

Pacific Crossings

October 2009

The Official Newsletter of the 624th Regional Support Group



Taking care of the homefront

624th RSG family members meet while loved ones are deployed

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Humbled to be part of the team

You folks are the best of the best

*By Col. Robert "Randy" Huston
624th Regional Support Group
commander*

One thing I have no shortage of is pride for the men and women of the 624th Regional Support Group. Senior leaders, employers and members of the media have each mentioned numerous times how my face lights up and I swell with pride when I start talking about our folks. I can't help it! Our folks are the best of the best, and I'm humbled to be part of the team.

Just recently, I was given a last-minute suspense to put together a package for the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. I knew our people had more than earned it and I wanted to make sure that you all got the credit and recognition that you deserve. As I looked through our units' history reports for the last two years, it just reinforced that belief. Here's just a sampling of the 624th RSG's outstanding accomplishments:

- In 2007, RSG members were selected for five MAJCOM awards, two NAF awards and one AF award for Air Force Logistics Readiness Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

- In 2008, RSG members won three MAJCOM awards & one AF award for Air Transportation Activity of the Year

- Inspections: 724th Aeromedical Staging Flight Health Services Inspec-

tion -Excellent, 624th Civil Engineer Squadron(first ever total force, Joint Operation Readiness Inspection) - Excellent, 624th Aeromedical HSI - Outstanding

- Over 300 members deployed in the last two years in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM and NOBLE EAGLE. 624th CES is still deployed in support of the Army on a JET (Joint Expeditionary Tasking) mission. (So you could say they're our JET Jocks!) I've welcomed back members of the 48th Aerial Port Squadron, and I'm getting ready to send out members of the 44th APS. And of course our Med folks are stepping up to serve wherever they're needed.

- Incredible numbers of our folks are performing volunteer work, excelling at their jobs and winning distinguished graduate awards, such as the John L. Levitow award.

It may seem hard to believe, but that's only a small sampling of the outstanding things our folks are doing day-after-day, year-after-year!

I'd like to end by letting everyone know how inspirational they've been to me, and that your positive, can-do attitudes and selfless sacrifices energize me and make me even more determined to do whatever it takes to support you and to champion your efforts.

You all are truly my heroes!

Pacific Crossings

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Action Line

The Action line is your direct line to the 624th Regional Support Group Commander. If you have worked through normal channels and are not satisfied with the answer, the Action Line is your opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions about the subjects of concern to the 624th RSG community.

You may contact the action line at 624RSG.PA@Hickam.af.mil.

Please include your name and phone number in case additional information is required. Action lines of general interest will be published in Pacific Crossings while others will be answered by phone.

On the Cover

Donna Torres and Arsenia Belong, 624th Civil Engineer Squadron key spouses, participate in the 624th RSG Airman and Family Readiness Center Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program mid-deployment event held Sept. 27, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

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(Photo by
Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel)



Kandis Bainter, Military and Family Life Consultant, talks to spouses about deployment stress and the services she offers at the 624th Regional Support Group's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program event Sept. 27. (Photos by Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel)

On the home front

By Staff Sgt. Erin Smith
624th Regional Support Group

Some of the Air Force's most important members have never packed their bags to deploy in support of a contingency operation, nor have they ever donned the uniform. Instead, their job is on the home front. They are military spouses and their contracts begin on their wedding day.

The 624th Regional Support Group reached out to some of these spouses Sept. 27 during a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program mid-deployment event at Hickam Air Force Base. About 28 spouses of deployed 624th Civil Engineer Squadron members were at the event, designed to minimize stresses of military service encountered as the result of deployment and family separation.

The YRRP, run by the 624th RSG Airman and Family Readiness Center, offers information and support to military spouses during a deployment. It also helps educate members and families about resources available to assist them and connecting members to service providers before, during and after deployments.

The resources include Military One Source, financial planners, chaplains,

social workers and psychologists available to offer counseling.

"There are so many services the family members don't even know are available to them," said Chief Master Sgt. Brian Wong, 624th RSG command chief. "This was an opportunity to share information, experiences and feelings. It's therapeutic to talk and share experiences among one another. It's important for us to support the families, an important part of the three-legged stool of Reservists have to support, which includes Reserve duty, civilian jobs and family members."

Key spouses from each unit help make the YRRP successful. Their job is to reach out and make direct monthly contact with the spouses of deployed members.

"For many of the spouses, this is their first deployment so they are anxious about it," said Arsi Belong, a key spouse with 624th CES whose husband is currently deployed. "We reach out to them to let them know they have someone to talk to who is going through the same thing."

Though the event provided much-needed information to these spouses of deployed members, it was also sprinkled with humor – one thing that can help make deployments bearable.

The keynote speaker was motivational speaker, Michelle Cuthrell, an Army spouse from Ft. Lewis, Wash., and author of the book, "Behind the Blue-Star Banner: A Memoir from the Home Front." She opened by holding up a sign that read, "I am an Army wife."

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Michelle Cuthrell, author of "Behind the Blue-Star Banner: A memoir from the Home Front" speaks to spouses about deployments. She is an Army spouse who has been through deployments in the past and offered advice about surviving deployments.

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Claire Nakatsuka hands out a Operation Military Kids backpack to Rosebel Belong, daughter of deployed 624th Civil Engineer member Senior Master Sgt. Rolando Belong. OMK helps support children and youth impacted by deployment. (Photo by Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel)

What's your super power?" She went on to explain the thankless job and the additional duties that come with being a military spouse, straddling the fence between military and civilian life. She talked to the spouses about surviving deployments and let them know that, "You don't marry a fighter without a soldier somewhere within yourself."

"Refuse the victim mentality," she

said. "Allow them to do the job they have been training for during their careers. We spouses have to do the job we too have been training to do."

She talked to them about setting goals to accomplish while their husbands are gone and to picture themselves running to embrace him as he steps off the plane.

Though spouses have to pick up

much of the slack around the household when the other half is deployed, they are not the only ones left behind. The children of deployed members also see marked changes in their lifestyle.

"We have to do a lot more chores and take on more responsibilities and get better grades," said Rosebel Belong, 16, whose father is deployed to Afghanistan. "Mom is harder on us. She wants to keep us in check and in the safe zone since Dad is far away."

For teens like Rosebel, sports and extracurricular activities like mock trial, Lacrosse and Civil Air Patrol help fill her days while her father is away.

"We talk at 6:30 a.m. on Skype and whenever we get home, he always has perfect timing," she said of his phone calls. "I'm always like, 'Wow, how'd you know we just got home?' We try to talk to him at least once a day"

She also tries to send him care packages full of his favorite treats often.

"We really miss our dad and I want him to know that," she said. "I don't count the days because it makes it feel longer. I just keep looking forward. I don't want to be dreadful but instead, want to be happy through the experience."

For more information on future Yellow Ribbon events, contact Master Sgt. Janet Hudson, 624th RSG A&FRC Superintendent at 448-3819.

September promotions



Col. Robert "Randy" Huston, 624th Regional Support Group commander watches as newly promoted Lt. Col. Eric Peebles, 48th Aerial Port Squadron, deputy commander, has his silver oak leaves pinned on by his girlfriend Ms. Donna Conlon in a ceremony held during the September drill weekend. (Photo by Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel)

In addition to Colonel Peebles the following were also promoted in the month of September.

AIRMAN

Zestony Calara

AIRMAN 1st CLASS

Ricky Hipolito

SENIOR AIRMAN

Monique Baza

Josephine Superales-Garrido

STAFF SERGEANT

Daniel Asato

Kerry Guerrero

Jesse Marquez

Shanette Marquez

Khrysallis Santos

MASTER SERGEANT

Richard Luzanta

SECOND LIEUTENANT

Valerie Mafnas

Warrior of the Month



Felemon Torres

Technical Sergeant
48th Aerial Port Squadron
Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii

JOB TITLE: Personnelist

JOB DESCRIPTION: Processing paperwork: updating and/or coordinating EPR's/ OPR's, Awards and Decorations, Reenlistments, make orders through AROWS(Air Force Reserve Order Writing System). Also, signing members in during UTA, updating UTAPS.

HOMETOWN: Born and raised in Kalihi but reside in Waipahu.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UNIT: "The people. We have some characters that belong either in a movie, on stage at the The Improv or on a reality TV series. Some of them should probably be on 'Cops.'"

FAVORITE THING ABOUT JOB: "Just getting to know everyone. This job is all about accountability, baby. Being a personnelist may be a challenge for some but for me, it's just another way of making new friends and at the same time, making sure that everyone's accounted for. "

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: "Fun to be around once you get to know me. "

SUPERVISOR SAYS: "Tech. Sgt. Torres is a highly motivated individual. An outstanding performer who demonstrates the ability to tackle all challenges and exceeds all work ethics on a consistent basis. Community supporter, volunteers with Hickam Youth Program coaching children of all ages in Basketball, Baseball and Volleyball." - Master Sgt. Abner Ganigan.

OPSEC Brief

The advent of the Internet, incorporating the vast amounts of information that can be garnered just by surfing the Web, has made it imperative that Airmen and their family members pay special attention to the information placed in public and even private forums there.

Internet forums such as MySpace and Yahoo groups are excellent arenas to meet new people in a new duty location. The intent of these sites and the people starting these groups is to inform and have a place to engage in conversation with a broad audience on a variety of topics.

Too often the information posted in these forums included dates of spouse deployments, locations of deployments, specific squadrons where they work and return dates. In some extreme cases, agents have found individuals posting their addresses and even detailed information about family members.

From an operation-security standpoint, it is imperative for the warfighter to feel comfortable knowing his safety and the safety of the mission has not been compromised. Terrorist organizations use Internet resources much like the intelligence world. They collect, analyze and put pieces of a puzzle together to give them a full perspective of what the Air Force and the United States are doing to combat them. The responsibility of Airmen and their families is not to give them these pieces. Missions fail and lives are endangered when OPSEC is compromised.

Times that spouses are gone during the day or if they

are gone at all, specific addresses, telephone numbers and detailed personal and family information are very valuable from the criminal viewpoint. Criminals are just as calculating as terrorists and collect and target this information. People can see examples of this daily just from reading the newspaper and turning on the local news.

As warfighters, Air Force members want to be sure their families are safe and not potential criminal targets. It is being comfortable with the situation at home that allows the deployed member to concentrate on the mission at hand and safely return home.

Some basic OPSEC and Internet practices are to:

- Know your groups, forums and owners of the groups.
- Post no information on a spouse's location, dates leaving or returning from a deployment -- this is need-to-know information.
- Don't post personal information such as addresses, phone numbers, specifics about children and family members on public forums.
- Use groups or forums that have moderators. These middlemen can usually aid in flushing out potential OPSEC breaches or personal information before messages get posted

If you are concerned with information that you have posted on the Internet, please call any agent at your local OSI detachment.

CE in Afghanistan: arrival and camp life

By Lt. Col. Rich Parkinson
624th Civil Engineer Squadron
Commander

Chaper 1: Arrival in Afghanistan

We left Wisconsin on Sep 3 and were finally on our way. We stopped at Pope AFB and picked up over 100 Army Airborne soldiers and then onto Norfolk where we picked up another 80 personnel. In all, we had over 250

Americans heading off to serve the greatest country in the world. We stopped in Ireland for fuel and ended up staying for nearly nine hours waiting for weather to clear so we could fly onto Kyrgyzstan. After a couple of days in Kyrgyzstan, we headed into Afghanistan and were met by quite a few CE folks with HUGE smiles on their faces. They left two days later to head home after their successful tour of duty and left us our own unique challenges.

We're in the midst of changing from several Field Engineering Teams (FETs) and a separate Utilities Detachment into one Expeditionary Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force (BEEF) squadron. I'm sure the folks will rise to the challenges and I know they're relieved to finally be getting their hands into their tool bags.



B-huts

Chapter 2: Camp Life

We made it to Bagram Air Field, or BAF as we commonly call it, and are developing a routine. We have moved into B-huts -- our home for the next six months.

A B-hut is made of plywood and will probably be chilly in the winter. There



Brig. Gen. Timothy Byers, the Air Force Civil Engineer meets with deployed 624th CES members while on a visit to Bagram Air Field. (Courtesy photo)

are six to eight people in each B-hut and we've been able to find creative ways get all of our gear into our new homes.

You may notice in the photo we are surrounded by mountains...and there's snow on some of those peaks!

We quickly turned our Utility Detachment and Field Engineering Team into an Expeditionary Prime Beef Squadron and the folks inventoried their supplies and settled into



their shops. We also had a visit from Brig Gen Byers, the Air Force Civil Engineer, and his Chief Enlisted Manager, CMSgt Abbott.

We showed them around BAF and discussed our construction projects and challenges. Some of us were invited to lunch and were able to discuss issues with the top civil engineers in the Air Force. All in all, a busy first two weeks.

Till next time, thanks for your continued support and prayers.



Deployed 624th Civil Engineer Squadron utility system specialists working on a "black water" or sewage issue. (Courtesy photo)



Grad Night

Chief Master Sgt. Brian Wong is on hand to congratulate Master Sergeants Alan Aspera and Kimberly Edwards upon their graduation from Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy Sept. 15 at Montgomery-Gunter Air Force Base, Ala. (Courtesy photo)

Guam medics support National Preparedness Month

*By Staff Sgt. Aizza Alisasis
724th Aeromedical Staging Flight*

Members of the 724th Aeromedical Staging Flight participated in the annual National Preparedness Month activities held Sept. 26 at the Agana Shopping Center, Guam.

The Reservists joined key agencies including the Guam Police, Fire Departments, Guam Homeland Security and Office of Civil Defense in providing emergency and disaster tips and demonstrations to the public.

The theme of the event was “Be Ready, Stay Ready” advising Guam residents to be mentally and physically ready to face adversities such as tropical storms, typhoons, and earthquakes, which are common to the island.

Several health screening stations were manned by the 724th ASTF’s medical technicians, dental technicians, administrative staff and nurses. Among the services provided were body mass index (BMI) calculations, blood pressure readings, blood glucose monitoring and nurse counseling.



Tech. Sgts Mae Estoy and Zenobia Lynn administer blood glucose tests. (Courtesy photo)

Also, 724th ASTF members set up a Drug Demand Reduction table which displayed pictures of commonly abused drugs and mock paraphernalia as well as colorful mood pencils, pens and heart-shaped stress balls.

The Reservists answered inquiries and gave important lessons on how being drug-free helps to promote health and a heightened sense of preparedness for emergencies and disasters.



Welcome back!

Senior Master Sgt. Mark Hatori reunites at last with wife Cindy, daughters Kiana and Kauanoe and father-in-law Kenneth Amimoto. Sergeant Hatori and six of his fellow aerial porters from the 48th Aerial Port Squadron arrived at Honolulu airport Sept. 28 following a four-month deployment to Joint Base Balad. They were the last group to return of a 25 member team which deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom to the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron to handle baggage pallets, general cargo, special handling cargo, rolling stock and aerospace ground equipment. (Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel)

UTA Schedule

Hickam

October 3-4
November 7-8
December 5-6
January 9-10

Andersen

October 24-25
November 21-22
December 12-13
January 23-24



*By Senior Master Sgt. Leony Macapagal
48th Aerial Port Squadron
First Sergeant*

Females will not wear shades of nail polish that distinctly contrast with their complexion, that detract from the uniform, or that are extreme.

Some examples of extreme colors include, but are not limited to, purple, gold, blue, black, bright colors like fire engine red, and florescent colors.

Nail polish will be limited to one color. French manicures are allowed. Nail length will not exceed 1/4 inch past finger tip.