

Pacific Crossings

May 2009

The Official Newsletter of the 624th Regional Support Group



Deployment:

Aerial porters bid farewell, leave for Iraq

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*By Lt. Col. Randall Honke
48th APS commander*

The upcoming Memorial Day weekend is the beginning of the 101 critical days of summer campaign, which runs through Labor Day.

Historically, this period has seen an increase in the number of fatalities associated with sports, recreation and motor vehicle travel.

Last summer was the safest in the last decade for the Air Force, with 16 fatalities. This is down from a previous low of 17 deaths in 2007. The average for the last decade was 24 deaths during the summer.

So, the awareness campaign is working, but any loss of life is too many. Whether traveling at excessive speeds, driving while fatigued, failing to fasten seatbelts, drinking then driving, or not using personal flotation devices, the sad news is that all of these mishaps were preventable.

The summer season is known for graduations, vacations, more recreational activities and weddings. The longer days provide the opportunity to enjoy more recreational activities during the day, but the increase in temperature makes it a necessity to keep hydrated. The longer summer days also allow us to spend more time at the beach and enjoy the ocean.

Death by drowning is of tremendous concern in both Hawaii and Guam. When enjoying the beach, it is important to assess the risks, be aware of the conditions and respect the ocean.

Graduations, weddings and other celebratory events often go hand in hand with the consumption of alcohol. Drink responsibly. Drinking and driving don't mix; so if you drink, don't drive. I know that this may sound like the same old

rhetoric, but statistics show that more Air Force personnel will suffer injuries and deaths from motor vehicle accidents than from combat. At both Andersen and Hickam Air Force Bases, Airmen Against Drunk Driving will give military identification card holders, including dependents, a ride home if they are intoxicated and cannot drive on Friday and Saturday evenings from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m.

We all have to make choices, the key to the 101 critical days of summer campaign is that we make responsible choices and use sound judgment when making these choices. It is taking operational risk management to our daily lives. Issues such as responsibility, common sense and the proper respect for conditions must be considered.

Lastly, we must look out for our fellow Airman by being a good wingman. If your buddy has had too much to drink, by all means, don't let him or her get behind the wheel. Also, look out for whether your fellow Airmen or those around you exhibit reckless or dangerous behavior.

Our nation's economic crisis has added additional stress to the lives of most Americans; behavioral changes may be a cry for help.

As General Stenner stated in his e-mail to all Air Force Reserve Command members, "Know the indicators of a potential suicide and be involved. It is equally important that every member realize that it is fully acceptable and appropriate to seek professional help."

The wingman culture has played a key role in the improvement in the 101 critical days of summer program. By being responsible, using common sense, making sound decisions and looking out for our fellow Airmen, we can enjoy our summer without losing any of our Airmen or family members.

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

On the Cover

Master Sgt. Stephen Yim gets one last hug from his son, Seiya, at Honolulu International Airport May 12 before leaving for a four-month deployment to Iraq. He and 25 of his fellow Reservists are tasked with running aerial port operations at Joint Base Balad. Story on page 5.

(Photo by Capt. Christy Stravolo)



Commander's first visit to Guam: Meets Reservists, employers and AF partners

Col. Robert "Randy" Huston, 624th RSG commander, makes an appearance on "The Breakfast Show" with host Ray Gibson on K-57 Radio in Guam April 21. Colonel Huston spent the week visiting the group's Reservists, meeting some of their full-time employers and talking with key active duty and Guard leadership about how the Reserve might do more to help better accomplish the Air Force mission. (Photo by Capt. Christy Stravolo)

*By Capt. Christy Stravolo
624th RSG Public Affairs*

The new commander of the 624th Regional Support Group met with the unit's Guam based Reservists and some of their employers during a weeklong visit April 21-26, 2009.

This was Col. Robert "Randy" Huston's first time visiting Guam since taking command of the group in January.

"The focus of this trip was to meet the Reservists, thank them for their service, and learn more about what I can do to help them accomplish their mission," said Colonel Huston. "I also wanted to meet with some of their civilian employers because the employer is a key enabler to our success. Our Reservists can't do the mission without the continued support of their employers," he said.

Colonel Huston met with Guam Police Department Chief Paul Suba

and Guam Public School System Superintendent Dr. Nerissa Bretania-Shafer Wednesday. Both agencies employ more than 30 Reservists from the 44th Aerial Port Squadron and 724th Aeromedical Staging Flight, which fall under the 624th RSG.

"Meeting with Chief Suba and Dr. Bretania-Shafer gave me an opportunity to thank them for their continued support," said Colonel Huston. "I also let them know that I understand the difficulties they face when the Air Force mobilizes Reservists who are working for them."

Nearly a dozen Guam Reservists are currently deployed to locations including Qatar, Iraq, Germany and Kuwait. More than 90 members of the 44 APS - almost half of the squadron - are slated to deploy in support of contingency operations in Iraq or Afghanistan in early 2010.

During their meeting, Chief Suba

explained to Colonel Huston that despite the unexpected mobilizations, the Air Force Reservists working for Guam's police department bring tremendous value to the organization.

"These folks are getting excellent training and they bring not only that but the professional attitude and character that is well proven throughout the military to their jobs with the police department," Chief Suba said.

Dr. Bretania-Shafer also said she recognized the value Reservists bring to their jobs within the education system.

"I can tell a difference in the way they address problems and their follow through," said Dr. Bretania-Shafer.

During future visits to Guam, Colonel Huston plans to meet as many

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employers as he can including those who employ a large number of the group's Reservists.

"More than a dozen of our members work for the Guam Fire Department and we also have a significant number who work for Continental Airlines and Guam Power Authority," said Colonel Huston. "I hope to develop good relationships with all of these employers so they know they can call me at any time if they have an issue they need to discuss."

The trip also afforded the commander his first opportunity to talk to the Guam media about the group's Reservists.

"I've found that the local community is very interested in who we are and what we do," said Colonel Huston. "It's important that we get the word out about the incredible job our Reservists are doing supporting both the Air Force Reserve and active duty missions."

Members of the 44th APS work alongside active duty members supporting aerial port operations at Andersen, which is one reason why Colonel Huston also paid a visit to key military leadership on the base.



Guam Police Department Chief Paul Suba talks with Colonel Huston about the advantages of having Air Force Reservists like Chief Master Sergeant Maurice Sayama (right) in his department. Chief Sayama, an air freight superintendent for the Reserve, is currently a lieutenant with the police department where he has been working for 23 years. At least a dozen other Guam Air Force Reservists are employed by the GPD. (Photo by Capt. Christy Stravolo)

"We have a tremendous relationship here at Andersen with our total force partners in the active duty and Guard, and I hope to explore how the Reserve can do more in conjunction with our partners to better accom-

plish the Air Force mission," he said.

Colonel Huston plans to make his next trip to Guam in June.



Lt. Col. Steven Shinkel, 734th Air Mobility Squadron commander, briefs Colonel Huston on the aerial port mission April 21 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. Reservists with the 44th Aerial Port Squadron, which falls under the 624th RSG, work alongside active duty Airmen from the 734th AMS to accomplish the Air Force mission. (Photo by Capt. Christy Stravolo)

48th APS bound for Iraq

Families and friends came out to say “goodbye” as members of the 48th Aerial Port Squadron left for a four-month deployment to Iraq.

Senior Master Sgt. Mark Hatori (right) spent a last few moments with his wife, Cindy, and daughters, Kiana and Kauano, before departing Honolulu International Airport May 12. Sergeant Hatori and 25 of his fellow Reservists are tasked with running aerial port operations at Joint Base Balad.

Most of the team arrived in Iraq a few weeks ago, including Capt. Kathleen Izon who is the commander of the Distribution and Deployment (D&D) Flight, which falls under the 332 Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron at Joint Base Balad.

Captain Izon reports the following observations on what the deployers can expect when they arrive:

“With temperatures on the rise more and more Airmen who are deployed here are looking for ways to cool off! Our Aerial Porters freeze their water bottles and take it with them as they work,” she said. “Our CHU (containerized housing unit) has air-conditioning units that run almost 24/7. The Olympic pool has opened up for airmen to use and cool off in. Although it’s getting hotter, we’ll find ways to keep cool and focus on the mission!” (Photo by Capt. Christy Stravolo)

Read about the 48th APS deployment by visiting Captain Izon’s blog on the 624th RSG homepage:
<http://www.4af.afrc.af.mil/units/624rsg/blogpage.asp>



CE gears up for mobilization

Over the next few months, the 624th Civil Engineer Squadron will send more than a third of its members on deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Lt. Col. Rich Parkinson, 624th CES commander, expects he and most of his Airmen will be wearing heavy protective gear not typically worn at home station.

That’s part of the reason why Colonel Parkinson led his squadron on a 2-mile march in protective armor during the April drill weekend.

“I wanted to start acclimating them both mentally and physically to the idea of wearing body armor,” said Colonel Parkinson. “Also, I wanted to instill in them a warrior spirit.”

CE members will spend their remaining time on Hawaii getting their medical records in order and accomplishing ancillary and weapons training. They’ll also attend Combat Skills Training at Ft. McCoy, Wis., in August before taking off for the desert. (Photo by Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel)

Medics provide health care to remote Alaska

By Maj. Jennifer Sur-Watanabe
624th Aeromedical Staging Squadron

Maj. Jerelyn Pedrina and I represented the 624th Aeromedical Staging Squadron at this year's Operation Arctic Care, a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care, health education and veterinary services to underserved people in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

More than 200 service members (including 23 Air Force reservists) traveled to Bethel, Alaska—the staging point of the mission. From there, we were flown by the Army in Blackhawk helicopters to 11 different villages in the remotest regions of western Alaska. I was assigned to Atmautluak, which is 20 miles north of Bethel. The population of Atmautluak is 284 and they speak English and Yupik, which translates as “real human.”

There was no running water in the homes or in the clinic. During our deployment, we lived in the school, which had running water and showers but the water would run out and showers were a luxury. We ate MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) for all our meals while in the village and walked to and from the clinic in weather that was zero to 40 degrees below with the wind chill. I wore two sets of thermal underwear with my parka in an attempt to keep warm.

Our team consisted of six core members: two Navy reservists, two Air Force reservists and two Air Force active duty. For two days of the exercise we had a physical therapist, an audiologist and an Army veterinarian team.

I worked with Doctors Gerald Delk and Rock Park in the Atmautluak clinic and treated 90 patients ranging in age from six-months old to people in their 80s.

Most of the patients we saw were treated for chronic illness such as hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, chronic back pain and migraine headache. We treated a few acute problems such as abscesses and urinary tract infection. We saw two infants for respiratory infections; we had to have them transported via bush plane to Bethel Hospital.

I was told by the health aide that the children in Atmautluak start chewing



This photo of me was taken on our first day at the Atmautluak clinic. It was 8:30 a.m. and a 10-minute walk from our sleeping quarters in sub-zero temperatures with the wind chill. This was the norm. The village is on the tundra and there are no mountains nearby. The terrain is flat. While we were there, the village activity started at around 10 a.m. due to the darkness. The clinic had an office, two exam rooms and a storage/rest room with no running water. Everyone gets around on snow machines. You can see one in the background next to the clinic. (Courtesy photo)

tobacco at age four or five. So, I also taught oral care and the harmful effects of chewing tobacco to all the students in Atmautluak School, which included kindergartners up to 12th graders.

We saw 354 patients and performed 627 procedures. The vet performed 185 procedures on 84 animals. In total, we provided medical services to roughly 77 percent of the Atmautluak population.

This was a wonderful experience for me. I have a new understanding and appreciation for the native population of Alaska, the hardships they endure each

winter, and how we take daily conveniences for granted.

One reason for establishing Arctic Care 15 years ago was to enable medical personnel to operate in a joint environment. Each branch of the military takes turns leading the annual training. The Army was in charge last year, the Navy led this year's training, and the Air Force is slated to lead the exercise in 2010.

I encourage anyone who has the opportunity to volunteer. I would definitely do it again.



This photo was taken right before our flight from Bethel, Alaska, to Atmautluak at the Army National Guard helo pad. Next to me is Chief Daniel Wondrusch, a Navy reservist from California who was our senior ranking enlisted member. Chief Wondrusch is a medic for the Navy and an operating room technician in his civilian career. We had just finished assisting with loading our gear and supplies on the Black Hawk when this picture was taken. The helicopter pad was like an ice skating rink. It was covered with a layer of ice and very slippery. (Courtesy photo)

Warrior of the Month



Jewel Potoae

Senior Airman

624th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii

JOB TITLE:

Health Services Management Journeyman

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Managing health services activities

HOMETOWN:

Nuuuli, American Samoa

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UNIT:

"My unit's willingness to assist and help each other out whether in Uniform or not. Whether it be a scolding, a laugh, or a shoulder to lean on, they are always there."

FAVORITE THING ABOUT JOB:

"Assisting others with their medical records as well as filling out various forms."

LITTLE KNOWN FACT:

"I enjoy lending a helping hand to anyone who needs it."

SUPERVISOR SAYS:

"Senior Airman Potoae is an independent worker who completes the tasks given to her quickly and efficiently. She is capable of taking charge when a need arises and has done so in the past." - Staff Sgt. Jonathan Wakatsuki

Personnel Briefs

E-Records now online

On March 2, 2009, fact became a reality when the Unit Personnel Record Group (UPRG) for 624th Regional Support Group personnel were boxed and forwarded to HQ Air Force Reserve Personnel Center in Denver, Colorado, to begin the conversion to E-Records (electronic records).

Electronic records processing started in 2006 with the active duty and in 2008 with the reserve. Reserve records are more than half way done and should be completed by July 2009.

The MPF was closed for four days while the UPRGs were purged of documents that were years old. All decoration and evaluation data along with certain data documentation were forwarded in the UPRG.

Paperwork removed from the UPRG has been forwarded to each unit for distribution to the member concerned. These are important documents and should be kept for

future reference.

Reservist will be able to access their e-records via the V-MPF through a system called the Automated Records Management System (ARMS) for Members. In about 60 days, you will be able to retrieve data contained in the UPRG.

Go to the website to take a look at what is currently out there at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil or via the Air Force Portal.

Readiness Management Period

Commanders may authorize a Readiness Management Period to satisfy a four hour minimum requirement. In special cases, a commander may waive the four-hour minimum for an RMP.

Use this authority only in exceptional circumstances and not for the personal convenience of the member. The member must attend the RMP for at least two-hours.

Commanders may extend an RMP beyond the normally scheduled 4-hour period to meet mission needs.

NOTE: The extension of the RMP beyond the four-hour period does not entitle the member to any additional pay or points.

MILITARY PERSONNEL FLIGHT HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

DRILL WEEKENDS

Saturday:
Open hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Closed for in-processing - 7-10 a.m.
Sunday:
Open hours: 7 a.m.- 1 p.m.
2:30 - 4 p.m.

Closed for training: 1-2:30 p.m.

If an ID card is required, please call before coming to MPF to check if DEERS is up and running.

44th APS pull plane for charity

Aerial porters based at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, participated in a plane pull April 25 to help raise money for the American Cancer Society.

Senior Airman Daniel Bersamin, below right, heads a team of 20 Reservists from the 44th Aerial Port Squadron in pulling a Boeing 737 12 feet in 5.81 seconds, the best time out of all the military teams participating in the competition. The team tied for 5th overall. The event was held at the Continental Airlines hangar in Tiyan. *(Photos by Capt. Christy Stravolo)*





RODE program prepares junior officers for leadership

Brig. Gen. Muriel McCarthy, mobilization assistant to the Air Force Reserve Command commander, spends time mentoring Capt. Jolie Gibbs and 2nd Lt. Kenny Ruggles April 18 during the Reserve Officer Developmental Education (RODE) course at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. Captain Gibbs and Lieutenant Ruggles, both with the 624th Regional Support Group at Hickam, were among 41 junior officers participating in the course April 16-19. The RODE program is designed to prepare Air Force Reserve junior officers to become effective leaders by providing essentials of military leadership, career planning and mentoring. A vital part of the program is the participation of senior leaders. (Photo by Maj. Joyce Gill)

Budgeting your financial readiness before deploying

By 624th RSG Family Support

The current economy situation has many people stressed. The last thing we want you to worry about while on deployment is a financial issue back home.

A few key items to prepare for Financial Matters are to establish allotments, develop a budget, and arrange for paying bills/taxes. An allotment is a designated amount of money that is automatically distributed for you, from your pay.

There are many reasons to have an

allotment, including setting aside funds for family, paying off a loan, or paying for your life insurance premiums or Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

Another good tool to consider is developing a budget. It can help get you out of debt and/or start saving. As David Ramsey said from The Truth about Budgeting "it is basically just a plan.

When you budget, you're spending on paper, on purpose, before the month begins."

Don't forget to talk to your family members about your monthly bills. If you normally take care of the bills,

make sure your loved ones have the information needed to take care of the bills while you are away.

Other options include setting up allotments to ease any stress of bills or set up a special power of attorney to assist with your finances.

These are just a few things to think about as you start getting ready for your upcoming deployment.

Find out more about budgeting at http://www.daveramsey.com/the_truth_about/budgeting_3457.html.cfm



I do solemnly swear...

Col. Robert "Randy" Huston, 624th Regional Support Group commander, reenlists three Air Force Reservists at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, during the Andersen drill weekend. From the left are Senior Airman Candy Strachota, Technical Sergeants Jesse Bamba and John Mababayag, all from the 44th Aerial Port Squadron. (Photo by Capt. Christy Stravolo)

UTA Schedule

Hickam

May 16-17
June 6-7
July 11-12
August 8-9

Andersen

May 30-31
June 27-28
July 25-26
August 22-23



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

Don't forget the value of a good "first impression." Your appearance, the way you carry yourself, your attitude, all tell a story ... your story. Don't leave it up to someone else to form an opinion about what kind of Airman you will be.

Set precedence early with good eye contact, a firm handshake and/or quick salute. You will see the rewards.