



# ANGEL'S WINGS



Volume 3, No. 11

920th Rescue Wing, Patrick AFB, Fla.

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## Angel's Wings

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**The 920th Operations Group held a change of command ceremony during the September UTA. Lt. Col. Jeffrey Macrander assumed command of the unit from Col. Gordon Elwell.**

# The 920th year in review

**Col. Joseph Trippy**  
**920th Rescue Wing**  
**Vice Commander**

**W**ow! And what a year it has been! When the ball dropped on 2005, it was evident that it was going to be a very busy year for the 920th Rescue Wing...but I don't think anyone realized just how "busy" busy could be.

As the champagne began losing its fizz, the 920th RQW was deep in preparation for its first Operational Readiness Inspection in 6 years... and its first ever by Air Force Special Operations Command. Through diligent efforts, our wing developed and executed a scenario that demonstrated its deployment capability and received an "Excellent" rating in our Phase I ORI.

This great effort was taking place while our HH-60G helicopter crews prepared for high altitude operations in support of our Aerospace Expeditionary Force deployment.

Months before deploying, the Air Force altered the AEF unit commitments from 90 days to 120 days.

Without missing a beat, our folks filled almost all tasked positions with volunteers. This commitment tested the capabilities of our equipment and the skill of our personnel.

All of this was done in the hostile environment of Afghanistan, where our folks performed combat search and rescue missions that resulted in saving 24 lives.

On the home front, the wing hosted guests from Canada in an International Search and Rescue Exercise, as well as a Search and Rescue Forces team of officers from Tajikistan. These types of information sharing events improve the global techniques and knowledge of our business.

The National Aeronautics and



Space Administration successfully returned the shuttle to space for the first time since the Columbia disaster.

The 920th performed its rescue support and range clearing mission. In the performance of our space mission commitment, we supported over 25 additional rocket launches from Cape Canaveral, Fla., including the Atlas, Delta, Titan and Athena Rockets.

While maintaining this high operations tempo, the wing pressed forward with the stand up of new pararescue squadrons at Patrick Air Force Base, Portland AFB and Davis Monthan AFB. These units are encompassed by the newly created 943rd Rescue Group at Davis Monthan AFB.

If all of this activity wasn't enough, 10th Air Force performed a commander directed no-notice tech order compliance, culture and account management inspection that resulted in no negative findings.

All of this activity took place before our response to Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast.

There we maintained a footprint of over 120 people at Jackson, Miss., for nearly three weeks and were credited with 1043 saves.

Our crews were the first Air Force assets to initiate rescue missions in New Orleans and surrounding areas, working around the clock conducting search and rescue missions throughout the region.

Before we could catch our breath from this great accomplishment, the 920th deployed to support Hurricane Rita efforts along the Texas coast. There we were credited with 6 saves while

**Commanders Column Cont.**

deploying more than 100 members for over a week in the Houston area, as well as Louisiana.

Wow... and we still have almost two months to go in 2005!

We have asked a tremendous amount from our folks and they have stepped up and met the mission needs in the truest spirit of the Citizen Airman.

In many cases these efforts have not gone unnoticed. This year, our wing has presented over 140 individual medals to our folks, including four bronze stars. Additionally, the wing was recognized with the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

Heck, that was for our efforts in 2004! We would seem to be a shoe-in for many more after the events of 2005!

I challenge our unit commanders to further reward their folks for the great efforts of recent months.

When it comes to Officer Performance Reports and Enlisted Performance Reports, there is a tremendous amount of potential to recognize the men and women of the 920th.

The challenges keep coming, and the 920th continually steps up to the plate. One would think that this pace would scare folks off, but we have maintained 100 percent in manning levels all year.

Each and every month, I meet another robust group of newcomers that ensure the future of this great wing. There is something about the rescue mission that gets into your blood.

As the holidays approach, we have a lot to be thankful for. We have met incredible challenges all year and we have done them effectively and safely.

I thank you all for your incredible efforts and I look forward to meeting the future challenges put upon the men and women of the 920th Rescue Wing. Have a safe and happy Thanksgiving and enjoy the remainder of this action-packed year. "These Things We Do That Others May Live"

# Why Change Now?

**By Lt. Col. Coy Speer**  
**308th Rescue Squadron Commander**

Most people are resistant to change. Why do we dislike change so much? Multiple reasons...it requires effort to adapt, often it is a step into the unknown, and it may require stepping outside of our comfort zone. Even when something is broken, we become comfortable with the way it is, we are comfortable with the workarounds and we can count on the fact that the process will be the same tomorrow. I'm not just talking about processes at work, but things like our family budget, or our exercise plan. I know we prefer to focus on the processes at work rather than the ones we own. So often, even when change is fixing a system that is broken, people don't like it because it changes what they were comfortable with; they knew what to expect from the broken process.

In big bold letters painted above the pool at the Air Force Academy it says, "Your most valued achievements will come from your greatest sacrifices". If you reflect on your life you will find this to be true. The achievements that you are most proud of required effort, sacrifice, and change. Achievements require a step into the unknown and challenge us to adapt. But in the end we are left stronger and always more proud of ourselves for the accomplishment. So, if we resist change, if we don't step from our comfort zone and push our limitations...we deprive ourselves of achievement and we miss out on the pride of accomplishment.

The point I'm making is that we should not resist change, but see it as opportunity to accomplish something, an opportunity to do it better. The Air Force is constantly changing and reorganizing.

Our children grow and our families constantly evolve. Some attempt to hold on to the past or resist professional reorganization. They can't find a reason for investing the effort. But the smart see these moments as opportunity. The strong realize that adapting inspires growth and always leaves you stronger and smarter. The brave know that change will lead to the achievements they will value the most. Change is the stepping stone to accomplishment!

My final point, is the pronounced difference between managing and leading. Managing is supervising the output of a provided system, it does not imply change. But leading requires setting direction, preparing for the unknown, and defining change. A leader believes in a stronger unit and isn't scared to invest the effort to successfully take on change. This is why leadership is a challenge, it implies taking people through what they resist most...change. Leadership is giving people a reason to believe in the mission and the direction. It requires effort from everybody that works for you to achieve change, but the result of adapting is a strong soldier and a stronger unit. Leaders inspire the changes that yield the achievements that we are most proud of. Leaders leave us proud of what we became.

# 920th Security Forces hone skills

*By 920th Public Affairs Office*

*Photos courtesy of the  
920th Security Forces Squadron*

Members of the 920th Rescue Wing Security Forces Squadron participated in Operation Patriot Protector earlier this year.

Operation Patriot Protector is a multi-force operation consisting of approximately 200 security forces members from joint services.

Units participating in the exercise combine forces to train in many different aspects of their job. Individuals train in scenarios including small arms firing, squad patrols, compass training and command control.

Training opportunities such as Patriot Protector have become increasingly important as the role of security forces during deployments has become more demanding.

“It’s an excellent opportunity for us to train in scenarios we may encounter during real world situations,” said Tech. Sgt. Luis Febres, 920th SFS Superintendent.

“It also provides the chance for our members to see just what they are capable of when they are put in challenging environments,” he said.





# Changing of the guard: 920th



Members of the 920th Rescue Wing welcomed three new commanders to its ranks during the September UTA.

Change of command ceremonies were held for the following units:

--Lt. Col. Jeffrey Macrander (pictured left) assumed command of the 920th Operations Group.

--Lt. Col. James Sadler (pictured bottom left) assumed command of the 920th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

--Lt. Col. Coy Speer (pictured bottom right) assumed command of the 308th Rescue Squadron.



# offers many hails, farewells



**Lt. Col. Donald Hunsuck, 920th RQW Command Post Officer in Charge, retired during the September UTA.**



**Col. Gordon Elwell, former 920th Operations Group commander, departed the wing to take a position as Reserve Advisor with the United States Air Force in Europe Command.**



**Lt. Col. Carol Powers, former 920th RQW Staff Judge Advocate, transferred to the Reserve IMA program.**

# Rescue Perspectives: A night in the AEF

**By Lt. Col. Christopher Hannon  
301st Rescue Squadron  
Commander**

It's hard to believe we've been back from Afghanistan now for over a month. After the intense rescue operations of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita where we saved over 1,050 lives, it feels like we returned from Afghanistan a year ago. However, the memories are as vivid as if it were yesterday.

As the deployed squadron commander for the last two months of our wing's four-month Aerospace Expeditionary Force rotation, I was asked to share a few of my thoughts on the deployment and some of the missions we were conducting.

I couldn't be prouder of the men and women of the 920th Rescue Wing who served during this deployment. Their hard work, sacrifice, courage and total professionalism allowed us to save the lives that we did and safely return home.

Our rescue wing flew over 250 combat hours, 180 sorties, conducted 54 significant combat life-saving rescues, and transferred the remains of five troops killed in action back to their loved ones. By now many have heard a few of the stories of our rotation, but I'm sure there are still a few that haven't had the opportunity to hear some of the details.

Before I share a few of our missions, I want to thank you all for your prayers, emails, care packages and all the things you did while the rest of us were deployed.

The support was incredible and made a difference for those of us away from our families.

We did a lot of good work there, flying some really tough combat rescue missions.

Our primary mission was to rescue shot down Airmen, fortunately

none of the air component flyers needed our services.

All of our work ended up as rescuing badly injured soldiers when the rest of the services or our coalition partners were unable or unwilling to fly due to the high risk of the missions - most we were able to accept.

When it was too dark or the weather was too bad for others to fly, we would be offered the missions.

What allowed us to take the missions when the Army couldn't was a combination of our highly experienced crews, extensive high altitude mountain training and our fantastic equipment, such as the Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) system.

For many nights of the month, we were the only rescue game in town capable of doing the mission. If we didn't have the ability to launch immediately, a lot of people would not have survived their injuries through the night.

In preparation for this AEF, we deployed on three training deployments to the mountains around Albuquerque, N.M., and twice to the mountains of Tucson, Ariz.

This was critical to our success. All our combat missions in Afghanistan placed our crews and rescue helicopters right at the edge of their performance envelope.

To make some missions possible, we had to strip every spare pound of weight off the helicopter to include floor armor, personal survival gear and in some cases the aircraft weapons.

As most of you have seen, the operations in Afghanistan usually don't make it to the national news, but from living it first hand, the combat operations were as intense as ever.

Our troops were in daily contact with the enemy and it wasn't unusual for the Army to prosecute as many as 20 rescue missions in

a day.

On the dark nights, we would regularly be called to fly one to two missions. These would take us to anywhere the need arose and depending on the operations being conducted.

We would forward deploy for weeks at a time to areas where our troops were in the greatest contact or danger.

When we arrived, combat operations were increasing as the time for the country's national elections drew near. During our first days in country, we hit the ground running.

As the weeks wore on, our troops were in constant contact with the insurgents.

On one of the missions I was on, it started like most evenings around the squadron's tactical operation center. It was a classic dark night with no moon. The Army declined the mission and we got the call!

On this night, our troops were fighting the Taliban in the high mountains. Unfortunately, the enemy had shelled a village and the Army called for the immediate extraction of a 4-year old Afghan child and his father.

Both were reported as severely injured from shrapnel wounds and the young boy was at risk for losing his eyesight.

After consulting with our squadron flight surgeon, we accepted the mission.

Using satellite imagery and other resources, we reviewed the Landing Zone (LZ) in great detail.

We could also get a fairly precise calculation of all our power requirements and then reconfigure the helicopters as necessary to safely make the recovery.

In addition, our "Guardian Angel" team of pararescumen (PJs), combat rescue officers (CROs) and flight surgeons would get the needed details on our



patients. They quickly determined if fresh blood was needed and what critical care equipment was required onboard the helicopters for the rescue.

In the high altitudes and hot summer nights of our tour, most missions required maintenance to make significant helicopter configuration changes.

Through hard work and a lot of team effort, they would make a change in what seemed like no time at all.

All of these changes were needed to save those crucial extra pounds of weight; it meant we would be able to pick up one more person, or sometimes having just enough power to make a safe landing.

As we were stepping to launch for the Afghan family, we were notified that the pickup zone was still "hot," meaning troops were in contact with the enemy. The area had just taken a mortar round smack in the middle.

We were told the patients were stable and would be moved a few hundred yards away.

The flight there was challenging and even with Night Vision Goggles (NVGs) we had a hard time making out the terrain below.

Watching the FLIR monitors was the only way we could pick our way through the rugged terrain.

At the objective area, my helicopter was designated as the gunship, with the role of protecting the other helicopter and crew making the pickup. It was pitch black.

We knew the mortar rounds must have come from somewhere up on the surrounding ridgelines overlooking the LZ. As our sister ship was making multiple reconnaissance passes of the LZ, my crews job was to search out the bad guys.

As we were making our passes on the nearby ridges, we found people where you wouldn't expect

them. They were blacked out, and so were we. The situation was tense but fortunately for all, no one engaged us. Our pickup helicopter had the toughest job: the landing.

This was no normal approach to a landing. It was the dreaded "brownout" approach.

A brownout landing is when the helicopter becomes totally engulfed in a self-generated dust storm just as it's trying to set down. It's not an approach for the poorly trained or weak at heart.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Robert Grande

Many a helicopter has been lost doing this maneuver.

As I circled above, I had all the confidence in the world knowing I had the best wingman around and when the dust cleared, they would be safely on the ground.

Later I learned the landing was as tough as they get, but the crew did a great job. Within minutes, the PJs had our patients safely aboard but to everyone's surprise, there were now three patients instead of the original two.

Normally a patient or two is no

big deal, but within our power margins, this was a problem.

The extra weight made the departure painfully slow, because once again they were facing another dust storm.

Through slow, controlled maneuvering and good crew coordination, they were able to safely climb away from the ground.

As we rejoined the formation, we made our way to the nearest firebase for refueling where we loaded the Afghan father to our helicopter, allowing our PJ team to provide the required medical care.

We finally brought them back to the Forward Surgical Team (FST) hospital, returning just before sunrise.

While this was just one instance of the bravery and professionalism our crewmembers, during our tour, we saw many fine young Soldiers and Airmen pay the ultimate price.

This was brought near and dear to our hearts on almost a daily basis when we were asked to attend what is called a "ramp ceremony".

This is when we would all line up at attention on the flight line to pay our last respects to a fallen comrade.

We would salute as one more flag-covered casket slowly rolled by on his/her final trip home.

Putting this in perspective is knowing that all our efforts in preparation for this AEF truly paid off.

We all did a great job and a lot of lives were saved.

Equally as important is that we accomplished this safely and without damage to our helicopters.

The endless hours of training and the time spent away from home paid off.

Our success was a result of a true team effort. It was our great maintenance and the superb effort of our support folks that allowed our aircrew and Guardian Angels to succeed.

# Around the pattern



Maj. John Lowe, 301st Rescue Squadron helicopter pilot, explains the 920th Rescue Wing mission to the Cocoa Beach Kiwanis Club during a recent community relations event.



920th Rescue Wing Command Post technicians (pictured right to left) Senior Master Sgt. Andy Corbett, Tech. Sgt. Pablo Limonta, Staff Sgt. Tammy Peasall, Airman 1st Class Vicente Padilla, Staff Sgt. Matthew Moore and Master Sgt. Michael Trejo were presented medals during the September UTA. All technicians were awarded the Air Force Achievement Medal except Staff Sgt. Moore, who was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal.

Photos by Senior Airman Heather L. Kelly

## BRIEFS

### Bosses Day

Bosses Day has been postponed until Spring 2006.

Please contact the 920th RQW Public Affairs Office at 321-494-0535 with questions or concerns.

### Holiday Greetings from the top

As the holiday season and another year approach, let us take time to consider what is really important – family and friends.

During this time of year, we tend to hold our families a little closer, realizing that what we take for granted can change in an instant. We need to remember our friends who have endured great sacrifices or those who have suffered great loss on the Gulf Coast.

It is your realization of what is important, coupled with your dedication to duty, that enables you to serve our great nation so well. You know the price of freedom and you are willing to pay it.

I salute those who have deployed in harm's way and supported the Global War on Terrorism, as well as those who have worked so hard to assist with hurricane rescue and relief.

As in the past, we face new challenges in 2006 – aircraft conversions, participation in air and space expeditionary force deployments and mission changes to name a few. I am confident you will once again do our country proud.

Jan and I wish you and yours happy holidays and a safe, joyous New Year. We are proud of you and what you do for America.

--By Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley  
Commander of Air Force Reserve  
Command

## The IG says...

Air Force military and civilian members have a duty to promptly report Fraud Waste and Abuse (FWA) or Gross Mismanagement.

**Fraud** -- Any intentional deception designed to unlawfully deprive the Air Force of something of value or for an individual to secure from the Air Force a benefit, privilege, allowance, or consideration to which he or she is not entitled.

**Waste** -- The extravagant, careless, or needless expenditure of Air Force funds, or the consumption of Air Force property resulting from deficient practices, systems controls, or decisions. The term also includes improper practices not involving prosecutable fraud.

**Abuse** -- Intentional, wrongful, or improper use of Air Force resources. Examples include misuse of rank, position, or authority that causes the loss, or misuse, of resources.

**Gross Mismanagement** -- A management action or inaction that creates a substantial risk of significant adverse impact on the organization's ability to accomplish its mission. It is more than mere, trivial wrongdoing or negligence. It does not include management decisions that are merely debatable, nor does it mean action or inaction that constitutes simple negligence or wrongdoing. There must be an element of blatancy.

Members should attempt to resolve Fraud, Waste and Abuse (FWA) issues and personal complaints at the lowest possible level using command channels before addressing them to a higher level or the Inspector General (IG).

The immediate supervisory command chain can often resolve complaints more quickly and effectively than a higher level not familiar with the situation.

The IG system should be used when referral to the command chain would be futile or there is fear of reprisal.

Air Force members have the right to:

- File a complaint at any level without going through their supervisory channel.
- File a complaint with an Inspector General (IG) without fear of reprisal.
- Submit complaints anonymously.
- Submit a complaint even if the member is not the wronged party or was not affected by the alleged violation.

**920th Rescue Wing**  
**Inspector General Office:**  
**DSN: 854-6474/2192**  
**Commercial: (321) 494-6474/2192**



File Photo

**Members of the 920th Rescue Wing assemble for the 920th Operations Group change of command ceremony held in October.**

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