

September 2010

The Lightning News

News from the front for Soldiers, families and friends of HHC, 359th Signal Brigade



Cover photo by Army Sgt. Monica K. Smith, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon

Images across Afghanistan

There is a beauty to the country for those who open their eyes to it



Army Spc. Ida Tate, 7th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Above, the sun begins to set in the mountains of Bagram. Left, in the winter months, the mountains of Afghanistan will be covered in snow. With such high altitudes, temperatures have been recorded to drop below minus 15 degrees Celsius. Below, a bird in Marmal rests on a wire observing the servicemembers.



Spc. Sheldon Pritchard, 392nd Expeditionary Signal Brigade



Spc. Lorenzo Ware, 982nd Combat Camera (Airborne)

Above, Soldiers from Task Force No Slack, convoy through the village of Daridam bringing supplies such as water and food to the Soldiers on the ground on June 30, 2010. Below, despite the dust, heat and gravel, this flower pops up near the signal headquarters in Bagram.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



John Tourelot, Joint NetOps Control Center



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Above, some sunsets in Bagram, Afghanistan, resemble something seen on a post card. Left, surprisingly, there are small villages in the valleys between vast mountains. Afghanistan's weather is characterized by dry hot cloudless summers and severe winters. The areas lying in the northeastern part of the mountains experience sub-arctic conditions having dry, cold winters.

HHC Soldier Feature:

Finding value through stress, humor

By Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Long hours, tense meetings, and paperwork representing millions of dollars all in a combat environment, are not generally most people's idea of fun. It really isn't for the Task Force Thunder resource management point of contact either, but after a few months in the position, he has been able to find the silver lining and humor to the relentless tasks of his mission.

As a trained signal officer, Philadelphia, Penn. resident Army 1st Lt. Vincent C. Cooper, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, which is located in Fort Gordon, Ga., never planned on serving as a resource management officer on his first deployment. As a matter of fact, it was downright disappointing with 14 years of signal training to not even put a finger on the equipment here, said Cooper.

However, all that signal training has not gone to waste in the resource management position. "When you can understand the intent and spell it out to someone very matter of fact, they get more motivated to help you," explained Cooper. Being able to clarify the use and importance of various signal equipment and/or parts and services that the task force needs to non-signal personnel, has allowed Cooper to excel at his job. "Even though I am not in the position I thought I would be in [on this deployment], it is strangely rewarding," said Cooper.

As a signal Soldier, Cooper said the supply and logistics section, or S4 shop, used to be intimidating to him. "There is a lot involved in getting stuff, and people don't understand that. I know I didn't." After spending countless hours learning how things are ordered, how supplies are distributed and how contracts are prepared, Cooper said he no longer fears the S4



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

shop.

Army Sgt. Maj. Mary Howard-Edwards, S4 shop sergeant major, HHC, 359th TTSB, thinks the resource management position, regardless of the pain, will be a good experience for Cooper. "I know he wants to be a company commander, and to be a good commander, you have to get out of your comfort zone."

The ability to try new and challenging tasks just proves that Cooper is up for leadership, said Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 William R. Wood, logistics maintenance officer. "Stepping outside your individual comfort zone and stepping into an arena that you have no idea where to start, will always improve and expand your horizons, and make you a better manager

See COOPER, page 19

Exclusive offer for families of deployed Military Members
September 1 – October 31, 2010

Send some love



to a loved one

free:

- sitting fees
- one traditional portrait sheet (additional traditional portrait sheets 3.99 ea.)
- **and** one portrait sheet shipped to your service member's APO

See a studio team member for details or visit
www.jcpportraits.com/portraitsoflove
for offer and more information.
Must show valid military I.D. at sitting.

plus **save 40%** on collections

JCPenney® Portraits

Bagram servicemembers, civilians honor 9-11



Service-members, government civilians and even military working dogs honor Sept. 11 by participating in the 9.11 kilometer *Patriots Run* in Bagram, Afghanistan on the morning of Sept. 11. The run T-shirt was designed by the 359th's own Spc. Jacob Riffe, intelligence analyst.

Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

By Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – More than 2,200 deployed servicemembers and civilians ran 9.11 km here Sept. 11 in remembrance of 9/11. Before starting the Patriot Day Run, U.S. Coast Guard 1st Lt. Jim Cullen, the Redeployment Assistance and Inspection Detachment team officer in charge, spoke to the large crowd in front of the airfield chapel about his experience on that infamous day.

The Coast Guard Reservist, who is also a New Jersey state policeman, knew the Coast Guard would be responding to the disaster, so even though he had not officially signed into his unit as a brand new second lieutenant, he took action.

“I threw on my Coast Guard uniform with my police department belt, and headed toward New York City,” he said.

When arriving on the scene, Cullen said he was approached by other “self-dispatched” junior enlisted servicemembers who asked for direction on what to do, and the reality hit him. “I realized that this was to be my first day on the job as a commissioned officer.”

What he and his thrown-together unit didn't know was as they set up security and a field hospital, two fellow Coast Guard Reservists had made it into the towers to help with the rescue efforts before it collapsed. Neither of them ever made it out, said Cullen.

With that, Cullen asked the runners to remember not only the victims lost, but also those Soldiers, police officers, firefighters and civilians who served this country both on that day and every day thereafter.

“As you run your race today, please draw strength and inspiration from those brave first responders and military members who put the welfare of others first and raced into those burning buildings to help,” he said.

As runners headed toward the start line, some wiped tears from their eyes with the refreshed memory of what happened that day. But that little bit of reminder was exactly the purpose in this run, said Allentown, Penn., resident U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Rodriguez, finance noncommissioned officer with the 374th Finance Management Company out of Wilmington, Del. “It is important to do things like this so we don't forget.”

“This is why we are here,” said U.S. Air

Right, Spc. Michael Cannon, chaplain's assistant, volunteers during the run by passing out medals to the first 200 runners.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Left, Sgt. Christina Dion, military photo journalist, 300th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, a subordinate unit to the 359th TTSB, documents the day.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Right, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Gary Williams, after the race. Lower middle right, Spc. Darcelyn Kimbro, human resources specialist, at the end of the run and happy.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Force Senior Master Sgt. Kevin Scanlin, an emergency manger with the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing out of Syracuse, N.Y. "Every place was affected by this. [We should be thankful] we are fighting the fight here and not at home."

And for those whose home is New York, this event was even more special, said U.S. Army Sgt. Melissa Gray, information systems team chief, 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, headquartered at Fort Gordon, Ga. "This was personal for me. [Brooklyn] New York is my home, and this was my way to honor them."

Being deployed to Afghanistan, where indirect fire attacks are a constant threat, added even more of a personal motivation for some participants, said Bessemer, Ala., resident U.S. Army Sgt. Jason Carter, an infantryman with the 187th Infantry, 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, N.Y. "It made it more significant because they are still trying to keep us down. We are still going to keep coming though. We aren't stopping."

Even runners who were in their teens on 9/11 had a strong reason for participating.

"The people of 9/11 should never be forgotten for what they went through, and what some are probably still going through," said Millen, Ga., resident U.S. Army Spc. Darcelyn Kimbro, 359th TTSB. "Their families will never forget. So, we shouldn't either."



Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cynthia Thomas

Above, Sgt. 1st Class Carl Turner, battle NCO, NetOps, finishes strong.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cynthia Thomas



Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cynthia Thomas



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Far left, Spc. Jerminthia Smith, human resources specialist, is all smiles. Left, Sgt. Shauna Phillips, human resources sergeant, has a good pace. Above, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cynthia Thomas, enterprise system administrator, cheers on the runners with the rest of her volunteer crew.

Brigade Highlights:

S2~The Security& Intelligence Section



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

S2, or the security and intelligence section, is responsible for collecting and analyzing intelligence information about the enemy to determine what the enemy is doing, or might do, to prevent the accomplishment of the unit's mission. Depending on the threat or potential effect, the S2 shop will disseminate this

information to the appropriate sections of the brigade in order to facilitate operational decisions. This section also gathers geographical information and weather related data that could affect the mission. At the unit level, the S2 is the unit's security officer, and the S2 section manages all security clearance issues

for the unit's personnel.

The S2 section includes the following personnel:

Army Maj. Benjamin Stevens, security officer, is a school teacher in Southern Indiana. He was cross-leveled to the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade in November 2009 for the purpose of this deployment.

After redeployment he plans to return to Indiana and continue teaching.

Army Staff Sgt. Chelsea Helsley, S2 noncommissioned officer, in charge was born and raised in Columbia, S.C. She was assigned to the brigade in February 2005. Helsley has a bachelor's degree in chemistry from University of South Carolina.

Her goal while deployed is to learn a new language.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Julio I. Vargas, S2 noncommissioned officer, is from San Jose, CA. Vargas is an active duty member from the 32 Intelligence Squadron out of Fort Meade, Md. and currently attached to the 359th TTSB for this mission at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

"I've volunteered my service here in Afghanistan to set the example for my two sons, and to serve my time for my country," said Vargas.

The S2 shop also has two Soldiers working directly for Combined Joint Task Force-101 as intelligence analysts.

Army Spc. Jacob Riffe, was born and raised in Augusta, Ga., and attended A.R. Johnson Magnet High School. Currently Riffe is a junior at Georgia Southern University majoring in Graphic Design.

After the deployment, Riffe will re-enroll at GSU for the upcoming 2011 fall semester and plans to contract with ROTC.

Riffe's daily functions include: reading reports about his assigned areas, which are provinces that border Pakistan; tracking reports and TTPs/trends on insurgents, (The goal is to figure out why and when they are going to attack places next.); briefing the commanding general when he needs to know the gathered intelligence in Riffe's assigned area of operation; and writing a daily intelligence summary article that gets produced and sent to IJC.

Army Spc. Tyler Dietz, of Richmond, Ga., works as the sole shift analyst for his multiple areas of focus. He provides daily, timely intelligence analysis to senior command and staff, including the command general for the 101st Airborne Division's Maj. Gen. Campbell.

At the young age of 20, Dietz plays an vital role in the Afghanistan war effort and take on more responsibility than many of his civilian peers his age.

Dietz is looking forward to redeploying, but understand there is a mission to finish first. "Sure, you have your good days and your bad days, but, in the end, you know you were making a difference here," said Dietz. "You just have to drive on and do what needs to be done."



Army Spc. Kristina L. Gupton, 982nd Combat Camera (Airborne)

359TH SOLDIERS PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN AIDE

Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan – Sgt. Natanisha Hersberger, supply sergeant, Joint NetOps Control Center, 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, helps an elderly Afghan woman to her appointment at the Egyptian hospital, Sept. 5. Hersberger, a member of Operation Care, and other volunteers, visited the hospital to help pass out clothes and shoes that have been donated to patients.

Operation Care is an organization at Bagram that distributes donated items from the United States to servicemembers at remote locations, local nationals visiting base hospitals, local schools and a number of humanitarian causes, like the Pakistan Flood victims.

Full story on Operation Care and how the 359th TTSB Soldiers are involved coming in an upcoming issue.

Hugs can ease pain in kids, adults

Blessings to all our 359th families!

I hope all is well and good with you. Please don't hesitate to e-mail me at nutsforicecream@yahoo.com if I can ever be of any help. We miss all of you!

My chaplain assistant, Spc. Cannon, and I hope to get outside the Airfield we are at in order to visit a school and possibly a hospital here in the local town of Bagram. We are hoping to give out school supplies and other needed goods. We also hope to bring some smiles to the faces of many children. I saw a picture the other day of one of the local Afghanistan children giving a hug to one of our American Soldiers. Most children love and appreciate hugs and meaningful touch from their immediate family.

One of the ways you can bring a smile to your child is to give them meaningful touch and lots of hugs. Touch, like a hug, supposedly causes the body to give off powerful endorphins, which brings about a very positive chemical brew, if you will. I started working at my dad's little home-spun party store some 40 years ago. It was always a highlight to go to work and get several hugs from my dad. Hugs tend to decrease a child's stress level. Hugs and a loving touch com-

municate a message of safety. I always felt safe when Dad was hugging me.

There is seldom a time when a mom or dad can both hug and yell at the same time. There is hardly ever a time when mom or dad can give a hug and spank your bottom at the same time.



Michelle Rumsey

Master Sgt. Steve Rumsey, NetOps noncommissioned officer in charge, with his boys, Ruben and David, before he makes his way back to Afghanistan after his leave in August.

It's awkward and doesn't work and hence our children feel safe and secure. There is also amazing comfort with a hug or loving touch. Ask a child who enjoys some touch if it feels good when mom puts her hand through her young child's hair, and they will surely say yes.

The comfort of a loving touch or hug eases whatever

pain ails us; the loving touch also reduces our anxiety. Touch is just plain powerful. It communicates unconditional love and honor. Is there anything more comforting than unconditional love? Also, the honor thing means that I am attaching high value to you because I am willing to extend myself to make you feel good through a loving touch and an ole fashion hug!

So when you are on the couch, bring your teenager over next to you and just put your arm around them. When your child is washing his/her hands, come up from behind them and give them a tickle and a hug. Tuck them into bed with a big hug! Hold their hand once in awhile when they talk to you. Sure, some of you may feel weird if you are not used to giving hugs and touching your child but it's never too late to start doing it a bit more. When they leave in the morning, give 'em a hug and tell 'em you love them. When they are playing their computer games, think twice about it, and then just go for it.

My wife will need a hug when I get back, and I look forward to her hugs as well. Grown-ups need hugs and meaningful touch as well!

Blessings to you all.

Chaplain Gary Williams

Brigade Commander:

How to 'fight the bear' everyday here, at home

Dear Families, Friends and Soldiers of Task Force Thunder,

As we cross over the half-way point in our deployment, I encourage our team in Afghanistan and you on the home front to make the most of your time - develop relationships and make friends.

Work out, get fit, take a course, read a book, learn something new. This should be a rewarding time for each of you. Even though some days may be difficult, wake up excited, facing each day with a positive outlook. You make the decision how you are going to respond to life's daily challenges.



Courtesy Photo

Here are a few thoughts on how to 'fight the bear' everyday:

1. *How you think is everything.* Be positive. Think success, not failure.
2. *Define your goals.* Write down your specific goals, and develop a plan to reach them.
3. *Take action.* Goals without action are just dreams.
4. *Never stop learning.* Get training, acquire skills and read every day.
5. *Be persistent – work hard.* Success is a marathon, not a sprint. Never give up.
6. *Learn to analyze details.* Get all the facts and input. Learn from your mistakes.
7. *Focus your efforts – always do your best.* Don't let others distract you.
8. *Be innovative.* Challenge assumptions. Think out of the box.
9. *Communicate with people effectively.*
10. Be honest and dependable – accept responsibility. If not, the other nine don't matter.

The key is, be in tune with what you want out of life, how you will achieve your goals, and how you want to create positive outcomes. If you want something, work hard for it – be persistent.

I encourage you to use this deployment (whether you are the deployed one or the one at home) to work on some of your goals, develop a new skill, become more self aware, and most importantly, wake up each morning prepared to beat the crap out of the bear.

Proud to serve each and every one of you,

Col. Chris Kemp
359th TTSB Commander

HHC Soldiers celebrating



Sgt. Shawn Bose
October 24

Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



1st Lt. Emile Hawkins
October 26

Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



1st Lt. Cedric Lloyd
October 24

Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Maj. David Schmitt
October 21

Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

October Birthdays!



1st Lt. Theodore Forbes
October 13

Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Mr. Scott Wisnieski
October 17

Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Todd Roy
October 16

Courtesy Photo



Spc. James Crooks
October 24

Look
whose
B-Day
is
coming
up

HERE AT BAGRAM...



Courtesy Photo

Honoring Sept. 11 - Army Col. Chris Kemp, commander, Task Force Thunder/359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, and Army Maj. Robert E. Nesmith, future operations officer in charge, Joint NetOps Control Center - Afghanistan, hold an American flag that was flown at a New York fire department from the 1980s until October 2006. Now, the flag travels the globe visiting deployed servicemembers and veterans groups in efforts to let us all never forget what we have and continue to fight for.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Above, Army Capt. Elijah McKenzie, networking officer, prepares to redeploy as part of the reduction effort. Below, Spc. Thomas Robinson, human resources specialist, performs as a disc jockey often.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Army 1st Sgt. Andree Lipscomb

Above, Army Sgt. Maj. Andrew Scheuermann, Joint NetOps Control Center sergeant major, demonstrates the, "I am talking to you" sergeant major stance.

**"Bravery is
being the only one who knows
you're afraid."**

- David Hackworth

Army Chief
Warrant
Officer 3
Roderick
Daniels,
property
book
officer,
appears to
be thinking
of home.
But then
again, he
is always
known
to have a
smile on
his face.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

FAMILY READINESS GROUP NEWS

359th TTSB's FRG announces a Children's Birthday Club

Please let us know the name, birth date, age, and address of your child.

The Family Readiness Groups would like to send them a special birthday card and little gift to let them know how important they are to us, their parent in Afghanistan, and to the unit.

We realize the sacrifice these children are making and want to let them know.

This information can be e-mailed to Mrs. Roberta Brunck at thebrunck1@gmail.com *All info is kept confidential.*

We are planning on starting this month and don't want to miss anyone!

Sorry guys, pets don't count.

Christmas Care Package Event

Please mark your calendar for Nov. 7. The 359th Family Readiness Group will be packaging, wrapping, and mailing Christmas gifts to each one of our soldiers in order to say thank you for your service, and we miss you all.

The event is being held at the drill hall from 10 a.m.-until.

Soldiers, please tell your family members about this event if you think they may be able to attend and help wrap packages.

We are requiring an RSVP because of lunch and space. We have family members that will be coming from Atlanta and various parts of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

We are collecting items for the care packages and family members can send items if they like. I don't want to give the list because then you will know what you are getting for Christmas!

For more information, please e-mail me at lisa.cooper3@us.army.mil or Donna Hamill at donna-ryb@optonline.net

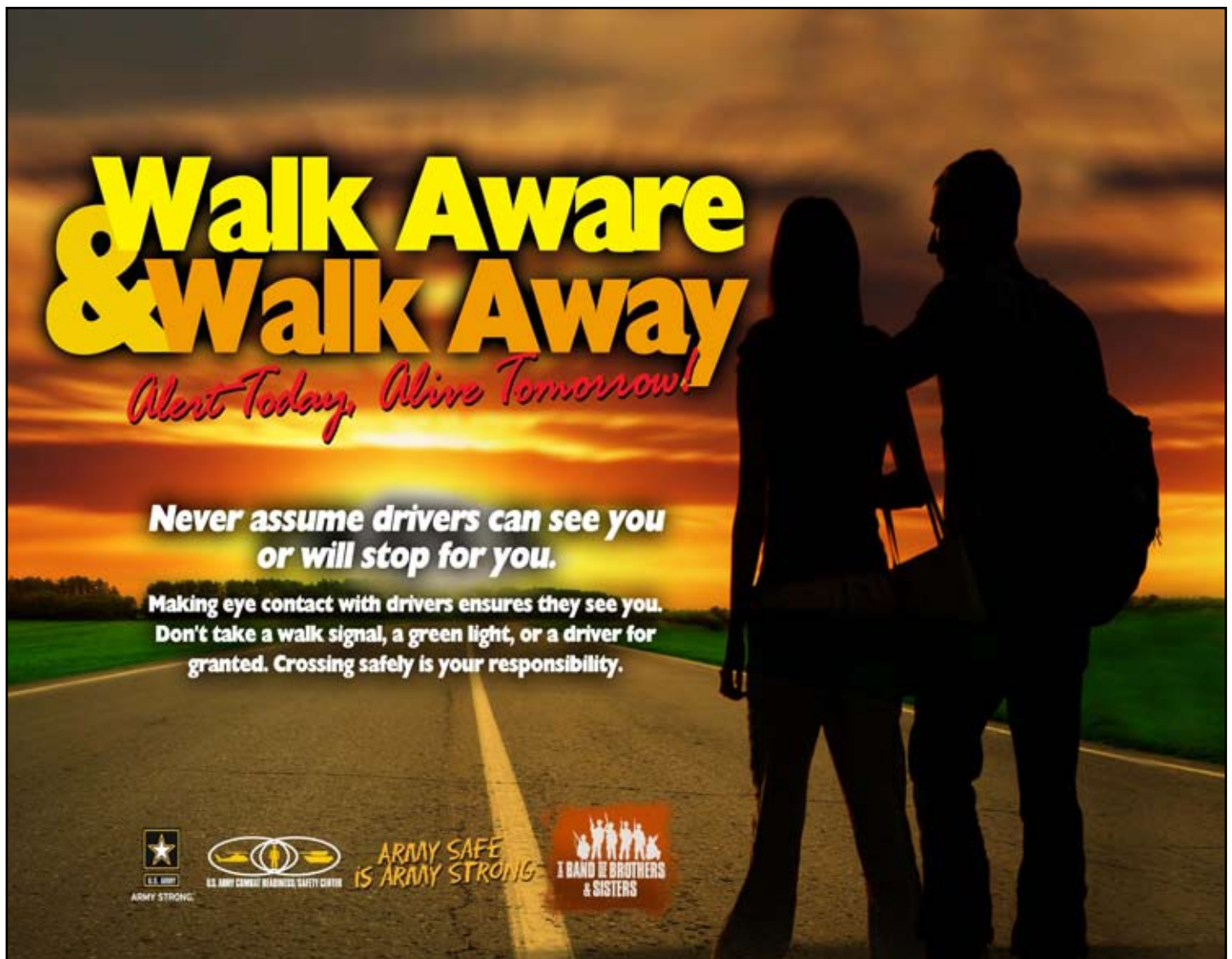
The cut-off date for care package items is Nov. 5.

With the changing seasons, it is time for the annual flu shot

For information on this year's
flu shot and prevention of flu see the
Center for Disease Control website :
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/flu vaccine.htm>

Note that this year's flu vaccine
has been reported to include
the H1N1 vaccine plus two other strain preventions.

**Task Force Thunder Soldiers, Airmen and DoD Civilians
all need to get their flu shots by Dec.1, 2010.**





Army Staff Sgt. Tommy Andrews, noncommissioned officer in charge, microwave line of site, meets some local Afghan boys at a checkpoint outside Bagram Airfield. "It was really cool to see the smiles on their faces," said Andrews as he explained the boys followed him around for a while to ask him questions in English. "I felt very comfortable around them."

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Orlan Sollano

HHC First Sergeant ~ Message to troops, families



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

Dear 359th Soldiers, friends and families,

I hope that everyone had a wonderful and SAFE Labor Day weekend.

No matter the day or occasion, safety is not just a leadership responsibility. It is EVERY Soldiers and EVERY family members. We have to keep each other safe.

As we come to the end of this fiscal year, I see the Soldiers, Airmen and contractors assigned to the 359th TTSB working hard. That includes all of you folks at the rear detachment too.

To the families, I would like to say thank you for all of the support you send everyone here. Without it, none of our efforts here would be possible. You are just as much a part of this mission as we are.

So, please know how much you are appreciated.

Sincerely,
1st Sgt. Andree Lipscomb
HHC First Sergeant

Promotion congratulations

Right, Army Chief Warrant Officer 3, human resources technician, speaks to the 359th TTSB formation after getting promoted to chief warrant officer 4.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Army Chief Warrant 2 Cynthia Thomas



Army Chief Warrant 2 Cynthia Thomas

Above, Army Pfc. Charles Smith, enterprise technician, gets promoted to specialist by Army Sgt. Maj. Victor Fernandez, Combined Joint Task Force 101st, who was Smith's battalion sergeant major when he was in advanced individual training. Right, Spc. Kimberly Howard, noncommissioned officer, resource management point of contact, is welcomed into the noncommissioned officer corps by Army Staff Sgt. Bakari Stepherson, movement noncommissioned officer, after getting promoted to sergeant.



Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

COOPER Continued from page 4

and leader.”

Since logistics can make or break a commander, “this [position] was probably a blessing in disguise for Cooper,” said Howard-Edwards.

Another blessing for Cooper, has been his sense of humor, said Howard-Edwards. “You have to have a sense of humor, especially in resource management.” In an office where tiny details can cost enormous amounts of money or lead to mission failure, there tends to be a lot of stress, said Howard-Edwards. “His day is stressful every day.”

So with that level of daily anxiety, Cooper’s natural humor has come in very handy. “Humor is a wonderful coping skill,” said Cooper. “If you can use it with a certain amount of decorum, it can help you face any stressful situation.”

This ability is a just one

of the reasons why Cooper is doing so well in a job he does not have experience in, said Wood. “You cannot take everything so seriously that you have no way to vent, and to use humor as a stress reliever is a key to success.”

Humor has helped Cooper flourish not only in his job though. It also helped him find the love of his life, he said.

On one particular date, Cooper said he was worried that his movie choice of “Nacho Libre” might not be the best. I thought she might think it was dumb, not funny, Cooper explained. But, when I looked over at her laughing and slapping her leg, “I knew at that moment it was a lock, and that I must have this wonderful creature in my life.”

Now married, dealing with a deployed husband, is not easy for his wife, Lisa, said Cooper, but she is hanging in there. “She makes it happen even though she is not happy,

and that is motivating for me to do the same.”

She stays busy with work and the family readiness group, but being separated is hard on us, he said. “I miss her a great deal. I can do without anything else, but not being close to her.”

To deal with the separation, Lisa and Cooper talk on the phone, write often and exchange care packages. One package included a wedding scrapbook with a number of humorous captions that Lisa put together for her Soldier. “It was probably the coolest thing I have got so far,” said Cooper. “She is hysterical. My wife is awesome,” he explained. “I use that word a lot, but she is truly awesome.”

So with the help of his awesome wife, his witty humor and exceptional mentors, Cooper said he is finding the path to exceed at an unknown and uncomfortable set of tasks that come with long hours.

However, Cooper said he wouldn’t complain if he found a little down time to work on his hobby of constructing a ship and HUMVEE out of cans. He said he won’t hold his breath on that happening though. “I am not one of those bored people who I hear so much about,” smiled Cooper.

In true Cooper humor, it is what it is, he said.

“It’s kind of disappointing [to not have much free time], but I think someone once told me, mission comes first, or something like that.”



Honor the past, support the future ~ VOTE

Elections are coming soon!

Get your absentee voting ballot at
www.fvap.gov