

# THE PONY EXPRESS

Special Issue:  
943rd Goes  
To War



## THE PONY EXPRESS

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### FY 2007 UTAs

October 14-15 April 14-15

November 4-5 May 5-6

December 2-3 June 2-3

January 6-7 July 7-8

February 3-4 August 4-5

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### On The Cover:

SSgt. Ralph Johnsen, armament technician with the 943rd Rescue Squadron, concentrates on storing weapons for that night's deployment to Afghanistan. Airmen from the 943rd had spent the previous months preparing. Photo Illustration by TSgt Shawn David McCowan.

## BASIC PAY—EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2007<sup>1</sup>

Pay Grade	Cumulative Years of Service																									
	2 or less	2	3	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	18	20	22	24	26										
O-9	8,453.10	8,729.70	8,913.60	8,964.90	9,194.10	9,577.20	9,666.30	10,030.20	10,134.30	10,447.80	10,800.80	11,319.00	11,598.30	11,946.60	12,118.50	12,367.20	12,801.30									
O-8	7,023.90	7,350.00	7,501.20	7,621.20	7,838.40	8,052.90	8,301.30	8,548.80	8,797.20	9,577.20	10,236.00	10,236.00	10,236.00	10,236.00	10,236.00	10,236.00	10,236.00									
O-7	5,206.20	5,719.20	6,094.50	6,094.50	6,117.60	6,390.10	6,414.60	6,414.60	6,779.10	7,423.80	7,802.10	8,180.10	8,395.20	8,613.00	9,035.70											
O-6	4,339.80	4,888.80	5,227.50	5,291.10	5,502.00	5,628.60	5,906.40	6,110.10	6,373.20	6,776.40	6,968.10	7,158.00	7,373.10	7,373.10	7,373.10											
O-5	3,744.60	4,334.70	4,623.90	4,688.40	4,966.90	5,244.60	5,602.80	5,882.40	6,076.20	6,187.50	6,252.30	6,252.30	6,252.30	6,252.30	6,252.30											
O-4	3,282.20	3,732.30	4,028.40	4,392.00	4,602.00	4,833.00	4,982.70	5,228.40	5,355.90	5,355.90	5,355.90	5,355.90	5,355.90	5,355.90	5,355.90											
O-3	2,844.30	3,239.70	3,731.40	3,857.40	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60	3,936.60											
O-2	2,489.30	2,569.80	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50	3,106.50											
O-1																										
O-3 <sup>1</sup>				4,392.00	4,602.00	4,833.00	4,982.70	5,228.40	5,435.40	5,554.20	5,715.90															
O-2 <sup>1</sup>				3,857.40	3,936.60	4,062.00	4,273.50	4,437.00	4,558.80	4,558.80	4,558.80															
O-1 <sup>1</sup>				3,106.50	3,177.70	3,440.10	3,585.50	3,688.80	3,857.40	3,857.40	3,857.40															
W-5	3,402.00	3,680.00	3,765.00	3,868.50	4,048.40	4,222.20	4,400.70	4,574.10	4,753.80	5,035.50	5,215.80	5,392.20	5,574.90	5,754.90	5,938.80											
W-4	3,106.80	3,296.40	3,369.00	3,412.80	3,552.00	3,711.30	3,821.60	4,129.20	4,350.00	4,515.60	4,680.60	4,751.40	4,824.60	4,984.20	5,143.20											
W-3	2,732.70	2,888.70	3,025.50	3,124.50	3,209.70	3,443.70	3,622.50	3,822.50	3,755.10	3,885.00	3,973.80	4,068.80	4,191.00	4,332.30	4,475.40											
W-2	2,413.20	2,610.60	2,742.90	2,828.40	3,056.10	3,193.50	3,451.20	3,541.20	3,622.80	3,755.40	3,856.20	3,856.20	3,856.20	3,856.20	3,856.20											
W-1																										
E-9 <sup>1</sup>							4,110.60	4,203.90	4,321.20	4,459.50	4,598.40	4,821.60	5,010.30	5,209.20	5,512.80											
E-8							3,364.80	3,513.90	3,606.00	3,716.40	3,835.80	4,061.80	4,161.30	4,347.30	4,450.50	4,704.90										
E-7	2,339.10	2,553.00	2,660.80	2,780.70	2,881.50	3,055.20	3,152.70	3,250.20	3,424.20	3,511.20	3,593.70	3,644.10	3,644.10	3,644.10	3,644.10											
E-6	2,023.20	2,226.00	2,324.40	2,419.80	2,519.40	2,744.10	2,831.40	2,928.30	3,013.50	3,043.50	3,064.50	3,064.50	3,064.50	3,064.50	3,064.50											
E-5	1,854.00	1,977.90	2,073.30	2,171.40	2,323.80	2,454.90	2,551.50	2,582.10	2,582.10	2,582.10	2,582.10	2,582.10	2,582.10	2,582.10	2,582.10											
E-4	1,689.50	1,786.50	1,863.10	1,978.50	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80	2,062.80											
E-3	1,534.20	1,630.80	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20	1,729.20											
E-2	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90	1,458.90											
E-1 <sup>1</sup>	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40	1,301.40											

# Excellence at the core of Airmen

**Honorable Michael W. Wynne**

*Secretary of the Air Force*

The new year is upon us and promises to be as challenging as the past year, because a nation at war knows no rest.

Our Air Force has been at war for more than 16 years, and we must plan for more. The new year gives us all an opportunity to reflect on our achievements over the past year and set new goals for what we want to accomplish as individual Airmen and as an Air Force.

One of the beacons to guide you in forming these goals is the Core Value of “Excellence in All We Do.” And a mechanism to implement these goals is AFS021.

Having just returned from the CENTCOM AOR, I know very well the amazing things you are accomplishing every day for our Air Force as you face the rigors of serving in a combat zone.

Every Airman’s dedication and attention to detail in this demanding and unforgiving environment are what makes our Air Force second to none.

And I was also proud to see Airmen everywhere using Air Force Smart Operations to strive for excellence in their deployed workplaces.

Seemingly simple suggestions, such as rearranging tool rooms and weapons

storage facilities, saved time, money, and even lives, while giving us a more efficient and lethal organization.

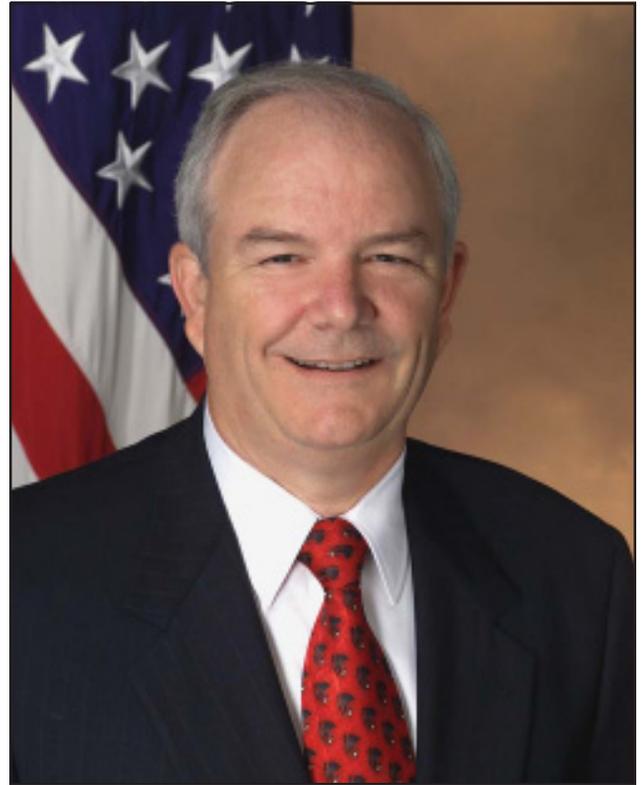
But AFS021 does not just call for excellence in process improvement or organizational structure. The changes in enabling functions are not ends themselves; rather they must lead to greater combat capability.

On my recent trip, I was impressed by the Airmen who added infrared sensors to their vehicles to search for IEDs. Other innovations, such as the ROVER laptop, came from the warfighters in the field who sought better air / ground interoperability.

From life-saving ideas to increased operational capability, Airmen continue to impress me with their passion for finding a better way.

A culture of excellence must permeate “All We Do.” AFS021 assists us in achieving this excellence by empowering our Airmen to ask how we can do things better. Excellence must be our prevailing attitude.

To those of you who are returning from deployment, I welcome you home and encourage you to share your



**Honorable Michael W. Wynne**

experiences from the field with your leaders, fellow Airmen, and the public.

Your invaluable combat experience will contribute mightily to our collective pursuit of excellence, as long as we capture your successes and make them into relevant, realistic training for others.

There is no doubt that we are the greatest Air, Space, and Cyberspace force in the world. Yet we still have room for improvement.

Remember, our enemies are continually looking for ways to defeat us, so it is critical we build upon the successes of 2006.

Make excellence your guide for 2007; it’s what distinguishes us as Airmen.

## Why are we the PONY EXPRESS?

In 1800’s America, communication between the East and goldmining communities of California challenged even the bold. So rode the Pony Express in rain, in snow, in sleet, over moonlit prairie and down tortuous mountain paths. The Pony Express knitted together the ragged edges of a rising nation. Hearty souls toiled over plain and mountain that understanding might be shared in a nation spanning a continent.

Through the iterations of symbols that represented the 943rd, one image was always retained; the winged horse. Symbolizing strength, power and grace, the white horse has remained through each change of this group’s history.

The combination of symbolisms made the name “Pony Express” ideal; the message of the 943rd Rescue Group to its sister locations across America.

# Preventive Maintenance



Shawn David McCowan

## **Dry run**

Dozens of Airmen from 943rd Maintenance Squadron, including MSgt Virgil Colvin, gathered at Roadrunner City in Davis-Monthan Air Force Base to participate in Expeditionary Combat Skills Training. They learned or enhanced important force protection skills needed for deployments into “Hot Spots” like the Middle East. Personnel from throughout the 943rd Rescue Group participated in the training as part of their preparations for deployment to Afghanistan.



TSgt. Richard Madison, a member of the 943rd Maintenance Squadron, leads a march during Expeditionary Combat Skills Training.



Various members of 355th Wing participated in Expeditionary Combat Skills Training, learning different force protection techniques from experienced personnel throughout the two day training.



Shawn David McCowan

er of the 943rd Maintenance security detail training.



Shawn David McCowan

SrA Daniel Brewer (foreground, in black), vehicle operator with 355th Logistics Readiness Group, plays the roles of 'terrorist' and trainer while assisting with deployment training.

## Shawn David McCowan

### *Pony Express*

### *Thousands of Reservists*

go through many different kinds of training every year. Although it is all necessary and helpful, sometimes it can be hard to take seriously.

But just weeks before members of the 943<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Squadron deployed for Afghanistan in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, they completed two days of Expeditionary Combat Skills Training at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base's "Roadrunner City."

And they took their training seriously for good reason.

The training is designed to better prepare Airmen for a joint services deployment by making them more accustomed to some security-focused details like patrols, convoy support, or other duties that require Air Force

personnel to know some ground tactics.

Maj. Keith Belhumuer, 943<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance commander, was not surprised by the seriousness of his people for several reasons.

"This maintenance team is dedicated to our mission like no other unit I've ever seen. I knew they would take this training seriously, but there's more sense of realism here.

"We live in a desert not unlike Afghanistan, and the fact is we're about to deploy. So this training may immediately come into use," said Major Belhumuer.

Jeff Ludwikoski, a security forces trainer here, says the importance of this additional training has become more pronounced as deployed servicemembers from all branches of the military find themselves performing more security duties as attacks on American convoys increase.

He also sees an increase of both the requests for this training and the need for deployed Airmen.

"We're almost constantly running combat skills training here. In the past, Airmen simply didn't have to worry about patrols or supporting convoys. Now it's an important part of the deployment. I

"It's vital they know movements, commands, hand signals and how to secure an area just like any Army platoon or Marine security patrol," said Ludwikoski.

The Air Force added "Warrior Week" to its Basic Military Training program to allow Airmen more exposure to weapons and deployment readiness. Officials had also announced their intentions of adding a seventh week of training to facilitate even more "boots on the ground" training.



Shawn David McCowan

Security Forces demonstrated queues of aircraft, vehicles and days of field training.



SrA Jesse Shipps

Lt. Col. Steven White, deputy commander of the 943rd Rescue Group's 305th Rescue Squadron and deployed commander of the 305th Expeditionary Rescue Group, addressed deploying Airmen and their families before the deployment.

# Reservists deploy into 'harm's way'

## Nearly 70 husbands, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, mothers and fathers leave for Afghanistan

**TSgt. Shawn David McCowan**  
*Pony Express*

Nearly 70 members of the 943<sup>rd</sup> Rescue Group here deployed to Afghanistan Wednesday, January 3 at about 8 p.m.

Area family members gathered in the 943<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Squadron hangar here at 5 p.m. to say good-bye to their loved ones while they make final preparations to depart.

The deployed Airmen are scheduled to be gone for various duration of time in

support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. Some Airmen will be gone as long as four months as part of a planned Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) deployment.

Although individual squadrons in the 943<sup>rd</sup> have deployed before, this marks the first deployment of personnel as the 943<sup>rd</sup> Rescue Group.

As their AEF mission began, Lt. Col. Steven White, deputy commander for the 305<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron, will take

control as the deployed commander of the 305<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Rescue Squadron (ERQS). As the Airmen prepared to leave, he spoke with them all once more at their home station.

"Leaving everyone behind isn't easy. I know that no one wants to go halfway around the world into harm's way.

"But we've been all over the country and all over the world to do search and rescue. Let's do our job safely, let's do our job right, and let's come back home," Colonel White said to

both the gathered media and deploying Airmen's families.

The reservists shared expected sad good-byes with their families, but they were thankful to be leaving now instead of before the holidays.

"Of course I'm happy it's afterward, I like to spend the Christmas with my family," said SMSgt. Mike Flake, a flight engineer with the 305<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron. He and his family might be used to seeing him leave, but they say it never gets easy.

"It's hard sometimes, but you have to get used to it after awhile," said Sergeant Flake's son, Brayden.

Sozelle Flake, Mike's wife, compliments her kids for their understanding.

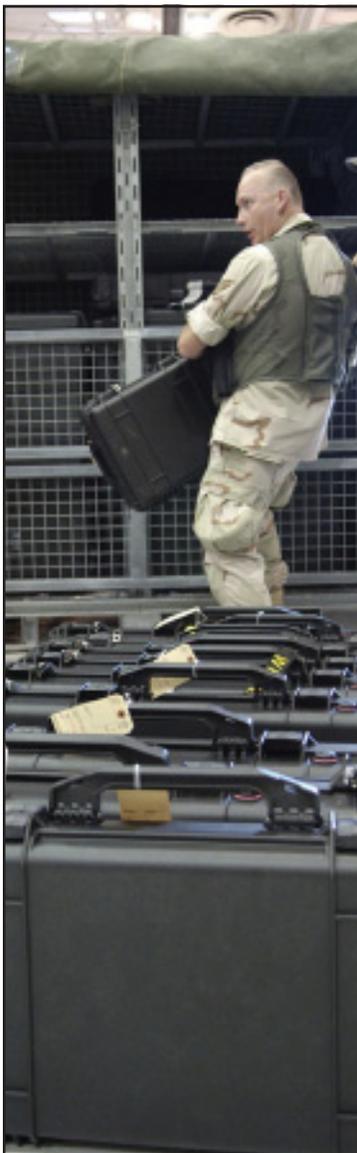
"They just have that faith that he'll be back. They're stalwart kids," said Mrs. Flake.

The deploying men and women have been preparing for months for this day, but Col. Robert Dunn, 943rd Rescue Group commander, says his Airmen have really been training for this kind of mission throughout their career.

"These men and women are every bit as thoroughly trained as their active duty counterparts. That means they train to do more in much less time.

"Their commitment as citizen Airmen is proven in their selfless, volunteer dedication. They leave behind their families, their jobs and their friends to protect the freedoms of every American. I'm very proud of each and every one of them," said Colonel Dunn.

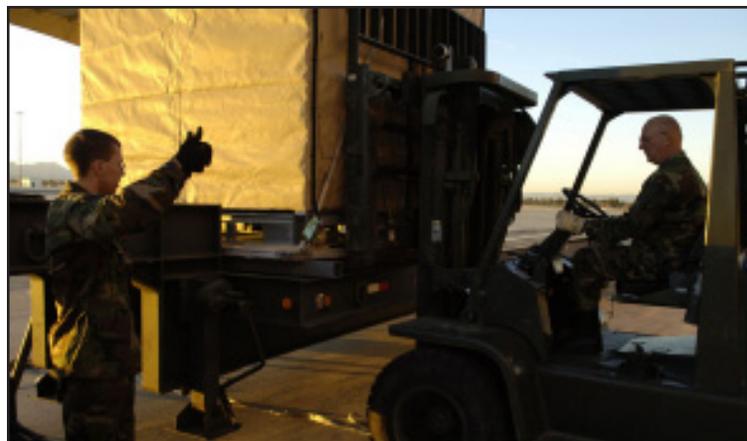
Although many families and media were on hand to see the men and women leave, Colonel Dunn said he hoped to see even more people on hand when everyone comes back home.



SrA Jesse Shipps



SrA Jesse Shipps



SrA Jesse Shipps



SrA Jesse Shipps

## Ready to go

(clockwise from top left) SSgt Ralph Johnsen, 943rd Rescue Group armament technician, checked and loaded each weapon bound for Afghanistan; Maj. Jeffrey Peterson, chief of 943rd Standards and Evaluations, spent his few precious final moments with his children; As the Arizona sun began to set, 943rd Rescue Group's CMSgt Craig Bergman, Maintenance Squadron Superintendent, loaded cargo containers onto a flatbed trailer just hours before the deployment; Col. Robert Dunn, 943rd Rescue Group commander, spoke with local media just before his Airmen deployed Jan. 4.



SSgt. Lanie McNeal

Maj. Keith Belhumuer, 943rd Maintenance Squadron commander, and his wife, Debbie, dance the night away.

## Rescue group waltzes into 'long december'

**TSgt Shawn David McCowan**  
*Pony Express*

150 Reservists and guests from the 943rd Rescue Group gathered at the Tucson DoubleTree hotel to celebrate the holiday season and their finest Airmen.

The group's first-ever military ball was themed "A Long December," reflecting many different moods for the evening. Some attendees said the event was a welcome break from preparations for the deployment.

Col. Robert Dunn, 943rd Rescue Group commander, echoed the theme in a different way.

"This is the start of a festive month before our deployments take us away from our families. May this be a long December for us and our families."

Quarterly and annual award winners, awarded for excellence above and beyond their peers throughout the year, were also announced.

943rd Rescue Group award winners for the 4th quarterly were: MSgt Karen Forsythe from 943rd

Maintenance Squadron, SSgt Clote White, 943rd Aeromedical Flight and SrA Jacob Monzingo, 943rd AMDF.

Annual award winner were MSgt Christina Garland and SrA Monzingo, 943rd AMDF and TSgt Ricky Madison, 943rd MXS.



SSgt. Lanie McNeal

Davis-Monthan Air Force Base's 355th Wing Honor Guard opened the evening with a solemn POW/MIA ceremony.



SSgt. Lanie McNeal

MSgt. Luis Alvarez, a member of 943rd Operations Support Flight, and his wife, Selia, share one of several slow dances played by the 108th Army Band from Phoenix, Ariz. Sergeant Alvarez was one of the deploying Reservists.