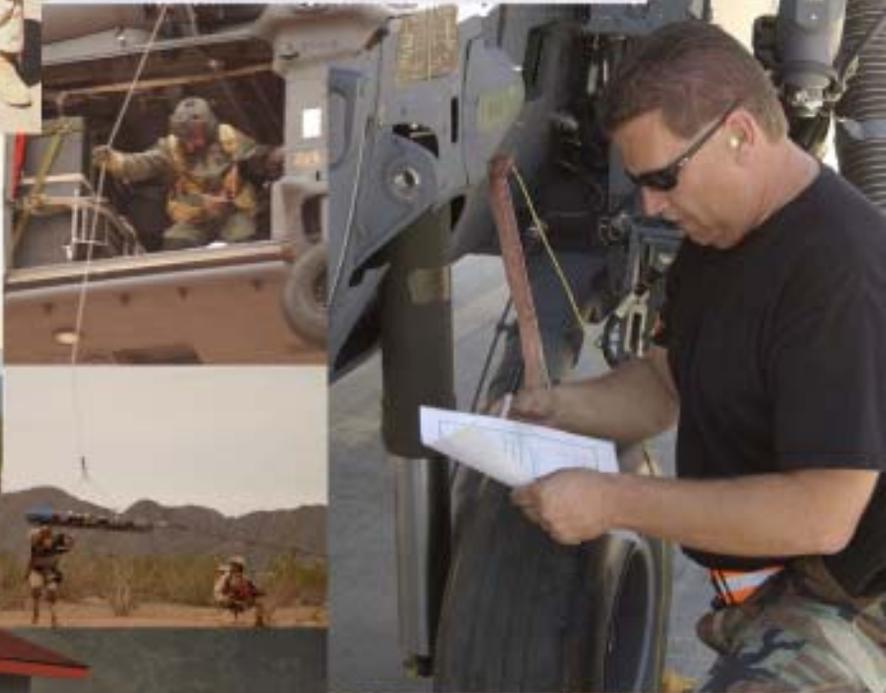


# PONY EXPRESS



## Pony Express

is a funded Air Force Reserve authorized publication for the members of the 943rd Rescue Group, Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. The contents expressed herein are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force. All photographs are U.S. Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated. Deadline for article submission is the 15th of each month prior to the desired month of publication. All stories, graphics, commentaries and photos will be subject to editorial review.

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### FY 2005 UTAs

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July 9-10, 2005

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Sept. 10-11, 2005

### Cover Photo:

By Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny  
The cover photo is a collage of the men and women of the 943rd Rescue Group.



Colonel Mike Shook  
943rd RQG Commander

### “Around the Group” an update

**Kandahar, Afganastan:** The 305<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Cliff Shuman, reports all is well. They have successfully acquired the mission from the active duty CSAR contingent, set up the facilities and operations to meet the mission needs. And they have already responded to two missions, including a rescue mission with GREAT success. The second rotation of members departed Tucson on Sunday as scheduled.

**Key Family Member:** All indicators thus far point to success regarding our newly implemented Key Family Notification Program. A small group of volunteers are making weekly contact with those participating family members of deployed personnel. Their purpose is to provide any weekly updates there might be for the families, but more important, to make contact to ensure they are OK and to try and help with obtaining any assistance they may.

**Portland, Oregon:** The Safety Investigation Board has completed their investigation of the pararescue jump mishap and their recommendations for continued safe operations are being implemented. The 304<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron commander, Maj Joel Kinnunen, reports that Jason Songer, the pararescueman injured in the mishap continues to improve every day. He has left the hospital and is home recovering, still undergoing therapy 5 days a week. The doctors say he is months ahead of schedule for

recovery. We are all hopeful Jason will eventually enjoy a full recovery from his injuries.

**Tucson, Arizona:** Preparation for the April 2006 Phase II ORI has begun. The Group’s deputy commander, Lt Col Ted Bale, will lead the 943<sup>rd</sup> Rescue Group’s scheduling efforts, preparation, and spin-up training for us to be ready to join our Wing at Gulfport, Mississippi for the needed Operational Readiness Exercises (OREs) and the eventual inspection in April 2006. Keep your ear to ground and eyes on the horizon for the schedule and plan which will soon follow. Lt Col Bale begins the process by attending the initial planning conference at the end of May with our Wing counterparts and representatives from the Air Force Special Operations Command Inspector General (IG).

We are pleased and at the same time sadden by Master Sgt. Ruby Z’s departure... Ruby has decided to transfer from Davis-Monthan to Portland, Oregon for a public affairs position at the 939th Air Refueling Wing. We are pleased for Ruby because this move will take her closer to her family where she has a real need to be now... Sadden, because... well, we’ll just miss her. Ruby has been a mainstay around here for a long time, even when she has been tasked with duty elsewhere. And then there is the *Pony Express*... our monthly newspaper she created. I challenge any one to find a better one. Thanks Ruby, its not “goodbye,” just “so-long.” Don’t forget where you came from and good luck!

Last but not least — We “Ace’d” the Phase One ORI.... The preparation was harder than the inspection but as could be predicted the professional experts, combat proven airmen warriors of the Air Force Reserve contingent stationed at D-M, watered the IGs eyes during the Phase I portion of the ORI. WAY TO GO!!! Bring on Phase II.



# Desert Sky

By Capt. Eric Simon  
305<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron

In case you're wondering who I am... I'm the new kid in town, and worse, I'm former Army. The transformation from Army pilot to Air Force pilot has been slow at times since it's not easy having to brain-dump 70% of the acronyms and terms I've used over the last 15 years with the Army to make room for my new Air Force language. Who makes this stuff up anyway?

It seems that over the next decade almost anyone enlisting in the military is guaranteed a tour overseas in support of OIF or OEF - no big surprise. Soon we'll have the largest pool of combat veterans on active duty since the end of World War II. The media knows this too. As a result production companies are rushing to get the latest and most innovative film made about the troops. They'll spend thousands of dollars sending film crews off to a combat zone for thirty days, then go home to edit. As a film maker and active duty officer, I took exception and spent a whole year in the big sand box once the home to the Babylonian Empire.

In February of 2003, I deployed to Iraq in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division with its Air Assault lift asset the 159<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade. With 102 Blackhawk and 30 Chinook helicopters, we were the largest Air Assault Brigade in the world and carried the footprint to prove it. The brigade's assembly area in Kuwait was 3 square kilometers in size. If my fuzzy math is correct, it equates to around 700 football fields.

Over the course of 12 months in the Middle East, I shot footage with my Sony miniDV video camera with the hopes of making a Wings special for the Discovery Channel chronicling the brigade's action in Iraq. During the war and up to our final destination in Mosul, North Iraq, I was a Battle Captain for the Brigade Commander. I ran the operation center for him to include holding daily briefings for the staff and tracking missions our aircraft were flying. Despite the agony of being in a non-flying job, there was an advantage. I had a bird's eye view of the whole show which allowed me access to all that was happening with the Brigade's 2000 personnel and 132 aircraft. As a result, it became the perfect place to be for this documentary producer.

My idea for a Wings production changed in November of 2003 when a Blackhawk from the 159<sup>th</sup> was shot down by an insurgent surface to air missile just north of Tikrit, Saddam's home town. All four crewmembers on board were killed one of which was a friend of mine. A week later, two more Blackhawks from our Brigade flying under night vision goggles collided over Mosul taking 8 more souls from our Brigade. The toll on the 159<sup>th</sup> went from 0 to 12 in the span of a week - the largest loss to an individual unit in Iraq up to that point. Needless to say, we were stunned. After witnessing over 2000 troops attend our memorial ceremonies, I knew this was no longer a simple Wings presentation and the film became a full fledged documentary. My goal was to tell our story from a human perspective as opposed to a tactical one. I began combing the Brigade for more stories and soon found that our brigade had been through more than meets the eye.

Upon my return home from the Middle East in the spring of 2004, I visited Wide Open Films in Phoenix, Arizona. I pitched the film to them and they agreed to help edit and promote the feature. The first cut was 90 minutes long. Capt (Ret.) Dale Dye the famed Hollywood military advisor to Steven Spielberg and occasional host on the History Channel took a look at the film and gave advice which led to the film being cut down to 47 minutes for television.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005 we held the Nashville Premiere of Desert Sky at the Belcourt Theater where the mayor, press and 150 soldiers from the 159<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade attended along with surviving family members of the soldiers we lost in November of 2003. The film was met with accolades and is now being pitched to major distributors for a hopeful U.S. theatrical release if not world-wide distribution.

DVDs of the film are now for sale and proceeds will benefit the Desert Sky Scholarship Foundation for children of the 12 crewmembers lost to the 159<sup>th</sup> during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Visit [www.159thFilm.com](http://www.159thFilm.com) for more details on the film and how to order a copy.

Capt Eric Simon is a traditional reservist working as a producer and director shooting television and independent film productions in the southwest as the owner of Aero Factory Productions.

## Maintenance Sign-in

0645-0700, Bldg. 1750, Hangar

## MX Fitness Evaluation

Saturday 0800-1000

Base Track

Sign-in wearing PT gear

## CATM Webpage

familiarize yourself with the M-16, M-9, use of force AFIs, other weapons and more at the CATM webpage located on the 943rd RQG intranet secure webpage. To get to this webpage click on the link marked 943 MSF or Training and then click on CATM

## Welcome Newcomers

305 Rescue Squadron

**Staff Sgt. Jonathan Homan**

943rd Maintenance Squadron

**Tech. Sgt. Karen Guaman**

**Staff Sgt. John Harris**

943rd Areomedical Flight

**Senior Airman Donald Collopy**

Air Force 101 Critical

Days of Summer

**safety campaign**

begins May 27 and

runs through Labor

Day.

Story on page 11.

[www.myeasypayment.com](http://www.myeasypayment.com)

An easy way to make BOA travel card payments and check on balances.

## Promotions May 1, 2005

Chief Master Sgt. Landon Willhoite  
Senior Master Sgt. Robert Branchfield  
Senior Master Sgt. Jim Eddings/  
304 RQS

Master Sgt. Kenny Simmons  
Staff Sgt. Armando Altamirano  
Staff Sgt. Yolanda Esparza  
Staff Sgt. Chris Uriarte  
Senior Airman Michelle Montagno

## An Apple a day keeps the doctor away!

Expect in the case of Master Sgt. Joshua Appel who graduated from the University of Arizona medical program May 13th. His name tag now includes MD.

## UTA schedule Home E-mail Delivery

If you would like the training schedule delivered to your home or work email address, please send an **email** with your alternate email address to **marilou.mann@dm.af.mil**

**POINT CREDIT:** The Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver no longer mails Air Force Form 526, Air National Guard/Air Force Reserve Point Credit Summary, to Air Force reservists. Guard and Reserve members must now use the virtual Military Personnel Flight to print a copy of their point credit information. They may call Headquarters ARPC/DPPK toll free at 1-800-525-0102 for questions and concerns about credit of points. They can access the vMPF by going to: [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/vs/](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/vs/)

**CALL-UPS AT MCCHORD:** During the first two weeks of May, the Department of Defense activated 108 reservists from the 446th Airlift Wing at McChord Air Force Base, Wash., to support the Global War on Terrorism. Since February, a total of 271 wing people received orders placing them on active duty. DOD has the authority to call up another 54 in the Air Force Reserve Command wing. These reservists expect to report for duty in June and July.

**NEW RECRUITING LOGO:** Air Force Reserve Command has a new advertising logo that more closely aligns it with the active force while touting the command as a high-tech, professional fighting force. Sleek and simple, the AFRC logo features the Air Force's new logo alongside the

words "Air Force Reserve" in a stylish, modern typeface. AFRC recruiting officials began working with Blaine Warren Advertising in January to develop the new logo. It replaces the "Above and Beyond" logo featured in Reserve recruiting and advertising products since 1998. The command will feature the new logo in all of its new advertising products but will continue using promotional items with the old logo until they are all gone.

**TRUE BLUE:** Air Force Reserve Command launched its commandwide "True Blue" anti-drug campaign in April. In the past, anti-drug or anti-substance abuse efforts were negative and centered on disciplinary action, said Dr. Don Jenrette, the command's drug demand reduction program manager. The new True Blue initiative promotes healthy living, career-mind sets and career role models. The focus of the AFRC Drug Demand Reduction Program will be enhancing readiness by eliminating substance abuse through prevention, education, community outreach and drug testing.

**TRACKING STORMS:** The first storm of this year's hurricane season arrived early and offered the Hurricane Hunters from Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., the

opportunity to track a hurricane for the first time in a WC-130J. When thunderous winds threatening El Salvador formed Tropical Storm Adrian in the Pacific during the third week of May, the National Hurricane Center called on Air Force Reserve Command's 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron to get a fix on the storm's location. During previous seasons, unit crews flew the J-model into storms for training and evaluation but never to fulfill a tasking from the NHC.

**MEDRETE MISSION:** Outside a primitive five-room elementary school hundreds of villagers lined up to receive medical, dental and optometry care. Thirty-two medical Airmen and a public affair specialist from the 943rd Rescue Group left Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., April 23 to provide that care for 10 days at three different schools in villages surrounding the city of Coban in the mountainous region of central Guatemala. Air Force Reserve Command's 710th Medical Squadron at Offutt AFB was the lead unit for this medical readiness training exercise that supports the Humanitarian Civic Assistance program through the International Health Specialist program. The goal of the MEDRETE mission was to give free medical care and education

to Guatemalans who cannot afford medical and dental treatment, eyeglasses or medication. At the same time, the deployed Airmen improved their training skills by treating people under remote, austere conditions.

**MEDRETE MISSION:** Medical professionals interested in increasing their medical readiness, planning skills and a second language by supporting the Total Force Medical Readiness Vision by participating in similar missions can get more information at the International Health Specialist website [http://www.afrc.af.mil/hq/sg/public\\_ihs](http://www.afrc.af.mil/hq/sg/public_ihs).

## **NEW TOOL AVAILABLE TO HELP PEOPLE IN DISTRESS**

“Read it before you need it” is the intention behind a new guide distributed to squadron commanders and first sergeants. The “Leader’s Guide to Managing Personnel in Distress,” is an interactive CD that provides general information, summaries of policy and checklists on 35 topics relating to distress. More than 100 people, including commanders, first sergeants and health experts, spent two years developing the comprehensive guide. Produced by the Air Force Suicide Prevention Program working group, the guide addresses a wide range of events such as romantic relations, finances, substance use and family violence to coping with car accidents, burglaries and unintentional injuries. People who are not squadron commanders or first sergeants can access the Leader’s Guide to Managing Personnel in Distress on the Web at

<https://www.afms.mil/afspp/products/default.htm> from a dot-mil address.

## **SAVINGS PROGRAM ASSISTS DEPLOYED SERVICEMEMBERS**

Deployed servicemembers have the chance to earn a guaranteed 10-percent interest on their savings annually. The Savings Deposit Program started in 1990 for servicemembers who were serving in the Persian Gulf conflict. The program progressively changed and now includes Operation Iraqi Freedom servicemembers assigned to a combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone. Servicemembers can contribute up to \$10,000. Interest of 10 percent will not accrue after that amount. To make a deposit into the fund, people should contact their financial office. Withdrawing the money before leaving the combat zone is not authorized, unless there is an emergency. The savings-deposit balance will show up on leave and earnings statements. To learn more about this program, go to

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123007239>

## **ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HELPS CRIME VICTIMS, WITNESSES**

The Air Force’s Victim Witness Assistance Program provides liaison assistance to help people through the gamut of legal processes that follow criminal action. The liaison helps victims and witnesses obtain legal information and services, and access to civilian services.

Activation of the program is automatic. Victims and witnesses receive an information sheet from the first responder at the crime scene. At base level, this commander’s program is administered by the staff judge advocate’s office. For more information about this program, go to the Air Force Print News story at <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123007236>.

## **PERSONNEL SERVICES NOW AVAILABLE ON AF PORTAL**

The days where people need to remember numerous user IDs and passwords for basic online personnel services are coming to an end as a result of the Air Force Portal. The portal is a Web-based system developed to incorporate as many Air Force applications as possible. Systems such as the virtual military personnel flight

or functional area applications, such as a munitions ordering or parts tracking system, are accessible from one Web site Airmen may register for access to the portal by logging onto the Web site at <https://www.my.af.mil> and clicking on the self-registration link. The registration process is self-guided.

## **SOME PERSONNEL SERVICES BECOME WEB-ONLY**

Airmen will no longer have to stand in line to accomplish a personnel records review or several other common tasks. To make it easier for personnel customers, six different personnel services are now available only on the Web, including any of the following:

- Update the Record of Emergency Data.
- Apply for a change to an assignment or change a report-not-later-than date.
- Apply for certain curtailments of date eligible for return from overseas.
- Accomplish a humanitarian or exceptional family member program application.
- Request a ‘proof of service’ letter, often needed for home loans.
- Make simple updates to common information like home address, home telephone number, religious preference, race, ethnic group, foreign language self-assessment, duty and personal e-mail addresses.

For people using these services, questions can be answered 24 hours a day online or by a toll-free call to the Air Force Contact Center. Airmen can access the vMPF through the Air Force Portal, at [www.my.af.mil](http://www.my.af.mil), by clicking on the “careers” tab. It is also available at

[www.afpc.randolph.af.mil](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil). For more information, call the Air Force

Contact Center at (800) 616-3775.

## **COMPUTER-BASED TRAINING AVAILABLE TO ALL**

For Air Force people wishing to further their education, the computer-based training system, located at <http://usaf.smartforce.com>, allows people to supplement major blocks of formal education that may not be a part of an individual’s current curriculum. People do not receive certification for courses offered through the system, but the training prepares students for the certification exams.

The complete system is available to all active-duty Airmen, Department of the Air Force civilians, Air National Guard members and Air Force reservists. The CBT program offers more than 1,700 courses encompassing both information technology and business skills including: software development; server technologies; database systems; project management; operating systems; Internet and network technologies; desktop computer skills; and budgeting. More information is available in the Air Force Print <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123007149>.

## **ART ORIENTATION BROADCAST**

[https://www.mil.afrc.af.mil/hq/dp/dpi/home/Professional\\_Development\\_Center.htm](https://www.mil.afrc.af.mil/hq/dp/dpi/home/Professional_Development_Center.htm)

The link above will take you to the AFRC Professional Development home page where you can click on the News link and then the ART Orientation link for more information about the new broadcast. You can also see the upcoming broadcast dates. The 8 Aug 05 class is full. For those of you who are scheduled for the 8 Aug class, you need to visit this website and read the info. Later you’ll have to download some materials prior to attending the class. At this time, the downloads aren’t available, they’re still working on getting them out there. I also sent you a separate email with a partially filled out DD Form 1556 for you to complete and submit to civilian training (Gerry Hoard).



Major Brett Howard, 305th Rescue Squadron pilot trains at the Desert Trails Gun Club in Tucson, Ariz. with Richard Batory an FLETC & NRA certified police instructor April 18 before going on an AEF deployment. He and other aircrew members from the 305th RQS are learning how to tactically move together with the pararescuemen from the 306th Rescue Squadron so they will be prepared for this kind of situation.

photos by Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny

Tech. Sgt. Dan Juen, (center) 305th RQS flight engineer also attended the tactical weapons training on April 18. In this sceanario, the aircrew members learn how to move together, provide surpression fire and find cover.



This isn't just a UTA hair cut. Ms. Brooke Stineberg, 305th RQS secretary shaves Master Sgt. Ed Dawson's head as he prepares to deploy to Afganistan for his Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) deployment.



*April 2003, Capt. Gary Holland , 306th Rescue Squadron commander(right) and 2nd Lt. Dan Lake, 306 RQS combat rescue officer (left) presents a Meritorious Service Medal to Senior Master Sgt. James Sanchez, the pararescuemen super during the first 306th Rescue Squadron's commander's call.*

photo by Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny

*Captain Michael Williams, 943rd Mission Support Commander, (left) presented Staff Sgt. Karlos Siqueiros with an Air Force Commendation medal in an informal award presentation. Master Sgt. Brett Canada, Tech. Sgt. Henry Holland and Staff Sgt. Brian Stevens.*



photo by Staff Sgt. Darcy Mulkey

*During an informal promotion ceremony held in Kardarhar Afganistan May 1st, Landon Willhoite, 306th Rescue Squadron superintendent (center) is promoted to Chief Master Sergeant. Lt. Col Cliff Shuman 305th Rescue Squadron commander (left) and 2nd Lt. Dan Lake 306th Rescue Squadron combat rescue officer present our newest Chief with his stripes.*

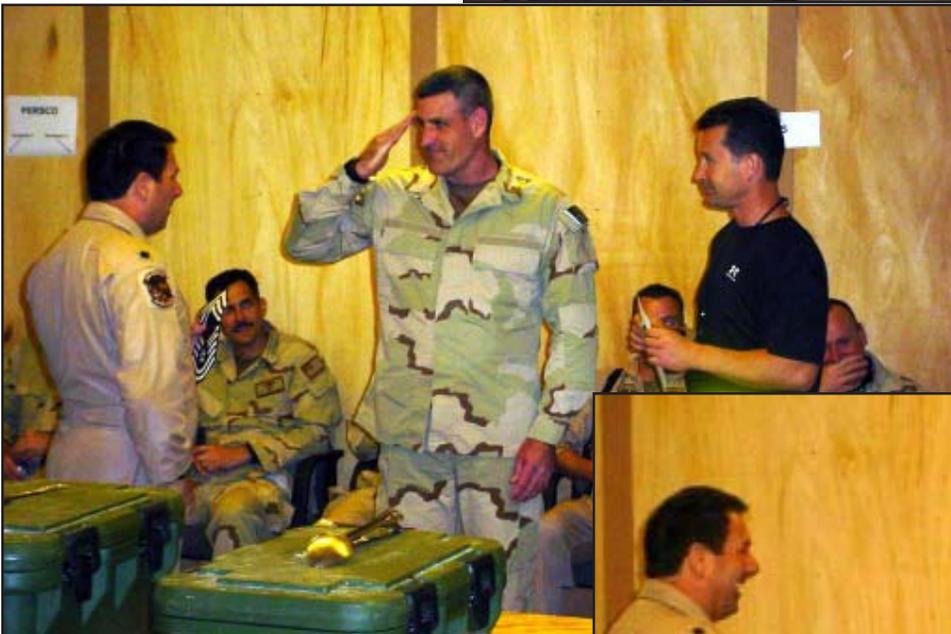


photo by Staff Sgt. Beth Grosh

*During the same ceremony, Robert Branchfield , 305th Rescue Squadron flight engineer is promoted to Senior Master Sgt. and Lt. Col Cliff Shuman presents SMSgt Branchfield with some pretty impressive stripes.*



photo by Staff Sgt. Beth Grosh

# Guatemalan Man gets Fresh Sight

## After visiting the AFRC MEDRETE field optometry clinic and the optometrist from the 920th AMSS.

Photos and Story By: Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny  
943rd Rescue Group Public Affairs  
TACTIC GUATEMALA—Traveling for hours before the day breaks on a crowded bus, the seats are full and people are clinging to hand rails swaying and tumbling with every bump and winding turn in the road. The senses of a man hear the roar of too many conversations, feels the strikes of the surrounding crowd, and becomes aware of the presence of the breaking morning sunlight. An 83 year-old man's bones creak as his trembling hand grasps his cane to lift himself from his seat. Slowly he moves into the flow of the isle where many people bump his sombrero as they nudge him towards the front door. He can not see their faces. He is quiet and moves along steadily because he knows today is the day he will get fresh sight.

This man was the third person seen on the May 4 by the MEDRETE 05 Guatemala optometry clinic. The MEDRETE is a medical readiness training exercise organized by the International Health Specialists providing medical, optometry and dental care to rural communities Worldwide in

support of the Humanitarian Civic Assistance program.

This is the ninth day of the medical readiness training exercise (MEDRETE), where 33 Air Force Reservists and Air National Guardsmen came together as a seamless force with the Guatemalan Army and community members to treat 8,505 Guatemalans during their 10 day humanitarian mission. This is also the last day the team will be at the Tonpoc public school in

Tactic, Guatemala where this morning when the MEDRETE team arrived they found a line of people stretching from the school and curving around the playground for more than seven hundred feet.

Many of these people in line have come to the MEDRETE clinic to see the optometrist.

During this MEDRETE, 1177 patients were seen by the optometry clinic and more than



*One of the lines of patients to be seen at the MEDRETE Clinics in Guatemala. This MEDRETE team saw 8,505 patients in 10 days.*

1200 pairs of glasses were prescribed, said Maj. Dave Monbeck, optometrists from the 920<sup>th</sup> Areomedical Staging Squadron at Patrick AFB, Fla.

The optometry clinic here has one optometrist and one optometry technician Master Sgt. Max. Sornoza, 944<sup>th</sup> Medical Squadron from Luke AFB, Ariz. The mission of the clinic is to examine and treat the eyes by prescribing corrective lenses and dispensing glasses that were donated by the Wisconsin Lions Foundation.

“We try to dispense glasses when we can, said Maj. Monbeck. “Many of the Guatemalan’s we’ve seen have not had vision care for decades. In the U.S. the leading cause of blindness for people under 65 is diabetes’s, but here the leading cause of blindness is uncorrected vision.”

“Major Sheri Gladish, one of the physicians on the team, had a 46 year-old patient who could only see light,” said Maj. Monbeck. “Doctor Gladish guided her into the optometry clinic, and I checked her vision. She had cataract surgery, but did not have an artificial lens replacement. So, to correct her vision, we needed a very high prescription of +9.”

“We were very fortunate to have one, continued Maj. Monbeck. “Immediately, the women who had to feel her way around to get to the clinic could see. The smile on her face when she was able to see her way out of the clinic—that was my reward.”

There were many people seen at the clinic with cataracts and Pterygiums, a growth over the cornea caused by ultra violet rays from the sun, said Maj. Monbeck. Working outside can cause excessive exposure to UV ray which accelerates their



*Guatemalan Army Medic Hugo Rolando Galvez-Gallardo escorts an 83 year-old man to see the MEDRETE Optometrist Maj. Dave Monbeck..*



*Major Dave Monbeck, the only optometrist on the MEDRETE team examines a Guatemalan boy who appears to be cross-eyed by is really extremely far sided and in need of glasses to correct his vision.*

growth. For people who work outside like farmers and construction workers, simply dispensing and wearing sunglasses can slow and prevent the development of cataracts, continued Maj. Monbeck.

Along with a high amount of cataracts in the community, many of the children are farsighted and their eyes will cross. In these cases, Doctor Monbeck examines the eyes to determine the correct prescription, and then the prescription will be sent to the Sunland Optical Company in El Paseo, Texas. The company will make the glasses and then donated them back to the school for the children.

After Doctor Monbeck examines the patient, he prescribes glasses and then the patient is seen by Master Sgt. Sornoza who searches through 2500 pairs of donated glasses to find the correct prescription.

“I receive the prescription and then try to find it from the available glasses,” said Sergeant Sornoza. “We have a great need for hyperoptic lenses, but we have a limited amount of those lenses, so it’s a challenge to accommodate the prescription. I select three pairs of glasses to see which one will work. And when I see a big smile growing on their face; I know I’ve gotten it right.”

Matching the prescription with the lenses available is not a small job.

“He has the hardest job matching up my prescriptions with the glasses we have available,” said Maj. Monbeck. “And he’s the best I’ve ever worked with.”

Communication, for Maj. Monbeck is a barrier for him during the examination process because Maj. Monbeck does not speak Spanish, so he is teamed up with an interrupter First Sergeant Vertulio Ruben Orozco Monzon, an engineer in the Guatemalan Army.

Maj. Monbeck and Sergeant Orozco—Monzon have become a great team.

“He knows exactly what to ask the patients and he streamlines the process which allowed us to see more than 200 people in one day,” said Maj. Monbeck.

“I enjoy working with Doctor Monbeck, and doing the “we’re so good dance” when we find the correct prescription on the first try,” said Sergeant Orozco—Monzon who learned to speak

English 10 months ago. “I also enjoy helping the poor people in the village,” he added.

The optometry team has also treated eye infections. If the eye infections are left untreated, it could lead to corneal scarring and blindness which Doctor Monbeck says he has seen quite a



*Major Dave Monbeck (center) examines the vision of the 83 year-old man with the help of his interpreter Guatemalan Army First Sgt. Orozco—Monzon.*

bit of here. Once the corneal scarring occurs, there is nothing the MEDRETE clinic can do.

The optometry team is also teaching the kids the proper distance for reading which is the natural reading distance and the length from the knuckle to elbow. As well as how to do warm soaks and lid scrubs to help prevent inflammation of the lid margins.

This morning an 83 year-old man was escorted into the MEDRETE optometry clinic, and within minutes, he was examined and giving a pair of glasses. He said to Maj. Monbeck through Sergeant Orozco—Monzon the interpreter, “today I have fresh sight.”



*Master Sgt. Max Sornoza from Luke AFB, Ariz. fits a pair of glasses for one of the almost 1200 patients seen at the MEDRETE clinic. He is the only optical technician here, and his job is to find the right pair of glasses prescribed among the 2500 pairs of glasses donated by the Wisconsin Lions Foundation.*

# BRAC affects Air Force reservists in 22 states

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – If put into law, Air Force Reserve Command will close three installations and move people from a dozen locations to two dozen sites throughout the United States.

Although command officials anticipate keeping roughly the same troop level authorizations, AFRC will expand some existing missions such as air operations center, space, unmanned aerial vehicle and associate-unit flying.

These and other changes are among those recommended by the Department of Defense to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. DOD announced the recommendations May 13.

The BRAC process is simple, DOD officials said. The military services and joint cross-service groups develop closure and realignment recommendations. Military value is the primary consideration. Also, the law mandates that department officials use a 20-year force-structure plan in forming their recommendations.

The services examine each base's "service-unique" function. In a difference this year, cross-service groups analyze functions that cross service lines. For example, all services have warehouses. So a joint group analyzes warehouse functions for all the services.

Cross-service groups examined seven functional areas: educational and training, headquarters and support activities, industrial, intelligence, medical, supply and storage, and technical.

The commission is holding hearings and examining the recommendations, a process that runs through September. The commission sends an "all-or-nothing list" to the president, meaning the president can approve all of the closures and realignments on the list or disapprove the entire list. If he approves, the list goes to Congress.

The House and Senate have 45 "legislative days" to disapprove the list. If they do nothing, the list **McChord AFB, Wash.** – AFRC's 304th Rescue Squadron, Portland International Airport, Ore., moves to McChord AFB to permit the squadron to continue training since the AFRC flying mission ends at Portland.

**Portland International Airport, Ore.** – Seventy-five full-time and 437 traditional reservist authorizations from AFRC's

939th Air Refueling Wing move to Vandenberg AFB, Calif., to support the Reserve's growing space program. The 939th ARW transfers four KC-135R's to AFRC's 507th ARW, Tinker AFB, Okla., and four KC-135R's to the Air National Guard's 190th ARW, Forbes Field Air Guard Station, Kan., as part of KC-135 unit consolidation. Portland's 304th Rescue Squadron moves to McChord AFB, Wash., to permit the AFRC squadron to continue training since the Reserve flying mission ends at Portland.

More information is available on the Air Force Link at <http://www.af.mil>

## SGLI benefits increase, adds traumatic injury coverage

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service  
WASHINGTON, May 18, 2005 - Defense and Veterans Affairs officials are ironing out details of programs that will expand benefits provided through Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance. The \$82 billion supplemental legislation signed into law by President Bush May 11 increases maximum SGLI coverage to \$400,000 and provides payouts of up to \$100,000 for servicemembers with traumatic injuries, explained Stephen Wurtz, the VA's deputy assistant director for insurance.

The increased SGLI coverage will take effect Sept. 1, and the so-called "traumatic SGLI" benefit, December 1. Wurtz said the legislation directs that both benefits will be retroactive to Oct. 7, 2001.

Traumatic SGLI benefits will be retroactive for troops who have lost limbs, eyesight or speech or received other traumatic injuries as a direct results of injuries received during Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The benefit does not apply to servicemembers suffering from disease. The retroactive coverage increase is payable as a result of deaths in either

operation, or under other conditions prescribed by the secretary of defense, Wurtz said.

**Servicemembers enrolled in the SGLI program will notice an increase in their premiums when the increases take effect.**

The traumatic SGLI benefit will be rolled into the basic SGLI program and will likely cost about \$1 a month, Wurtz said. *Sounds automatic*

**Troops opting for maximum SGLI coverage** — \$400,000 vs. the current \$250,000 - will see their monthly premiums increase from \$16.25 to \$26, Wurtz said. This is based on the rate of 6.5 cents per \$1,000 of insurance coverage. *Automatic if you're already getting the max?*

SGLI coverage is currently available in \$10,000 increments, but as of Sept. 1, the increments will increase to \$50,000.

Because the rates have not changed, servicemembers who retain \$250,000 or less coverage will see no increase in their premiums, Wurtz said, except for the \$1 "traumatic SGLI" premium.

While these expanded benefits will be provided retroactively, affected servicemembers won't be charged retroactive payments, he said. DoD will absorb that cost.

In a new twist introduced through the supplemental legislation, troops with dependents must get their spouse's approval to purchase less than the full amount of SGLI coverage. In the case of members who are not married, notice will be provided to the designated beneficiary when the member purchases less than the maximum coverage.

The new traumatic SGLI benefit is designed to provide "a quick infusion of cash" for cash-strapped families of troops recuperating from traumatic injuries received in the line of duty, Wurtz said.

Compensation will range from \$25,000 to \$100,000, and is designed to help families of severely wounded troops leave their homes and jobs to be with their loved one during recovery. "These families incur a lot of expenses, and this is designed to help them financially," Wurtz said.

While VA staff members consult with DoD to write regulations that will put the new SGLI benefits into effect, Wurtz said, "lots and lots of details have to be worked out."

Among outstanding issues is the fact that the expanded SGLI coverage is part



## 101 Critical Days of Summer

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

WASHINGTON - "There are no second acts in American lives," F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote. Memorial Day Weekend signals the start of summer, traditionally a time of fun and sun. During the 101 Critical Days of Summer, we sometimes try to do too much because of the extra sunlight. Here are suggestions on how to keep healthy and safe this summer:

- Alcohol consumption** - Don't drink and operate vehicles - automobiles, boats, jet skis, etc. If you drink, do it moderately and always appoint a designated driver.
- Traveling** - Be sober, vigilant and well-rested. Ensure everyone wears a seatbelt.
- Watercraft** - Know your craft and use personal floatation devices. Use caution when operating boats and jet skis, staying away from other boaters, swimmers and jet skiers.
- Motorcycles** and all-terrain vehicles - Don't operate without proper training and personal protective equipment. Always remain vigilant and

drive defensively.  
**Outdoor activities** - Before and after athletic activity, take a short moderate-to-brisk walk to improve circulation rather than stretching, which experts say contributes to muscle strain. Know your limits and don't overdo it. Avoid prolonged exposure to the sun, use sunscreens and drink plenty of water.  
**Swimming** - Swim with a buddy in known waters and don't drink. In the past few years we've been made more aware of the need for diligent force protection.

We need to apply this same kind of vigilance off duty during the 101 Critical Days of Summer. Most mishaps involve one or more of the following factors: alcohol, fatigue, darkness, bad weather, poor judgment, inappropriate risk-taking. Let's use common sense, plan ahead and be prepared. An "it-will-never-happen-to-me" attitude is not a guarantee but rather a recipe for disaster. Take care of your family and of your Air Force Reserve family. Be alert and prevent incidents that could cause a lifetime of regrets. Let's all enjoy the months of summer, but let's enjoy our off-duty time responsibly. (AFRC News Service)

## Vigilance + Planning helps us to enjoy our off time during the 101 Critical Days of Summer.

- <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/sumsafety/>
- <http://www.worldtravelers.org>
- <http://travel.state.gov>
- <http://www.azgohs.gov/>
- <http://www.recreation.gov/hiking.cfm?myActivity=hiking>
- [http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.1112/healthissue\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.1112/healthissue_detail.asp)
- <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/>
- <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>
- <http://www.recreation.gov/camping.cfm?myActivity=Camping>
- <http://travel.howstuffworks.com/travel-safety-channel.htm>
- <http://www.weather.gov/>
- [http://www.hwysafety.org/safety%5Ffacts/qanda/alcohol\\_general.htm](http://www.hwysafety.org/safety%5Ffacts/qanda/alcohol_general.htm)

## SGLI cont.

of the supplemental legislation package that funds operations only through Sept. 30. That's 30 days after the new SGLI limit takes effect and two months before the traumatic SGLI benefit begins. Wurtz said VA is confident Congress will resolve this issue before there's any lapse in coverage. VA will continue to oversee and control the SGLI program. Related Site: Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance [http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/SGLI/SGLI.htm]



Photos by Xavier Gallegos Tucson Citizen

## From ‘Top Gun’ to ‘Desert Sky’

Tucson Citizen

Capt. Eric Simon, 34, grew up in Glendale, Calif., in the shadows of Hollywood, idolizing his father, a crew chief for the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s search-and-rescue team. From that grew a love for filmmaking and sense of adventure that would lead him to a job as a helicopter pilot for the Army’s 159th Aviation Brigade and a yearlong tour of duty in the Iraq war. And that led to “Desert Sky,” a 47-minute documentary sold online at [www.159thfilm.com](http://www.159thfilm.com). Proceeds will go toward scholarships for the children of soldiers from Simon’s brigade who were killed. Simon, a University of Arizona graduate now serving in the Air Force Reserve at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, recently talked with Citizen reporter A.J. Flick:

**Q. Where did this interest in the military and moviemaking come from?**

**A.** In the summer of 1986, the movie “Top Gun” was playing at the Roxy in Glendale. I was blown out of the water. In 1990, I enlisted in the military because I wanted to serve and also earn money toward college. They said you can choose any major but theology. So I chose media arts and filmmaking. You don’t have to be in Hollywood to study filmmaking, so I came to the UA, served in the ROTC while I was going to school, and after I graduated, went on active duty in the Army.

**Q. So when you were deployed to Iraq, you took your camera to make the documentary?**

**A.** I had planned to do something for the “Wings” show on the Discovery Channel. Very technical, not concerned with the human aspect. But in November of 2003, a Black Hawk (helicopter) was shot down over northern Tikrit by a surface-to-

air missile. One of the guys killed was a guy I knew, Ben Smith. He was the battle captain like me, and he and I talked a lot. We lost four guys, and two passengers were killed.

A few days later, on Veterans Day, which was quite fitting, they held a memorial service that drew about a thousand people. It was absolutely amazing, very emotional. I knew it had to be a documentary about the human experience, not the technical side for “Wings.”

**Q. What’s next for you?**

**A.** We recently held a screening in Nashville of “Desert Sky,” and we’re hoping to get someone to distribute it. I’d like to go back to the UA to get my master’s degree in media arts and filmmaking. And I’ve started doing interviews about my dad’s search-and-rescue group, which is one of the largest in the nation, if not the world. They’ve got 40 years of stories, including the capture of Charles Manson, security detail for the Sirhan Sirhan trial for the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, the riots in Watts and South L.A. and the L.A. Olympics.

I’m writing a screenplay about my experiences at a military school. It’s semiautobiographical, a coming-of-age film about military academy kids. Not like “Taps” - we don’t take over the school. Although it’s funny, because when “Taps” came out, we used to joke about one day coming back in our wheelchairs and taking over the school. Then, a year later, they announced they were closing the school, so we couldn’t do it.

**Q. Will you stay in the reserves?**

**A.** As long as I can. Unless I have a calling to leave the military or move from Tucson.



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