


AIR | OBSERVER

biannual journal of the 137th special operations wing

QUIET PROFESSIONALS

WILL ROGERS AIRMEN TRAIN FOR NEW MISSION



BLUE TEAM, GO!
AIRMEN TAKE ON SWAT
SCHOOL

COMMUNITY IMPACT
JEC HITS THE STREETS

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AIR OBSERVER

the biannual journal of the 137th special operations wing

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ON THE COVER

This photo-illustration celebrates the transition of the 137th Air Refueling Wing to a Special Operations Wing and signifies the return of flying operations to Will Rogers Air National Guard Base. As a part of Air Force Special Operations Command, the wing provides highly-trained Air Commandos to execute global special operations.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux and Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION: Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux

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Members of the 146th Air Support Operations Squadron run in formation during the Will Rogers Air National Guard Base "Oktoberfest" 5K held Oct. 3, 2015. The 146 ASOS sponsored the event in support of Operation Holiday Spirit. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Brigette A. Waltermire)

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WING COMMANDER

Col. Devin R. Wooden

“There is no question that Will Rogers Guardsmen take pride in themselves, their unit and this installation.”

As we continue our progression toward becoming the 137th Special Operations Wing, you will witness subtle changes in how we communicate our wing’s message. Over the last 18 months, you have embraced the requirements of an effective Oklahoma Air Guardsmen through the 5 Pillars of Will Rogers Airmen and, more recently, have completed the indoctrination into the Air Force Special Operations Command through the “Five Special Operations Forces Truths.”

The Five Truths were written by Retired Col. John Collins while he served on a congressional research staff. The Truths Collins wrote embody the heart of special operations, though he was not a special operator. In the same way, the Truths can apply to any organization – special operations or not – that relies on the service of highly skilled professionals, especially when the training of those professionals is expensive, time-consuming and quality-demanding.

I want to focus on the first truth, “Humans are more important than hardware” and begin by saying that I have always felt this particular Truth is a major strength of the 137th. It is one of the reasons why I believe we are well suited to join the Air Force Special Operations Command.

It is said that where your eyes focus, you are bound to follow, and I am proud to say that I’m impressed with the vision and focus of all of our Airmen, no matter their rank.

Our leaders focus their eyes toward allocating resources and providing well maintained equipment in order to preserve their Airmen’s time. They lead with dignity, respect and humility toward others.

Our Airmen focus their efforts on each other while working through the difficulties that follow the mission change, whether that means reorganizing, standing up a new mission or working in facilities that are under construction. They provide their service without degradation and lean on one another for support to continue to work as a team.

Perhaps most important, is the focus of Airmen on themselves. There is no question that Will Rogers Guardsmen take pride in themselves, their unit and this installation. The health and fitness of our wing is the best it has been in recent memory. Our Junior Enlisted Council is developing leaders, as their community volunteerism alone demonstrates what it means to be an Airman. This is what “Humans are more important than hardware” is all about.

I challenge each of you to continue making this truth a reality. “Humans are more important than hardware” is not only a guiding principle but a key component as we continue to work toward our AFSOC priorities.

Take care of each other, be safe, and fly right, Air Commandos!

FIRST SERGEANT

Master Sgt. Kevin C. Hill

“When we take care of the human element, they will definitely take care of the hardware.”

As we embrace our new mission, it is electrifying to know that we have been thrust into an exciting new era that has unlimited potential to make a positive global impact. As first sergeants, our primary role is to dedicate our time and energy to our Airmen’s health, morale, discipline and welfare needs. This is why I have the belief system that humans are more important than hardware.

Try to picture a huge, heavy flywheel (a revolving wheel in a machine that increases momentum and provides stability) that will metaphorically represent our new, and somewhat daunting, mission. Now, imagine that our mission is to get the huge flywheel rotating on the axle as fast and long as possible. Pushing with great effort, we get the flywheel to inch forward, moving almost imperceptibly at first. We keep pushing and after two or three hours of persistent effort, we get the flywheel to complete one entire turn. We keep pushing, and the flywheel begins to move a bit faster, and, with continued great effort from all of us, we move it around a second rotation. We keep pushing in a consistent direction. The flywheel builds up speed. We keep pushing and building momentum, moving faster with each turn. Then at some point, there is a breakthrough! The momentum kicks in our favor, hurling the flywheel forward, using its own heavy weight to work on our behalf.

Several years from now, there will be those who will ask the question “What was the one big push that caused this thing to move so fast and efficiently?” Trick question: all pushes are equally important to the mission. No matter what your Air Force Speciality Code is, you are equally important in the big picture.

When we take care of the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of our Airmen, they will perform better on all core tasks for which they are responsible.

I love being a first sergeant. My business is taking care of people. It has been the best job I have had during my 17 years as a military member. When we take care of the human element, they will definitely take care of the hardware.



IN WITH THE NEW | Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward

Will Rogers Air National Guard Base commemorates the arrival of the first MC-12W with a base-wide ribbon cutting ceremony, Aug. 1, 2015. Its arrival publicly marked one of the many steps in the Wing's path to become a fully-functioning special operations wing.





CHAPLAIN

Capt. Joseph D. Baker

“Essentially, when you can’t live in a moment, they say it’s best to live in anticipation of an experience.”

“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions.”

We have an opportunity to create new experiences for ourselves and others by persevering through the mission. So, as we continue this new mission, let us realize and understand that each experience is priceless. You have one chance to make the most of it, and no amount of money in the world will change those experiences for you. We will learn that people are more important than things.

Over the past decade, an abundance of psychological research has shown that experiences bring people more happiness than possessions do. The idea that experiential purchases are more satisfying than material purchases has long been the domain of Cornell psychology professor Thomas Gilovich. Since 2003, he has been trying to figure out exactly how and why experiential purchases are so much better than material purchases. In the journal “Psychological Science,” Gilovich, along with Cornell doctoral candidate Amit Kumar, expand on the current understanding that spending money on experiences “provide[s] more enduring happiness” by looking specifically at anticipation as a driver of that happiness.

Essentially, when you can’t live in a moment, they say it’s best to live in anticipation of an experience. Experiential purchases like trips, concerts, and movies, tend to trump material purchases. Experiential purchases are also more associated with identity, connection, and social behavior. Looking back on purchases made, experiences make people happier than do possessions. It’s kind of counter to the logic that if you pay for an experience, like a vacation, it will be over and gone; but if you buy a tangible thing like a couch, at least you’ll have it for a long time.

Actually, most of us have a pretty intense capacity for tolerance, or hedonic adaptation, where we stop appreciating things to which we’re constantly exposed. iPhones, clothes and couches just become background. They deteriorate or become obsolete. It’s the fleetingness of experiential purchases that endears them to us. Either they’re not around long enough to become imperfect, or they are imperfect, but our memories and stories of them get sweeter with time. Even a bad experience becomes a good story.

COMPTROLLER

Maj. Judd K. Kroener

“The human interaction that takes place develops a sense of trust and builds a relationship more valuable than any piece of equipment.”

Humans are more important than hardware: a universal truth with which all departments, agencies, MAJCOMs and career fields can identify. Having been a member of the Comptroller Flight for quite some time, I can tell you there’s nothing particularly glamorous about what we do. We don’t fight fires, orchestrate air strikes, fly aircraft or issue equipment. We don’t own shiny hardware, nor do we have any of the much “cooler” and more capable equipment. Not that we don’t appreciate these things, and, in many cases, play a part in obtaining them - it’s just not what we do. Our job centers on people. Whether it’s in-processing a member for the first time or out-processing for the last, the human interaction that takes place develops a sense of trust and builds a relationship more valuable than any piece of equipment.

The workload that comes with serving over 1,100 personnel is daunting and sometimes overwhelming. The sheer volume of work screams, “take a number and take a seat,” but that’s not how we operate in the 137th Comptroller Flight. I am continuously impressed and inspired by the level of attentiveness and consideration my folks give to each person who walks in the door. This personal touch is something rarely found in an organization this size. Admittedly, we do stumble from time to time, but our intentions are good and the end result is generally positive. One hundred percent satisfaction is the goal, but unfortunately is not the reality. With the new mission upon us, I am certain this level of professionalism will continue as we endeavor to maintain and take advantage of its new opportunities, processes and challenges.

Most military careers are unique, but a career in the Air National Guard is distinct in its own way. While active duty is typically laden with one permanent change of station after another throughout the corporate complex, it’s not uncommon for a Guardsman to spend an entire career at the same installation. This stability contributes to our success by fostering enduring relationships that last a lifetime. Our wing has experienced its fair share of change over the last several years. Be it war, BRAC, association or disassociation, we’ve seen it all, and we’ve persisted. The saying goes, “the only constant is change,” but I argue it’s the constant accompanying the change that gets you through it.





PAST, PRESENT AND THE WILD BLUE YONDER | Tech. Sgt. Caroline E. Essex

Senior Airman Sam Wirstrom looks toward the future of the 137th Special Operations Wing as he refuels an Air Force special operations MC-130 during his last mission as a boom operator with the 185th Air Refueling Squadron. This photograph pays tribute to the Wing's missions and its future endeavors with the Air Force Special Operations Command.



FORCE SUPPORT

Lt. Col. Christopher J. Davis

“FSS personnel are at the ground floor of preparing our future for the success of our wing’s mission: the people.”

As commander of the 137th Force Support Squadron, it is my distinct privilege to work with the men and women of this great team. FSS personnel are at the ground floor of preparing our future for the success of our wing’s mission: the people. Our business is a support function to the Airmen and their families assigned to this base.

The FSS provides total coverage. We prepare Airmen for success by taking care of them and their family’s most basic needs, so they are able to perform when called. Without our deploying personnel having peace of mind and being able to focus on their training, the mission is less likely to succeed.

The FSS is with each member from the beginning to the end. From the day you’re recruited and given basic military training dates, to deployments, promotions and professional military education – all the way to retirement and death benefits – the FSS will be there working with you to ensure you and your family are well informed and cared for.

Case in point: an Airman is deploying. FSS will assist with contingency, exercise or deployment orders, health insurance benefits and life insurance paperwork. While downrange, an Airman may be promoted or want to participate in a local election. We will coordinate paperwork for this process. If an Airman must miss hometown elections but wants to participate for the benefit of their family and community, we make voting assistance available. Happily, the Airman returns home, where we complete forms for the most up-to-date record of his/her service and provide reintegration family support. Deployments tend to centralize on the gear that protects Airmen, but, in FSS we focus on helping deployed members protect their families back home.

We exist to provide a firm foundation for Airmen by providing meals, organizing training and processing deployments and orders – all while keeping them healthy and fit! Our objective is to provide the best personnel, education services, family programs and professional military education, while simultaneously operating the full spectrum of morale, welfare and recreation services for the Wing.

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Master Sgt. Bert F. Burnside

“If our current leadership follows the example of leadership past, you will be afforded, once again, opportunities to succeed as a part of the future of the 137th.”

After four years of active duty service in security forces, I enlisted in the Oklahoma Air National Guard. I came into the 185th Airlift Squadron right as we were transitioning to the KC-135. This is when I truly became a part of the 137th Air Refueling Wing, but I understood others’ disappointment when the C-130 left.

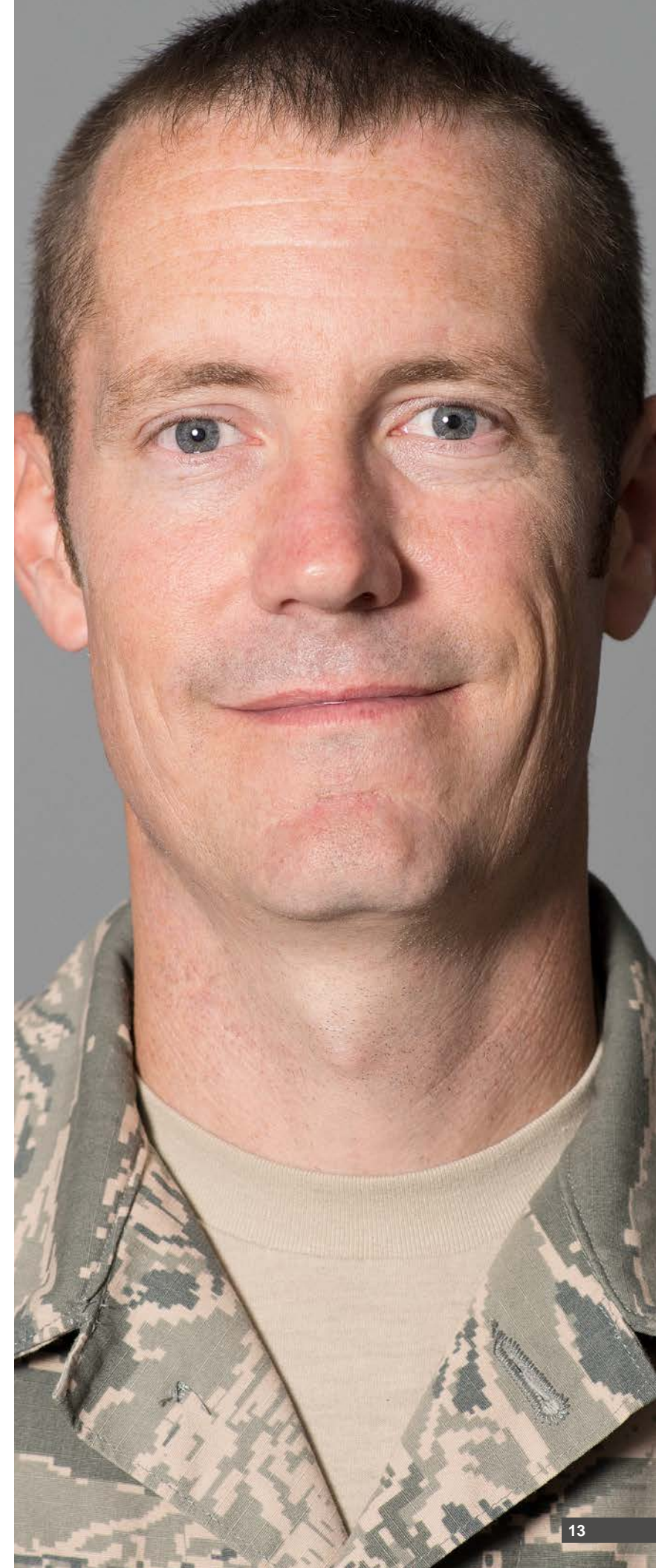
Coming into this unit at that time gave me a certain perspective: regardless of how any individual felt about a change in mission, there are options. The transition definitely did not please all, but leadership worked hard to present each and every individual with opportunities to find their place with this new aircraft. I doubt you could say that personal happiness was at 100 percent, but it wasn’t for a lack of trying.

Over the next decade, I truly realized how great the Guard and its standards are. We took the same aircraft, the same training, and the same mission that the U.S. Air Force Reserve had, and we did it with distinction.

It’s happening again. This time, I am not new to the game. I actually know these people. This time, I am just as excited as they are. Sure, some people are upset, but why? Are they fearful of change? Are they annoyed with more training? Are they getting more than they bargained for? I can’t answer these questions for each individual, and I can’t make my excitement contagious. All I can do is assure you that, if our current leadership follows the example of leadership past, you will be afforded, once again, opportunities to succeed as a part of the future of the 137th.

The time I have spent here and the stories I have heard over the years has shown me that the 137th has never been successful because of the planes that flew off this ramp. From my perspective, its success is dependent on the people.

I know this. Our leadership knows this. Do you?





FINAL FAREWELL | Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux

137th Airmen and their family members pose for a final photograph with a KC-135 Stratotanker, June 25, 2015, at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, as a tribute to the 8-year refueling mission. Many of the Airmen will find new places within the Wing as the transition leaves the KC-135, and its maintenance, to the 507th Air Refueling Wing at Tinker AFB.

The story of Will Rogers Airmen becoming the newest members of Air Force Special Operations Command began with the touchdown of the first MC-12W on the flight line at Will Rogers Air National Guard Base, July 10, 2015.

STORY | Senior Airman Kasey M. Phipps

Though the refueling chapter has closed, the wing draws on its experience and past to propel the wing's newest mission forward and into the next chapter.

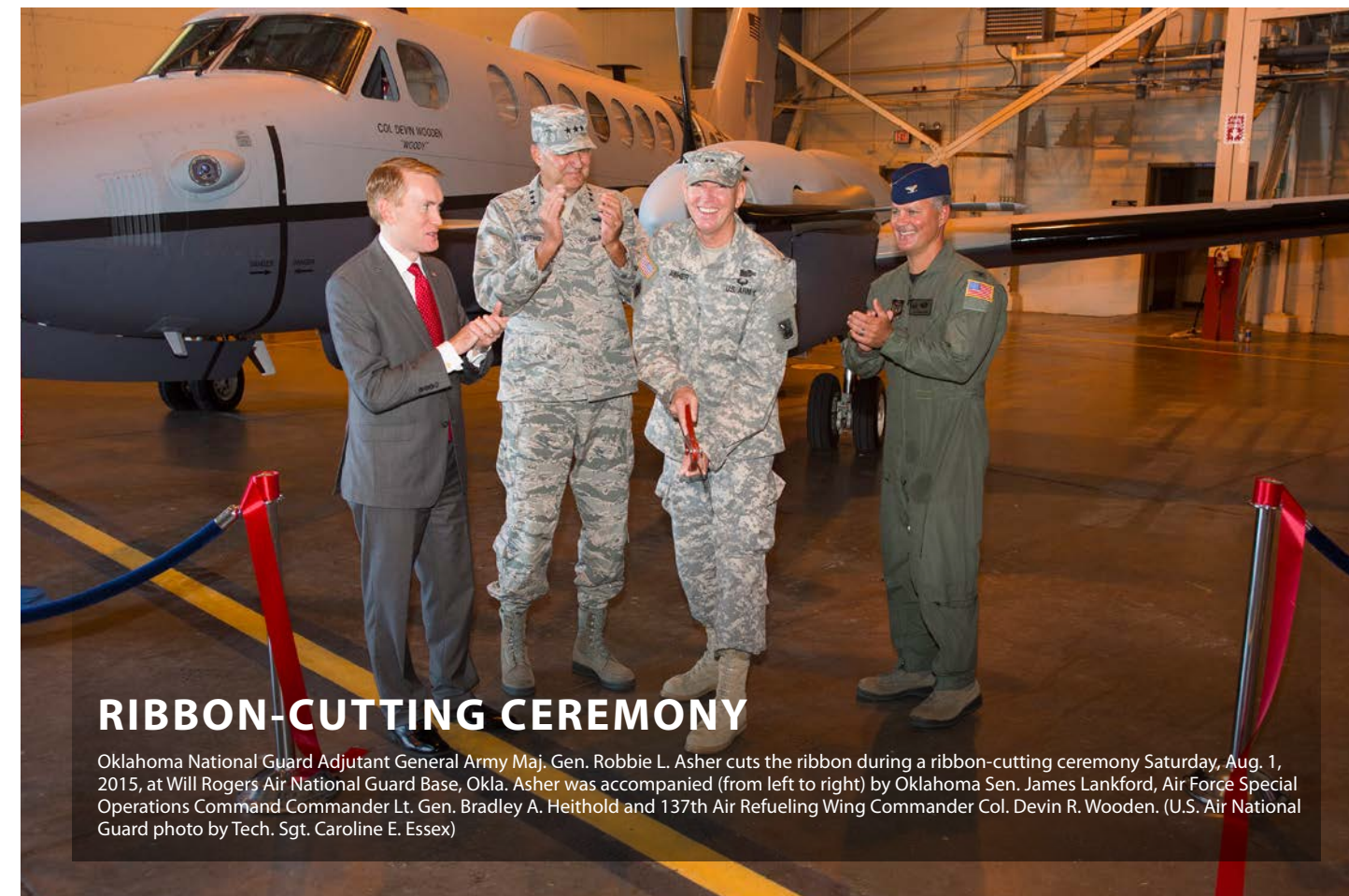
The qualities – resiliency, resolve, patience and perseverance – that were instilled in the 137th personnel by past mission changes are the same qualities that the Air Force Special Operations Command saw when assigning this new mission.

Added to the more than 615,000 accident-free flying hours, sufficient facilities, strong community relations, an appropriate command structure, and a geographic location conducive for both flying and recruitment, the wing stood up to the arduous AFSOC selection processes.

Now, the wing has to do what it does best – persevere. Through personnel shifts and rigorous training with the MC-12s in the air and on the ground, 137th Airmen look to sharpen their intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.

Having proved itself before, the wing has an opportunity to write history once more. It trains its Air Commandos to find their places within the pages of the new mission, just as the new aircraft begin to populate the flight line at WRANGB.

PHOTOGRAPH | Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux



RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY

Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General Army Maj. Gen. Robbie L. Asher cuts the ribbon during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Saturday, Aug. 1, 2015, at Will Rogers Air National Guard Base, Okla. Asher was accompanied (from left to right) by Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford, Air Force Special Operations Command Commander Lt. Gen. Bradley A. Heithold and 137th Air Refueling Wing Commander Col. Devin R. Wooden. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Caroline E. Essex)

The whirl of metal turboprops cut through the air as the twin engines slowed to close the distance between the waiting wheels and the sun-beaten tarmac. As the aircraft found traction on the ground, so too did flying operations find a home at Will Rogers Air National Guard Base.

The touchdown of the first MC-12W in July 2015 marked the return of flying missions to WRANGB for the first time since 2007. The base officially welcomed the arrival with a ribbon cutting ceremony, Aug. 1, 2015.

"There's a lot of pride across the Wing to be a part of this time in history: to bring flying operations back to Will Rogers, to be able to get out there and smell JP-8 (aircraft fuel) wafting across base with a nice south wind," said 137th Wing Commander Col. Devin R. Wooden.

The medium-to low-altitude, twin-engine turboprop aircraft watched over the gathering of WRANGB Airmen and dignitaries as they spoke of the new mission's importance both stateside and abroad.

The aircraft's primary mission is to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support directly to ground forces serving overseas, but that same technology could be used to assist in damage assessment during natural disasters here in Oklahoma.

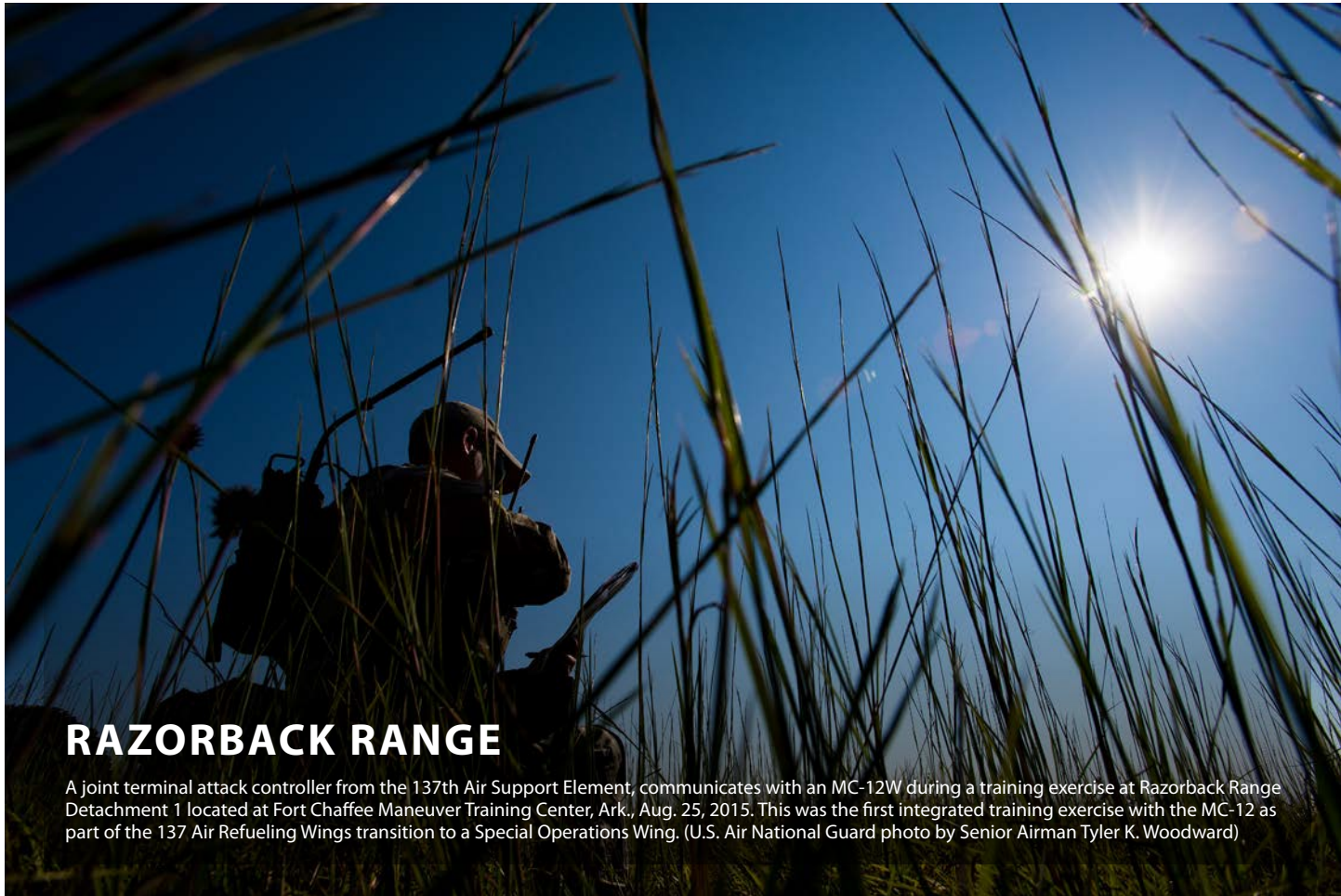
"This is going to be a challenging mission," said Army Maj. Gen. Robbie L. Asher, Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General. "This is going to be an exciting mission, and this is going to be a demanding mission. There's a huge need for this aircraft in theaters around the world."

Lt. Gen. Bradley A. Heithold, Air Force Special Operation Command commander, looks forward to the partnership between AFSOC and the Oklahoma Air National Guard while focusing on the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aspects of the AFSOC mission.

"The whole reason why we're standing up this Wing here is so we can provide more ISR to combatant commanders," he said. "It's vitally important to the success of our mission on the battlefield."

The Wing is the second Air National Guard base to be a part of the AFSOC mission and will be the only military entity flying and maintaining the MC-12 and its unique capabilities.

MC-12s are being transferred from Beale Air Force Base in California, with all 13 aircraft expected to arrive by April 2016. But, just as the light-manned aircraft find the tarmac, so too must areas like communications, intelligence and air support gather resources and train personnel to advance the intensely ISR mission. **AO**



RAZORBACK RANGE

A joint terminal attack controller from the 137th Air Support Element, communicates with an MC-12W during a training exercise at Razorback Range Detachment 1 located at Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center, Ark., Aug. 25, 2015. This was the first integrated training exercise with the MC-12 as part of the 137 Air Refueling Wings transition to a Special Operations Wing. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)

Though the mission most notably came with a new aircraft, the real focus is on the Will Rogers Air National Guard Base Airmen, both in the air and on the ground, who must adapt and train to support its unique capabilities.

Members of the 137th Operations Group and 146th Air Support Operations Squadron participated in the first integrated MC-12W training exercise for the 137th Air Refueling Wing at Razorback Range Detachment 1 at Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center in Arkansas, Aug. 24-27, 2015 .

During the exercise, crews in the air, which consisted of a pilot, co-pilot, signals intelligence operator and optical operator, trained on the MC-12's systems as well as developed communication tactics with operators on the ground, exactly as they would in the field, said the 137th Air Support Element Officer in Charge.

The ASE's primary mission is to support WRANGB flying operations by pushing the aircrews to become mission-ready and proficiently trained for the manned intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platform.

"There's a whole slew of things that we do from the ground to make that happen," said the OIC. "We utilize different tools, techniques, and skill sets to help them get their training accomplished. These include direct line-of-sight communication, airspace deconfliction and ground coordination, simulation of additional air assets and joint fires, and representing supported ground forces. The ASE can provide a near realistic training environment for the aircrews."

During the training, 137 ASE replicated both friendly and unfriendly ground forces to allow the aircrew to track troop movements using the sensor systems in the MC-12. The aircrews also provided intelligence to ground forces who were navigating hostile territory and environments, helping to identify dangers such as improvised explosive devices.

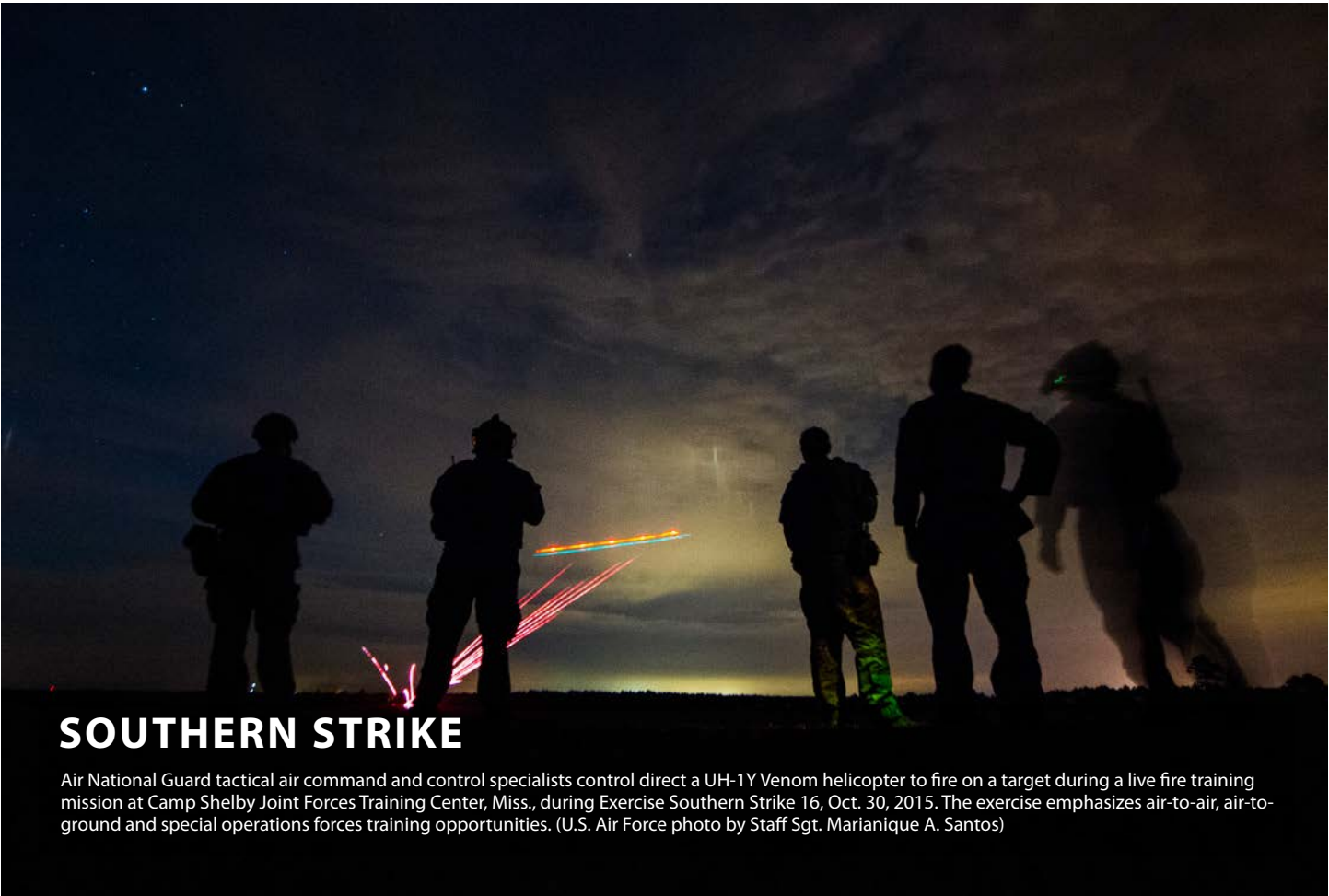
Each scenario, though multifaceted, was tailored to the specific aircrew's training needs while also providing ISR integrated air support training lines for the ground forces.

"This way, it meets both the needs of the manned ISR platform as well as the needs of the ground team," said the 137 ASE OIC.

For service members on the ground, the MC-12 is a particularly vital asset, said Maj. Christopher Gries, commander of the 146 ASOS. Its technology is used to gain a larger, more accurate picture of the conflict by providing an audio and visual feed to assess target areas and give the ground commander an idea of the situation.

Though the aircraft does have unique capabilities, the true assets to this mission, regardless of service branch or rank, are the highly-trained service members of the special operations crews, said the 185th Special Operations Squadron Director of Operations.

"We've hand-selected people from all throughout the country, with all different depths and breadths of experience, to come and do this one mission," said the 185th Director. **A0**



SOUTHERN STRIKE

Air National Guard tactical air command and control specialists control direct a UH-1Y Venom helicopter to fire on a target during a live fire training mission at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Miss., during Exercise Southern Strike 16, Oct. 30, 2015. The exercise emphasizes air-to-air, air-to-ground and special operations forces training opportunities. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Marianne A. Santos)

As Will Rogers Air National Guard Base organizes under the special operations mission, precise joint tactical training is important in developing and maintaining the expertise of its Airmen.

More than 20 Airmen from multiple units from WRANGB united with federal agencies and military units from across the U.S. to enhance combat effectiveness during Exercise Southern Strike 16 at the Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Mississippi, Oct. 23 - Nov. 6, 2015.

Guard, reserve, and active-duty units from all military branches, along with U.S. federal agencies and international observers, converged on the site to provide and receive tailored, cost-effective and realistic combat training in a joint and multinational environment.

"We really got to see how these other units work and operate," said the exercise mission commander from the 185th Special Operations Squadron. "It just gets us more familiar for when this happens in a real operation. Not only have we seen how they operate, but they've seen what we can do as well."

Though centered in Gulfport, training was spread throughout the South Mississippi region, focusing on close air support, medical evacuation, air-to-air combat operations, and coastal and Riverine operations.

WRANGB Airmen were scattered throughout the training zone, helping to complete missions that mirrored current operations in the Middle East. Intelligence Airmen were centered in the Joint Operations Center in Gulfport, operations Airmen participated in scenarios with

the MC-12W both on the ground and in the air, and aeromedical evacuation Airmen remained on alert for medical operations.

Lt. Col. Darcy Tate, battle staff flight instructor for the exercise and medical crew coordinator for the 137th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, said the exercise fulfilled the 137 AES training requirement while providing an environment that was realistic to a deployed situation.

This is the fourth year for Southern Strike, but the first year for the 137th's participation. This year is particularly important for 137th Air Refueling Wing Airmen because, like Razorback, it's the first time the 137th units are participating in a special operations capacity.

For many of the Airmen, it was the first time to see their new mission in action.

"It gave them a great understanding of what it's going to be like in intelligence, communications and support," Master Sgt. Bert Burnside, 137th intelligence specialist, said of the new intelligence Airmen. "They saw the integral parts that are planned and constantly evolving to complete the mission."

The joint training also allowed Airmen to build contacts and become familiar with the units they could be working with in future operations abroad.

"This whole thing was really about education," said the exercise mission commander. "It let us see some of the operations and let other units see what we can do." **A0**



EXTRATERRESTRIAL | Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward

The shadow of a joint terminal attack controller from the 137th Air Support Element takes an otherworldly shape as he communicates with an airborne MC-12W from the ground during a training exercise at Razorback Range Detachment 1 at Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center in Arkansas, Aug. 25, 2015. The exercise was the first MC-12 integrated training mission for the 137th.



BLUE TEAM, GO!

SWAT

Airmen take on SPECIAL WEAPONS and TACTICS school

STORY | Senior Airman Kasey M. Phipps

PHOTOGRAPH | Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux



A 146th Air Support Operations Squadron Tactical Air Control Party Airman from Will Rogers Air National Guard Base in Oklahoma City, aims a weapon through a doorway while clearing a structure at Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Okla., during a Special Weapons and Tactics school held by the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office, Oct. 26 to Nov. 6, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux)



Airmen from Will Rogers Air National Guard Base in Oklahoma City move as a team to search and clear a structure at Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Okla., during a Special Weapons and Tactics school held by the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office, Oct. 26 to Nov. 6, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux)

Gunshots pierce the leaden air. Their hearts pulse rapidly under the protection of green and black uniforms. They train their sights on a sole target, ebbing and flowing through darkened doorways, communicating by deliberate signals and nimble touch.

Six Will Rogers Air National Guard Base Airmen stealthily extracted a hostage from armed personnel during a Special Weapons and Tactics school held by the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office at a variety of training locations throughout Oklahoma, Oct. 26 to Nov. 6, 2015.

The four Security Forces and two Tactical Air Control Party Airmen collaborated with almost 30 students from the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office and other state agencies to execute precise joint operations and procedures that could later be used to save lives in real-world situations. The techniques taught in the school can be used directly by SF Airmen, who are charged with

ensuring base defense both here and abroad, and TACP Airmen, who perform tactical operations while deployed.

"Collaborating with the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office provides great joint training and helps us prepare for local state support and tactical missions," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Delarber, 137th Security Forces Flight Chief.

Just as live-fire simulation bullets were propelled from muzzles, the students were launched through a wide range of in-depth scenarios and tasks, including trauma care, building entry, shield and gas mask use, search and clearance, assessing threats, low

light operations, and hostage situations; all of which are potential operations for both SF and TACP Airmen.

"There is violence everywhere," said Lt. Jason Ruegge, Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office tactical unit team leader and training division instructor. "So the training can be applied anywhere and anytime... Everyone is going to get better from training."

As a part of each scenario, the students were bombarded with information and expected to assess every minute detail of their potentially fatal environments.



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward

"Through every scenario you have to watch each individual angle of the area and how things could appear from the other side of the situation," said a 146th Air Support Operations Squadron TACP Airman who can apply the techniques he learned during the school to execute tactical operations while abroad. "We have to make sure our bodies aren't visible through doorways, so that they can't shoot us."

The sheriff's office training division planned the operations according to specific objectives that are meant to test the students both mentally and physically, said Ruegge.

"A lot of the scenarios are from situations we've encountered real world, either our team or other teams," said Ruegge. "We work in reverse order a lot of times and put in place what we want the officers to learn from the scenario. Then we build the scenario backwards."

In the wake of shootings at military centers like those at Fort Hood, Texas, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, the 10-day school strives to go further than just education. The rigorous scenarios, which include live-fire simulation ammunition and explosives, are designed to mimic the stress that can complicate decision-making in rapidly changing environments.

"We try to make the training as real as possible and get their stress levels as high as possible so that these things come back to them when they are in a stressful situation," said Sgt. Jimmy Lilly, Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office tactical unit senior team leader and training division instructor.

Though the students get a certificate for completing the stringent and exacting school, the biggest takeaway is the knowledge base created from the multitude of demanding scenarios that lasts long after the gunpowder clears.

"Every time you experience something, you build a card file," said Lilly. "The bigger your card file, the more references you have to apply to a real-world situation. When they enter a stressful situation, they can pull out an experience they have, whether it's for training or real life."

This is at least the 10th year for the SWAT school, and the program continues to develop, said Ruegge. The scenario locations vary each year, which allows Airmen and officers to adapt to their environments and teams while leaving them with an appreciation for the collaborative learning and expertise shared by both law enforcement and military operators.

"Now, we all speak the same language," said Ruegge. "We understand the tactics. We understand the mission. We can push forward and get it done."

As the harsh echoes of gunshots reverberate through smoke-disturbed air and the last flashes of action evaporate, the uniforms' color variations dim to expose one absolute and unified mission – the preservation of lives, both stateside and abroad. **AO**

The 10-day SWAT school challenged Airmen and state law enforcement officers with a wide range of scenarios that were created to simulate past, present and potential real-world situations. Students were evaluated as teams and individuals in order to test as well as teach techniques that could save their lives in future events.



Airmen from Will Rogers Air National Guard Base in Oklahoma City communicate and move as a team to breach and clear a structure at Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Okla., during a Special Weapons and Tactics school held by the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office, Oct. 26 to Nov. 6, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux)



WHAT THE W.O.D.? | Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux

Members of the 137th Civil Engineering Squadron flex their mechanized muscles while using a Kubota SVL 90-2 skid-steer loader to clear a large concrete slab during a debris clearance training at Camp Gruber, Okla., Oct. 10-23, 2015. The 137 CES Airmen worked with 138 CES Airmen from Tulsa to build familiarization with the equipment and learn clearance techniques that could be used in case of a real natural disaster.

“Don’t be the same ... Be better.”

This article is about the Junior Enlisted Council from the 137th Special Operations Wing, its mission and the operations that supported that mission. For other uses, see Junior Enlisted Council (disambiguation).

[Senior Airman Brigette A. Waltermire]

The **Junior Enlisted Council** is the Will Rogers Air National Guard Base commander’s enlisted task force that has been involved in the yearly roster of events, from the base’s biannual 5K to fundraising for Operation Holiday Spirit.

MISSION

Codename: Rogue. Due to the highly sensitive nature of this assignment, the JEC will have full discretion over all aspects of this tasking. The mission, should the council choose to accept it, is to make contact with the surrounding base community.

OBJECTIVE

Continue “Don’t be the same ... Be better” mission by fostering positive public perspective within those surrounding base areas.

OUTCOME

The JEC executed this mission flawlessly and surpassed the command’s expectations.

The leadership of the JEC went outside of their usual yearly roster volunteerism efforts supplied by the chain of command and contacted resources off base to pursue diplomatic relations with the surrounding community.

After making contact, the council went under the radar as civilian volunteers. The Guardsmen were able to gain access to resident areas and proceed with operations, ranging from construction and 5k participation to ranching, to complete their final mission objective.

The following is a summary of their most recent operations.

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1.2.1 Hayden’s Superheroes

1.3 Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General’s Horseback Heroes (pg. 33)

JUNIOR ENLISTED COUNCIL



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Caroline E. Essex

Current Junior Enlisted Council Board Members. Shown are, from left to right, Airman 1st Class Chelsea R. Cummings (Vice President), Airman 1st Class Sarai Chavez (Secretary), Airman 1st Class Jessica G. Morrison^[1] (Treasurer) and Airman 1st Class Justin Bales (President).

^[1] Promotion to Senior Airman effective July 2015

MEETING INFORMATION

Date: Monthly/Sunday UTA

Time: Noon-1300

Location: Varies

Agenda: To develop young leaders and find unique volunteer opportunities that benefit the local community and positively represent members of the Oklahoma Air National Guard.



Volunteers, including those from the Junior Enlisted Council, hold up a wall frame in the mid-morning sun. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)

Codename: Groundbreaking

[Senior Airman Brigette A. Waltermire]

Los Rosa neighborhood, Oklahoma City: August 29, 2015

The pounding of hammers and whirring of saws by Air National Guard members and other volunteers broke the quiet of the late-August morning in the Oklahoma City neighborhood of Los Rosa.

Fourteen members of the 137th Air Refueling Wing volunteered with Habitat for Humanity to assist framing a house. The Will Rogers Air National Guard Junior Enlisted Council organized participation for the project that should be finished by the end of 2015.

“It’s important for the community to know that the Oklahoma Air National Guard is behind them and here to help anytime – not just in natural disasters,” said Senior Airman Jessica Morrison, JEC treasurer.

Volunteers showed up for shifts throughout the day, raising the walls by lunch and trussing the roof by midafternoon. After seven hours, the Guardsmen, other helpers and construction crew were able to see the result of their efforts – a completely framed house.

The work culminated three months coordination between the JEC and Habitat for Humanity representatives. The council is looking forward to continuing this partnership in the future, said Airman 1st Class Justin Bales, JEC president.

“This is just the beginning,” said Bales. “This is our first [project]. We’re just trying to get out in the community and establish relationships.”

This is not the first time the workers at Habitat for Humanity have worked with the military. Adrian Davalos, a construction assistant, said he and his construction team enjoy working with members of both the Army and Air National Guard.

“They’re always able to understand what we’re trying to accomplish,” he said. “It’s a blessing for us. They’re very hard-working people.”

The workers are employed by Habitat for Humanity to provide housing for low-income families, building around 50 houses each year throughout Central Oklahoma. Davalos said the volunteers are the reason they are able to build homes for people who work so hard to get houses for their families.

Habitat for Humanity requires prospective owners to invest “sweat-equity” hours in building their own home and others, according to their website.

Ana Suarez, the future homeowner of the site, said she had been volunteering for three months and is grateful for volunteers who will help complete her project faster.

“I feel so happy,” she said. “It’s not just me that they’re helping; they’re also helping my kids.” **AO**



Senior Airman Jessica Morrison, Junior Enlisted Council treasurer, hauls lumber across the construction site. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)



Volunteers from Will Rogers Air National Guard Base work together to raise a frame for a wall of the house. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)



Airman 1st Class Chelsea Cummings, Junior Enlisted Council vice president, measures the length of a board to prepare it for cutting. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)

Codename: Belonging

[Senior Airman Kasey M. Phipps]

Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark, Oklahoma City: Sept. 26, 2015

As the sun crested the Oklahoma City skyline, a team of runners in identical blue t-shirts bolted through the finish line of applauding hands to a table where they received chilled refreshments and glinting finisher medals.

Though the runners finished with smiles, the brightest belonged to Hayden Holmes, the Elmo-loving, 4-year-old whose grinning face shined from the front of the team's shirts.

The team, board members of the 137th Air Refueling Wing's Junior Enlisted Council, were three of the more than 15 people wearing blue "Hayden's Superheroes" t-shirts in support of the 2015 Down Syndrome 5K and Festival, Sept. 26, 2015, at the Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark.

The money raised by each of the 101 participating teams will be used to fund the Down Syndrome Association of Central Oklahoma, which creates specialty programs to benefit adults and children like Hayden who live with Down syndrome.

"I think it's a different volunteer event than we've ever done, and I think it's great to support something that needs support," said Senior Airman Jessica Morrison, JEC treasurer.

Airman 1st Class Sarai Chavez, JEC secretary, said she believes participating creates a cycle of volunteerism.

"Not only are we representing JEC, but we're also encouraging others to come be a part of it so they can participate," said Chavez.

The JEC president, Airman 1st Class Justin Bales, heard about the opportunity at Hayden's daycare, where his two sons also go.

"I called [Hayden's mother, Alicia Holmes,] up and said, 'We're doing it. We're in,'" said Bales.

Down syndrome, also called Trisomy 21, occurs most often when a person has an extra copy of the 21st chromosome, according to the Center for Disease Control. It is the most common chromosomal condition diagnosed in the United States, affecting about 6,000 newborns a year.

"When we first got our diagnosis, he was already 3 days old," said Alicia. "And my mom and I came down here when he was just a few months old ... I realized there's a community here for my son to belong to without judgment. He's completely accepted for who he is as a person, not just someone with Down syndrome."

By participating, the JEC helped to strengthen a community outside of the Guard.

"This is where he (Hayden) can belong, without question," said Alicia. "We are beyond honored that you (the OKANG) participated. It was completely unexpected and very overwhelming. I'm very proud." **AO**



The 137th Junior Enlisted Council runners pin numbers on one another before the start of the 2015 Down Syndrome 5K. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)



(From left to right) Airman 1st Class Sarai Chavez, Airman 1st Class Justin Bales and Senior Airman Jessica Morrison cross the finish line of the 2015 Down Syndrome 5K. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)



Members of the 137th Junior Enlisted Council pose with friends and family of Hayden Holmes after the 2015 Down Syndrome 5K and Festival. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)

Codename: Horseback Heroes

[Senior Airman Kasey M. Phipps]

Covey Creek Cattle Company, South Oklahoma City: Oct. 17, 2015

More than 160 people were milling about Gerry Shepherd's Covey Creek Cattle Company in South Oklahoma City for the 4th Annual Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General's Horseback Heroes, Oct. 17, 2015.

Among the crowd of 160 volunteers, were 14 Airmen from the Will Rogers Air National Guard Base's Junior Enlisted Council who were there to support both the event and the military community.

"I think it is important for members of the Oklahoma National Guard to know that we are here to support one another," said Senior Airman Jessica Morrison, JEC treasurer. "Whether it's helping out with kids at Horseback Heroes or in a time of greater need, it's important to build relationships across the board."

Close to 125 children, ages five to 16-years old, rode horses, played with farm animals, dressed mini horses, learned how to properly groom and care for horses, saw how horse feed is made, and tried their eager hands at roping.

JEC members performed various duties throughout the activities, including food preparation and serving, guiding horses around the arena and even providing the power behind bucking dummies.

"My favorite part was seeing the expressions on kids' faces when they first got on the horse," said Morrison. "It was great to see them having so much fun because of the many volunteers that made it happen."

Madi Current, a five-year-old girl who rode a horse named Midas, was one of the participants who rode a horse for the first time at the event. Her favorite part was flicking the reins while she rode Midas.

It was also the first time for Maj. Gen. Robbie Asher, the adjutant general for Oklahoma, to host the event since taking command of the Oklahoma National Guard in February. He said the event began three years ago as a way for children like Madi to forget about the stresses of having deployed parents and find support in similar children.

Madi's father and Kelly's husband, Lt. Col. Tom Current, a member of the 137th Air Refueling Wing Civil Engineering Squadron, has deployed three times, one of which caused him to miss the birth of Madi, the middle child of three.

"I think it's important for them to be around other military kids," said Madi's mother, Kelly Current. "It's like a family here, and I just wish everyone in the world was like this."

As the dust settled on the arena and the horses were lead back to their trailers, participants and volunteers like Madi and members of the JEC headed home with the knowledge that they are part of a larger, supportive family of the Oklahoma National Guard. **AO**



Volunteers for the 4th Annual Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General's Horseback Heroes use their muscle to simulate the bucking of a bull for a participant. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)



Oklahoma Army and Air National Guard Adjutant General, Army Maj. Gen. Robbie Asher, acts as a spotter for a participant of the 4th Annual Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General's Horseback Heroes. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)



Participants of the 4th Annual Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General's Horseback Heroes chase calves to retrieve the ribbons that are tied to the calves' tails. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward)



YIPPEE-KI-AY | Senior Airman Tyler K. Woodward

A Horseback Heroes participant lets the rope fly as she attempts to rope a practice steer during the 4th Annual Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General's Horseback Heroes event at Covey Creek Cattle Company in Oklahoma City, Oct. 17, 2015. The event was open for all Oklahoma National Guard dependents and included activities such as riding horses, playing with farm animals, dressing mini horses, providing general grooming and care, and learning how feed is made.

COMPTROLLER FLIGHT

Money management defines the role of the Comptroller Flight (CPTF). However, they are responsible for much more than simply guaranteeing Airmen receive their paychecks on time.

CPTF manages a budget just north of \$30 million that is applied to operations and maintenance costs, plus military personnel and pay. This is accomplished through the efforts of the flight's four offices – the financial analysis, financial services, quality assurance and comptroller offices.

The financial analysis office must ensure that each expenditure is necessary in carrying out an authorized function or will contribute materially to the completion of that function. Expenditures are deemed permissible through Air Force regulations and National Guard Bureau guidance based on appropriations law.

“Our job is to receive and properly execute the Wing Commander’s funds,” said Senior Master Sgt. Lindel Brinegar, 137 CPTF budget analyst. “We ensure that the money that has been allocated for the current fiscal year is being spent in that fiscal year, that the purpose is a legal purpose, and that the amount doesn’t exceed the authority we have.”

A daily report is run to track the status of funds for the base. The report breaks down how much money each squadron gets, how much they have spent and how much they have left for the year.

“We have 1,257 lines of accounting for this base,” said Brinegar. “This report rolls all that information into a few categories. So, we track the bottom line that way.”

A second office, financial services, processes all military, civilian and travel pay. Military pay requires several steps in order to complete the full transaction.

“For military pay, it depends on what you are doing,” said Senior Master Sgt. Jeannie Skeen, 137 CPTF financial superintendent. “If it’s drill weekend, we pay you [based] off the roll call. If you are TDY to a school, we have to start your base pay, subsistence allowance and housing allowance. If there are any other entitlements you are eligible for, like if you have dependents and are allowed family separation pay, that’s a separate transaction.”

Another office, quality assurance, reports on the health of all financial aspects of the flight based on compliance review guides established by the NGB. They are responsible for making sure Airmen’s paychecks are for the proper amount and that CPTF is producing auditable accounting records.

“If there are any issues with people not getting paid on time or if it’s not the correct amount, we do audits on the bills to make sure Airmen get their checks, or the money is refunded the next pay period,” said Tech. Sgt. Tamesha Rayes, 137 CPTF quality assurance manager.

Finally, 137 CPTF Commander Maj. Judd Kroener oversees the operation for the flight from the comptroller office, which ultimately makes him responsible for the execution of the base’s funds.

“I’m briefed by each office on how our records look,” said Kroener. “If there’s an irregularity, we’ll figure out why and go through the process we need to fix the situation.”

The CPTF will see some processes change with the new mission, said Kroener. Now, the financial analysis office will manage funds coming from the NGB as well as AFSOC, and classified missions will require a new way of establishing entitlements in the Defense Travel System.

Despite the changes, Kroener said he expects his Airmen to continue to provide top-notch service to WRANGB members.

“We’ll be challenged with the change, but our process won’t differ from anything we currently do,” he said. “So, I have no doubt we’ll continue to provide that consistent level of support that we always have.” **A0**





ATEL

CAT 10K ALL-TERRAIN FORKLIFT

STORY | Senior Airman Justin M. Creech
PHOTOGRAPHY | Tech. Sgt. Caroline E. Essex

Tested, Proven, Reliable
MISSION READY

Rain or shine, day and night, snowstorms or sandstorms, the **CAT 10K ALL-TERRAIN FORKLIFT** allows the Logistics Readiness Squadron to complete its mission both on base and in deployed locations.

The forklift has a 6-cylinder engine that allows the machine to carry loads up to 10,000 pounds. The Cat can also reach heights up to 8 feet while fully loaded and has a 360-degree viewing radius.

"It's one piece of equipment you can use in multiple situations to help you complete the mission," said Staff Sgt. Leslie Morton, 137 LRS vehicle operator.

The Cat's ability to lift such heavy loads comes in handy when loading cargo onto and from vehicles and aircraft. Logistics personnel must, at times, load 463L pallets and internal airlift/helicopter slingable container units onto aircraft like the C-130 Hercules, C-17 Globemaster and C-5 Galaxy that contain cargo ranging from food rations and munitions to medical supplies and military vehicles. The forklift's 6-cylinder engine is especially useful when moving these types of heavy loads.

"The engine provides the extra torque needed to move overweight palletized loads," said Morton.

The forklift can also be used to help move damaged or wrecked aircraft. Members of the 137th Crash Damaged Disabled Aircraft Recovery team removed wings from a Cessna Citation 550 aircraft in December 2014. Senior Airman Mitchell Spaulding, 137 LRS air cargo specialist at the time said the Cat's ability to operate off road contributed to the successful completion of the task.

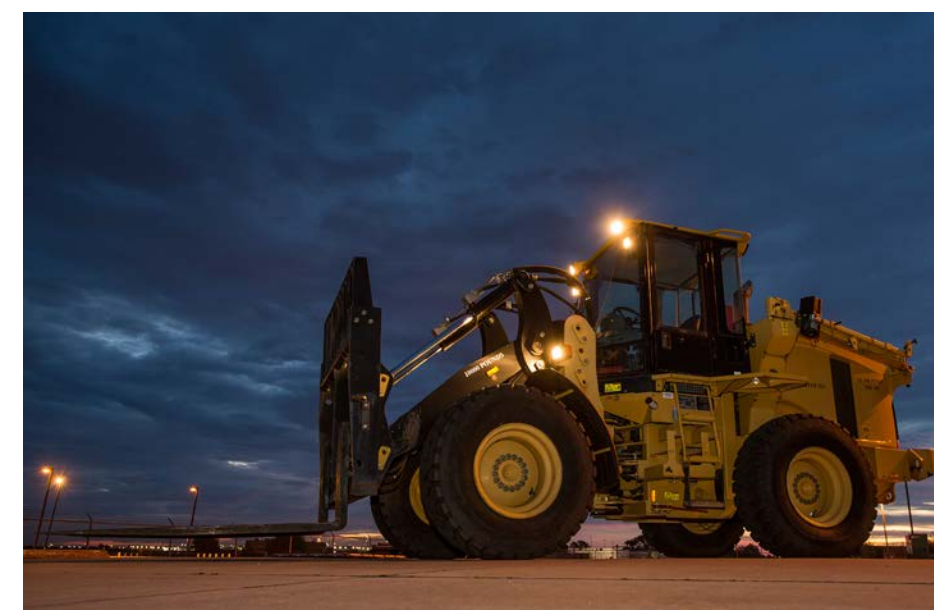
"We had to go across some soft ground at one point to pick up the body of the aircraft since the wings were too fragile to move," said Spaulding. "If we would've used the standard 10K, we wouldn't have been able to remove the body because the standard 10K would've sunk in the ground."

Morton recalls seeing the Cat help offload mail while he was deployed to Baghdad despite dealing with severe weather conditions.

"It never broke down offloading big loads of mail they had coming out of Italian and Russian planes," said Morton. "The post got to where it was supposed to be and in all kinds of conditions like snow, severe cold and sandstorms."

Even though the Cat 10K does not directly support the new mission at Will Rogers Air National Guard Base, it can still provide assistance in the event the MC-12 suffers damage and needs to be moved, said Morton.

"We're excited to see all of the different ways that we can use the Cat with the MC-12 and the new mission," said Morton. "It'll be new, in a good way." **AO**



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AIR | OBSERVER
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