



THE official newsletter of the 124th Fighter Wing

# BEACON

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★ 124TH FIGHTER WING ★ IDAHO AIR NATIONAL GUARD ★ "FIRST CLASS OR NOT AT ALL" ★ GOWEN FIELD, BOISE, IDAHO ★ OCTOBER 2012

## Airmen use combat equipment for fire mission

By Tech. Sgt. Becky Vanshur  
124th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

With more than 450,000 acres of Idaho's wilderness on fire by the end of August, Idaho National Guardsmen discovered a unique way to use a familiar combat tool for area fire support missions.

As a result, a more efficient task force was ready to respond, armed with the communication and tracking system known as Blue Force Tracker.

When Idaho's Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter declared a state of emergency, the National Guard was called upon to maintain a safe perimeter around these remote mountain fires. The Emergency Operations Center located at Gowen Field uses BFT to communicate with Airmen and Soldiers sent to remote mountain areas. The system provides a faster satellite network, secure data encryption and advanced mapping kits.

BFT provides military commanders with friendly forces tracking and messaging in a combat zone. With speed and accuracy the



Tech. Sgt. Bradley Dobson, 124th Air Support Operations Squadron, communicates with fellow Airmen through Blue Force Tracker as part of the Idaho National Guard's fire support mission near Idaho City Aug. 24. Airmen maintained a safe perimeter to help firefighting efforts by restricting access to dangerous areas. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert Barney)

personnel.

EOC kept in contact with Guardsmen in the field.

"Blue Force Tracker is a satellite communications and tracking system used in locations like Iraq to maintain accountability of all of our personnel and vehicles as they are out on missions and now in the state emergency in supporting the fires. That communications pack is extremely instrumental," said Major Stitt.

This is the first time the BFT has been used in support of fire response. The system has proven extremely useful for Airmen and Soldiers at the traffic control points who work closely with firefighters, law enforcement and area residents, and communicate with EOC

Blue Force Tracker consists of a computer used to display location information, a satellite terminal and antenna used to transmit location and other military data to be received by the EOC at Gowen Field.

The system displays the location of the host vehicle on the computer's terrain-map display, along with the locations of other platforms friendly and enemy forces in their respective locations and other battlefield conditions. BFT can also be used to send and receive text and imagery messages.

While supporting firefighting efforts, Idaho Guardsmen can stay connected and quickly adjust to an ever-changing mission through the use of Blue Force Tracker.



124th Fighter Wing, Idaho (Official)

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## Wing clears latest inspection hurdle ESOH CAMP results reveal wing is 'on solid ground'

By Capt. Tony Vincelli  
Public Affairs Officer

A team of civilian inspectors descended on Gowen Field to inspect the wing's compliance in environmental, safety and occupational health Sept. 17-21.

Unlike most inspections, when evaluators leave behind a grade for wing leaders to celebrate (see ORI part II) or lament (see ORI part I), an ESOHCAMP instead leaves only findings; some are significant and the rest, though regrettable, aren't quite as serious.

The team's comments were largely positive, as no significant findings were revealed. While the lack of a measurable score may make it a challenge to praise success, the lack of significant findings is indeed a victory for the inspected – a fact not lost on wing leaders.

"The operation of the (124th Fighter Wing) neither significantly degrades the environment nor adversely affects the health and safety of our Airmen. Well done," Col. Michael Nolan, wing commander, wrote on the wing's

Facebook page.

Airmen in the environmental, ground and weapons safety, and bioenvironmental engineering work centers have been the voice of compliance locally and bore the brunt of the pre-inspection workload, but the Airmen in the inspected sections also deserve their share of the post-inspection praise.

"There was great communication between the shops and the environmental office. The Maintenance Group did a great job preparing their shops for visits from the inspectors, and it showed," said Senior Airmen Heidi Caye, environmental protection specialist for the 124th Civil Engineer Squadron.

As usual, inspectors identified areas for improvement. Those will be addressed quickly and decisively, said wing leaders.

"Although it continues to be challenging, we will get on board as always and rise to the occasion and remain in compliance," said Master Sgt. Brian Hobbs, weapons safety manager.

Tech. Sgt. Gary White, 124 MXS, ensures Material Safety Data Sheets are present and that chemicals are correctly labeled with Dr. Ching Chen, an Occupational Health inspector from the Environmental Safety Occupational Health Compliance Assessment Management Program team Sept. 19 at Gowen Field. The weeklong inspection is held every three years. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Becky Vanshur)



# A-10 Pilots take aim on moving targets

By Tech. Sgt. Sarah Pokorney  
Public Affairs

A scorched and pockmarked door from a Jeep Cherokee and the melted remains of something that once resembled an engine block were all that were left after A-10 pilots from the 190th Fighter Squadron set their sights on these moving targets during a strafe training mission at Saylor Creek Range August 21.

The targets were rigged with remote control and were driving as fast as 40 miles an hour while pilots took aim, disabled, and destroyed each vehicle. Strafe training, with moving targets, prepares pilots for their real-world mission of providing close air support for ground troops. 1st Lt. Tom Silkowski, an A-10 Pilot with the 190th Fighter Squadron was one of the lucky pilots that got to fire on the moving targets.

"It's very similar to missions that are going on right now in Afghanistan," said Silkowski. "They may track a bad guy for weeks and have a tiny window of opportunity to get him, that's when this training pays off."

The training required extensive coordination with a visiting group of

special operations troops who rigged and remotely operated the vehicles, as well as Mountain Home Air Force Base and range personnel.

The troops controlling the vehicles

said Silkowski.

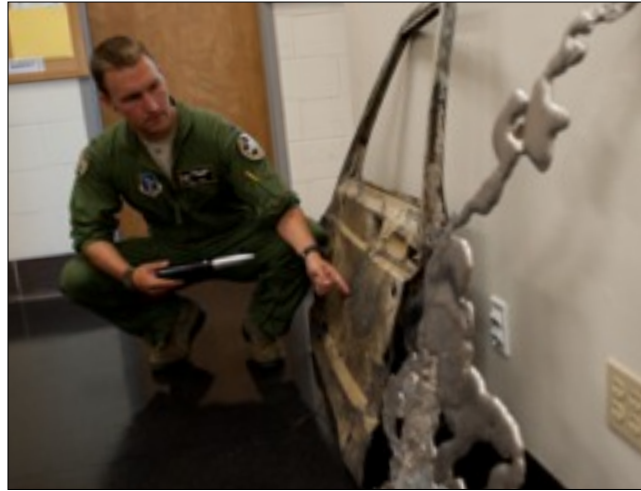
Strafe exercises demonstrate the fire power, accuracy, and relevance of the A-10 capabilities. The lead pilot will come in and disable the vehicle with the first shots and the wingman will take out the static target.

Silkowski explained that every time, during the training, the lead pilot disabled the vehicle and wingman came in to destroy the target. He said, "It validated the A-10 because we stopped the movers every time."

It has been over two years since the 190th has had the opportunity to train with moving targets. For some, like Silkowski, it was a first. It's a rare opportunity because of the extra coordination and resources required. Each moving target costs around \$25,000. In this training mission 10 pilots got a chance to take aim and three vehicles were destroyed.

The training helped more than just the pilots who participated. As in all training missions, they document the sorties and review the mission in detail. They share their experiences and lessons with all of the 190th pilots.

"After every sortie we debrief, review the video, and learn more about what worked and what didn't," said Silkowski.



1st Lt. Tom Silkowski, A-10 pilot with the 190th Fighter Squadron, examines the door and melted engine block from a vehicle destroyed during a strafe training mission at Saylor Creek Range Aug. 21. The targets were moving as fast as 40 miles an hour while pilots took aim, disabled, and destroyed the remote controlled vehicles. This type of strafe training with moving targets prepares pilots for their real-world missions of providing close air support for ground troops. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Pokorney)

were on the range during live fire so the pilots and the 190th commander Lt. Col. Shannon Smith, spent extra time outlining restrictions to protect the people and assets on the range while getting the most out of a rich training experience.

"It's a good mental exercise coming up with restrictions that make sense,"



## Local mayor visits to say "thanks"

Diana Thomas, mayor of Weiser, Idaho talks with 190th Fighter Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Shannon Smith during a tour of Gowen Field. The mayor visited with members of the Idaho Air National Guard Sept. 20 to thank them for performing a flyover over her city on the 4th of July. Wing members routinely volunteer on their days off to support flyovers in several communities all over Idaho during patriotic holidays each year.



# Gowen firefighters respond to house fire

## Advance interagency training proves valuable

**By Capt. Tony Vincelli**  
Public Affairs Officer

Staff Sgts. Jeffrey Sawmiller and Damon Williams were already 14 hours in to their 24-hour shift when they got the call at around 9 p.m. Sept. 23.

"A" Shift supervisor and assistant fire chief Ron Earl told the young firefighters assigned to the 124th Civil Engineer Squadron to suit up. Boise Fire Department needed assistance from the Gowen Field Fire Department off base.

A call of that type doesn't happen very often, maybe three or four times a year, said Chief Master Sgt. Bill Mattravers, Gowen Field fire chief.

"Most of the time we might whip outside the main gate to put out a car fire or respond to a wild land fire. That's about it," said Chief Mattravers.

This time was different. A house had caught fire in the South Cole area a few miles off base. Boise Fire's 2,000 gallon water tender was running low on water and trucks couldn't access the fire hydrant because it was further away from the flames than their hoses could reach.

A recent three-day training exercise with GFFD to assess inventory, training and equipment capabilities reminded BFD firefighters on scene that a fully capable fire department was nearby. The call quickly went out through Ada County Dispatch.

Their silver proximity suits and "U.S. AIR FORCE" stenciled across the side of the 4,000-gallon water tender made it obvious that to all

that Sergeants Sawmiller and Williams came from nearby Gowen Field to lend a hand.

They responded quickly, enjoying the commute almost as much as they enjoyed being able to assist in the firefighting effort.

"It was nice to be able to go off base to help Boise Fire out, said Sawmiller.

"It was fun getting to run a few stoplights," said Williams.



Staff Sergeants Damon Williams (left) and Jeffrey Sawmiller, 124 CEF, and the 4,000 gallon water tender responded to the off-base house fire that was caused by a charcoal grill Sept. 23. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert Barney)

Within 15 minutes from receiving the call, Sawmiller, Williams and the Boise Fire Department were putting water on the fire provided by Gowen Field.

Both firefighters have worked full-time for the Gowen Field Fire Department for about two years. This was their first off-base fire response. According to Chief Mattravers, military support of civilian firefighting efforts makes sense in a circumstance like this.

"In a nutshell: our equipment is prime, our skill set is a premium, our location is optimum, and our willingness is priceless," the chief said.



Tech. Sgt. Don Huffman, 124th Civil Engineer Squadron Readiness, discusses CBRN decontamination procedures during a weeklong Subject Matter Expert Exchange Sept. 6 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. More Idaho Air National Guard members traveled to Idaho's partner country in 2012 than in any year in the history of the State Partnership Program. (Photo by Capt. Tony Vincelli)

## ***CBRN exchange caps off a busy 2012 in Cambodia***

**By Capt. Tony Vincelli**  
Public Affairs Officer

Joint subject matter experts from the U.S. military shared Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear response best practices with Royal Cambodian Armed Forces personnel Sept. 3 to 7 in Phnom Penh.

Led by Airmen and Soldiers from the Idaho National Guard as part of its ongoing State Partnership Program, a team of CBRN professionals representing the Air Force, Army and Marine Corps met with RCAF soldiers from law enforcement, security and national defense directorates for a week of classroom discussion and hands-on decontamination demonstrations using locally purchased everyday household products.

The CBRN Subject Matter Expert Exchange was the fourth successful mission this year in which Idaho Soldiers and Airmen traveled to its partner country. The missions shared capabilities in logistics, medical first response and CBRN response as a foundation for future exchanges.

Next year will see an even busier schedule as the SPP momentum continues, said Air Force Capt. Chris Borders, Idaho SPP coordinator.

"We hope to get the RCAF to Idaho, which hasn't happened since 2009. The TAG will likely go to Cambodia for a senior leader visit. Based on the high success of the last CBRN exchange we will definitely continue that next year, as well as the maintenance and logistics and medical first response SMEEs. We hope to do a counter-narcotics exchange and revitalize the medical and engineer exchanges as well," said Captain Borders.



**Lt. Col. Tony Brown**  
Chief of Safety

## **Know the Rules of the Road**

In order to ride on Gowen Field, you (and your bike) must have:

### **Rider:**

- Helmet
- Eye Protection
- Long Sleeves
- Long Pants
- Full Fingered Gloves
- Over the Ankle Shoes
- (Day) Brightly Colored Upper Garment
- (Night) Reflective Upper Garment

### **Motorcycle:**

- Headlight
- Rear View Mirrors
- Brakes
- Fenders
- Horn
- Muffler
- Tail Light

Military members can attend the Idaho Star riding class for free throughout Idaho. The class is meant for riders of all skill levels. Contact the 124th Fighter Wing Safety Office for more information at 422-5317.

## THEY'RE BUYING

### CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY PROMOTED AIRMEN!

**CMSgt Tracy Mortenson** JFHQ  
**CMSgt Steven Stephanie** 266 RANS  
**SMSgt Tyrone Clarence** 124 MDG  
**SMSgt William Ferrell** JFHQ  
**MSgt Melissa Burgess** JFHQ  
**MSgt Aileen Castro** 124 CF  
**MSgt Milo Davis** JFHQ  
**MSgt Dean Sampo** 124 SFS  
**MSgt Brian Thompson** 124 MXG  
**MSgt Steven Vinsonhaler** 124 MSG  
**MSgt Anthony Wolf** 124 CES  
**TSgt Rebecca Buongiovanni** 124 MXS  
**TSgt Benjamin Olds** 124 FW  
**TSgt Maria Wilson** 124 MDG  
**TSgt SeanJay Wright** 124 LRS  
**TSgt Susana Barroso** 212 CAC  
**TSgt Gabriel Usog** 124 MDG  
**SSgt Troy Hayes** 266 RANS  
**SrA Scott Gawith** 124 MXS

## Your records are going online

### Expect delays during transition

The Military Personnel Data System is set to go online in early December.

During the transition period, which could last three weeks or more, some non-critical pay actions will be delayed until the completion of the migration, so it is highly recommended that you complete those non-critical actions prior to Nov. 15.

During the planned migration, critical-pay transactions are being defined as those that affect the start or stop of basic military pay and entitlements.

All other items affecting other pay transactions (i.e., promotions, special duty assignment pay, medical special pay, foreign language proficiency pay, etc.) will be processed for pay before the beginning or updated after the completion of the upgrade period.

Listed below are the personnel programs/actions that will be a point of emphasis to manage during the migration period:

- Accessions - Enlisted/Officer
- Casualty Reporting
- Retention
- Retirement
- Separations, Discharges
- SGLI

Self-service applications within virtual Personnel Center - Guard Reserve (vPC-GR) will be available during the transition, however all data will reflect information current as of the last day before the upgrade period.

Please contact customer service at 422-6719 or visit the Air Reserve Personnel Center's website at <http://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil> for more information.

MilPDS is the primary records database for personnel data and actions that occur throughout every Airman's career. MilPDS is also used to initiate pay actions, maintain accountability and strength data and support a host of interactions with other Air Force/ANG processes and systems that rely on personnel data.

## Know when to test...

## ...and what to wear

PT tests are about to become a lot more predictable. Beginning in October, tests will be administered both days of primary UTA in Bldg. 1530 at 9 a.m. Winter PT testing will begin at 2 p.m. starting in December.

"We wanted to make it easy for people to remember where and when testing is available," said Chief Master Sgt. Mary McKenna, 124th Force Support Squadron superintendent.

Personnel are reminded that tests must be performed in official Air Force-issued physical training gear. Because it is considered a uniform, you will be required to abide by AFI 36-2903. If you are not in uniform you will be turned away.

### Col. J.R. Compton retires



(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Becky Vanshur)

Idaho National Guard Commanding General Maj. Gen. Gary Sayler shakes the hand of retired Col. James R. Compton Sept. 8 during his retirement ceremony. Colonel Compton is the former commander of the 124th Fighter Wing who served in the Idaho Air Guard for more than 30 years. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Becky Vanshur)



## ***HOT TOPIC: Policy change limits options for TRICARE children needing vaccines***

Due to recent changes in federal funding for the Vaccine for Children program, children insured solely by TRICARE will no longer receive shots through the state-funded supply.

If this policy change, which went into effect Oct. 1, applies to your family, you will likely no longer be going to your clinic for your child's vaccinations, unless that clinic chooses to purchase vaccines from the private market and bill TRICARE instead of getting them through the state-funded supply.

Your options are now limited to either going to Mountain Home Air Force Base or finding a local pharmacy (see list below). According to 124th Medical Group officials, Air Guard medical personnel at Gowen Field are not credentialed to administer vaccines to civilians.

Local pharmacies providing vaccines to

TRICARE children are:

Rite Aid pharmacies offer all recommended vaccines. Some Rite Aid stores need advance notice of the vaccines to be administered since they do not stock them all and will need to place an order. Rite Aid will vaccinate children of any age, however, children younger than three years of age will need a prescription from their doctor.

Wal-Mart & Sam's Club pharmacies provide most vaccines needed for children ages four and older and have vaccines readily available. No prescription is necessary, however, Wal-Mart and Sam's Club will not vaccinate children under the age of four.

Other pharmacies such as Kmart and Albertson's (Savon) may only vaccinate children ages twelve and older.

Walgreens currently does not accept TRICARE.

### ***Think you have what it takes to fly?***

The 190th Fighter Squadron is currently accepting completed packages to be considered for the upcoming Undergraduate Pilot Training board. Applicants will need to have completed packages turned in to recruiting no later than Dec. 7.

Interviewees are required to be on-station for an in-person interview from Jan. 30 to Feb. 2, 2013.

For more information, including eligibility and application requirements, please visit our website: [www.idaho.ang.af.mil](http://www.idaho.ang.af.mil) and click on the "careers" link.



### **ASOS Training Manager Needed**

The 124th Air Support Operations Squadron is looking for a motivated individual to fill their Unit Education and Training Manager position. This is a traditional technical sergeant position.

This dynamic and challenging position requires motivation and great organizational skills. Qualified applicants are preferred, however, they are willing to train the right person.

Please submit a single page resume to Chief Master Sgt. Jim McMonigal by Oct. 24 or call 422-6313 for additional information.



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