also making it accessible and safe, keeping it in a fire-proof box, for example. As my experience with my father's bank information showed, documentation does no good unless somebody knows where to find it when it matters.

'The uninsured life is not worth leaving'

While I was aware that a funeral costs

money, the many small expenditures connected to a burial were a surprise to me. From the casket to the headstone, from coffee for funeral attendees to burial plot fees, expenses quickly rack up.

Life insurance could have alleviated this problem. It is intended to replace the loss of income, pay estate taxes, debts and cover funeral costs to the family. Unfortunately, my father did not have a policy, leaving those costs to be covered by his hardly accessible bank account, his remaining paycheck and the rest by his family.

Every active-duty service member, of course, is eligible for the Service Member's Group Life Insurance, a term life insurance. It does not build cash value over time and provides coverage for the assigned term only. This is an excellent way to protect against premature death on a strictly temporary basis – an example being military duty.

A variety of cash value insurance is available to provide a lasting insurance asset in the form of a cash accumulation account.

For military members, it is important to check whether such policies have a "war clause," preventing their beneficiaries to collect if the service member is killed in war or on duty.

Service members should also make sure that their SGLI is updated regularly to reflect the desired beneficiaries.

Privacy in life, access after death

In addition, there are more private issues to deal with. As I scoured my dad's house for photos, letters, documents and memorabilia important to my memory of him, I realized many were digital photos saved on hard drives and his pass-coded computer.

This left many of his photos and favorite

music, email accounts and social media, for example, nearly inaccessible and his computer a vault to the information inside.

Consider preparing a list of passwords to your computer and online accounts, so others can access your documents even when they don't share your computer on a regular basis.

Naturally, such a listing should be kept in a safe place, a sealed envelope and safe deposit box; but make sure the bank does not seal or limit access to it after your death.

Talking it over

Finally, more important than legal preparation, may be the open conversation with those closest to you. While speaking about your own death may seem callous, it can make it easier for your family to meet your wishes.

Will your family know whether you wanted to be cremated or not, for example? Where you would like to be buried or what you would like your headstone to look like?

I'm not suggesting we live in fear of death every day – but you never know what life has in store for you. After all, not one of us is indestructible.

Instead, I suggest that as Airmen we have a duty not only to our service, but also to our next of kin, our loved ones – those who have already enough to deal with after we're gone. It's better to prepare now, before it's too late.

If you haven't already, strive to get your things in order and plan ahead for those you love.

For more information on how to establish a will and what Airmen should do to prepare, please visit the U.S. Air Force Legal Assistance website, where you can also locate contact information for your local legal office.

