Kulongoski visits Bangladeshi leadership, PM
Oregon group spends Veterans Day in Bangladesh as part of SPP visit

SALEM, Ore., — Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski joined Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, the Adjutant General, Oregon, on a visit to Bangladesh to meet with military and civilian leaders supporting the State Partnership Program Nov. 10-12.

The State Partnership Program (SPP) helps build long-term relationships between individual states and their National Guard units, and foreign countries to enhance security and foster positive relations. The program was started in 1993 in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union and now includes 62 partnerships around the world. Oregon’s partnership with Bangladesh began in 2008.

The three-day visit was part of a continuing effort to discuss activities that promote mutual security cooperation, stability and progress.

The team, which included Oregon Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Steven Gregg and Oregon SPP Director Lt. Col. Mark Crosby, visited with various government ministries and Bangladesh military leaders, including Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina.

Several new concepts were discussed that complement the strengths and needs of the Oregon National Guard and the Bangladeshi

See BANGLADESH on PAGE 6
Every month continues to be demanding for our Oregon National Guard. National Guard has 3-116th Cavalry Brigade. In addition to having the privilege of traveling with General Ted Kulongoski to Baghdad to support the presenters, we welcomed home our Oregon 142nd Fighter Wing, returned from a successful overseas training tour to the United Arab Emirates, as well as the 162 Engineers from a 400-day deployment to Afghanistan.

Our impact is far reaching: when accomplishing our missions on the field of battle, assisting our communities here at home, or establishing partnerships, which will benefit our state and nation for years to come, the Oregon National Guard is leading the way.

The mission of the State Partnership Program is to build long-term relationships between individual states and their overseas partners.

In celebration of the Oregon National Guard’s 27th anniversary, I would like to thank our Guard members, Reservists, and families who make up the Oregon National Guard for their shared sacrifice. Our trip did just that. While in Bangladesh, we had the privilege of meeting with civilian and military leaders and various government ministries to discuss how to best respond to natural disasters, to provide better humanitarian opportunities, and to assist in military training exercises.

Oregon and Bangladesh share similar challenges with both regions impacted by food and flood zones and both governments can benefit from knowledge sharing and emergency management and disaster response.

I appreciated the opportunity to gain insight from the leaders of the 142nd Fighter Wing (Brown) during Operations, (provide they over 10,000 soldiers each year), while also sharing information about how we keep our state safe from disasters.

In early November, approximately 90 citizen-soldiers from the Oregon Air National Guard Company returned to Oregon early in the month. While in Afghanistan, our Oregon National Guard members deployed more than 13 Bronze Stars, 78 Combat Action Badges, 110 Commendations and five Purple Hearts.

This recognition speaks to the bravery and commitment of our Oregon Guard; Well done Captain Baca, First Sergeant Payne, and all the combat engineers of the 162.

The Oregon Sentinel is the official publication of the Oregon Military Department, designed and developed by the Oregon State Command Sergeant Major’s Command Masters Course. The Oregon Sentinel is distributed to members of the Oregon National Guard and other interested persons by request. Free of charge. It is available as a PDF file at www.orng.gov/organization/oregon-sentinel.
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force: ‘One suicide is too many’

Story by
Chief Master Sgt. James A. Roy, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

An alarming trend is happening in our Air Force, and we need your help. We’ve had a drastic increase this year in the number of suicides among our total force. Airmen - active duty, guard, reserve and civilians. Last year we lost 84 Airmen by suicide; as of October of this year, we nearly reached that number. The bottom line: even one suicide is too many!

We all take Suicide Awareness training, but that’s just the first step – we must take immediate action and get involved. We need to look out for each other and understand that we’re not alone. Be ready and willing to assist your Wingman and ask for help when you need it. We must all take the time to care about those around us. That’s what good Wingmen do, and that’s what our Air Force needs.

Supervisors at every level must now. Get to know your Airmen better and understand their personal and professional challenges. This is not a time to sit idle and think this won’t happen in your unit. No one is immune. Suicides range the spectrum of ages, locations, MAJCOMs and career fields. The two most common factors we’ve seen are problems with relationships and finances.

We need to be good Wingmen for others and also need to develop and maintain trusted relationships and friendships where we can talk openly and honestly about things happening in our own lives. We need to feel comfortable exchanging ideas, views and experiences with those who are closest to us. There is always someone available for you.

So many people care about you - more than you may think; family, friends, co-workers, supervisors, first sergeants, commanders, chaplains, medical professionals and senior leaders are ready and willing to listen and help. Just give them a chance. Don’t ever think you are alone or that no one will understand. We will understand, and we will help you. It doesn’t matter whether you write, call or e-mail, please reach out. We are an Air Force family and you mean a lot to all of us. If you feel you are at the end of your road, you are not - talk with someone.

We care about you and will ensure you receive the help you need. You should never be afraid of seeking help for fear of reprisal. Our lives should be the priority. The Air Force also has many resources to help. Military and family life consultants, chaplains and medical professionals are all available. Also, Military One Source counselors are always available by calling 800-342-9647 or visiting www.militaryonesource.com.

With everyone’s help, we can and must step up and reverse this devastating trend.

Note: This article was originally published on the National Guard Bureau website in late October, 2011.

Men also victims of sexual assault, few report crimes, study says

Story by Judith Watson, JFHQ Sexual Assault Resource Coordinator

Did you know that one man in seventeen will experience a completed or attempted sexual assault during his lifetime?

“According to a 2007 study by a team of VA researchers, a nationwide screening of veterans seeking VA services turned up more than 60,000 with sexual trauma. More than half of those – nearly 32,000-were men.” (Bill S sizeS of the Virginian-Pilot, 10-9-09)

If it is difficult for female victims to report the crime it is even more difficult for men to contact authorities.

“Boys are not supposed to be vulnerable, sad, helpless, ashamed, afraid, submissive…” according to Jim Hopper, a psychology instructor at Harvard Medical School. Military training reinforces that socialization. He further states that “… conditions men to accept physical wounds, death and killing while leaving them unprepared for emotional wounds that assault their male identity.”

The Department of Defense is committed to creating a climate in which victims/survivors feel accepted when they step forward to report an assault. Victims of sexual assault want to know that they will not suffer negative consequences, either in the form of career advancement or personal stigma.

Two key factors that improve the climate for reporting sexual assault are commander involvement in creating a pro-reporting environment and the role that fellow soldiers and airmen can play in being supportive to the survivor by encouraging that they report the crime.

The good news is that there are now over 25 Victim Advocates throughout Oregon as well as five SARCs for the two Brigades, the two Wings, and the Combat Operations Group.

Capt. Rey Aguillana (JFHQ-SARC) or Judith Watson (alternate JFHQ-SARC) are your resources for any questions you have regarding sexual assault. The number for the 24-hour hotline is 503-756-5327. You can make a difference.

Oregon Air Guard Chief leads visit to Bahrain hospital

From left to right: Tech. Sgt. Annette Sanders, Tech. Sgt. James Wilson, Staff Sgt. Melanie Mangan, Chief Master Sgt. Max White, and Senior Airman David Sisam pay a visit to a hospital in the capital city of Manama, Bahrain. The two boys in the photo were there checking up on their infirm little brother.

Led by Chief Master Sgt. Max White, who serves as the 142nd Fighter Wing Chief Master Sergeant, the group paid a visit to a local hospital in the capital city of Manama in Bahrain.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

talk to Soldiers or Airmen who have recently returned from one. For example, I learned from others personnel that insects that are present in the area can be a problem. I found that it was not necessary to dip my uniforms in insecticide and that Avon Skin So Soft was very effective in keeping away the rare mosquito or fly.

And Chief Gardner, who recently got back from Afghanistan, said Airmen would be relying on my leadership and decision-making over here. He was right, and that has just encouraged me to give it a 120 percent effort all of the time.

I would like to address the regulation that requires Oregon Soldiers to wear a safety vest while riding on or off duty. I know that this requirement is not necessarily enforced to its fullest extent, but I think it should be.

On Sept. 29, I was on my way home from picking my bike up from a scheduled service at Salem Harley. I live in St Helens and by the time I got to Scappoose it was dark.

Approximately six miles from home I hit a deer that jumped out in front of me on Highway 30. I was doing 55 mph at the time, and I hit the brakes. I laid the bike down as gently as I could after “Eboning” the deer, and ended up with only a few scrapes.

I was able to control laying down the bike, and prepared for the tumbling and kept my head off the ground.

The point I really want to stress is the fact that it was dark, but I believe I was able to get out of it with very little damage to myself or the bike because of the reflective safety vest I was wearing. Surely if it were not for the vest, I would have been run over by the drivers behind me.

In 35 years of riding I had never laid a bike down, and I attribute my not getting hit by the cars behind me to that reflective safety vest. It most likely saved my life.

I would ask that the ORANG take a stronger stance on the enforcement of the regulation and requirements that are already in place.
In spite of enemy fire, Oregon Soldiers refuse to leave downed comrades

We’re not leaving your brother

Story and photos by John Bruning, Printed with permission

The two Oregon National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopters roared between sawtooth ridges of the Hindu Kush Mountains, bound for a remote NATO outpost under enemy attack. Each Chinook carried two pilots, two door gunners, a flight engineer and half a platoon of Polish infantry assigned to reinforce the beleaguered garrison.


The hundred-foot-long Chinnocks seemed like toys compared to the sprawling backdrop of treestocks, rock-strewn mountains that peaked above their rotor blades.

The four pilots, chief warrant officers Joe Speal and Eric West in 262, Kyle Evans and Anson Smith in 073, had received this mission while out on election morning flying Afghan soldiers, officials and ballots into isolated villages all over the Logar Province.

As the two Chinnoks reached the last set of mountains before their destination, Eric West began to climb for more altitude.

In his civilian life, West works for Boeing in the Seattle area and is also a flight instructor. In his younger days, he once found a job as an announcer in a strip club to help pay his college bills. He sometimes uses his “announcer voice” over the radio to provide a little levity.

Beside him sat 262’s pilot-in-command, Joe Speal, a native of Georgia. Forty-seven year old Speal has spent over two decades in Army aviation and is currently on his second consecutive combat tour in Afghanistan.

“Can’t carry many troops or supplies. At the high altitudes of Eastern Afghanistan, the Chinooks to 15,000 feet without oxygen. The two ship flights through the mountain range, then broke out into the clear over a dry lake bed that stretched for miles. The two sides of the mountains, ridgelines over twelve thousand feet high averted.

For the combined Washington and Oregon air crews of Pendleton and Fort Lewis-based Bravo Company, 1-168 Aviation, the rugged countryside adds complexity to an already difficult mission, one in which their services are in great demand 24/7.

Once again, an element of the Oregon National Guard has found a spot center stage during a climactic time in the War on Terror.

Afghanistan is a country without a robust road network. Supplying far-flung NATO bases with vehicular convoys is simply not possible. Blackhawk helicopters abound, but at the high altitudes of Eastern Afghanistan they can’t carry many troops or supplies.

In this mountainous environment, the Chinooks shine.

Capable of carrying everything from trucks skid-derailed by crushed fire engines. God was with us in the cockpit that day.”

Evarts strapped on his helmet and rejoined his knowledge of the local area has been invaluable to the freshly arrived Guardsmen.

The two CH-47s took off, climbed to avoid being shot at with a rocket propelled grenade, then orbited 262 to provide cover with their three machine guns.

“Snuf.” The Apache pilot didn’t hesitate. He keyed his mic, “Doesn’t matter. We’re not leaving without our man.”

Despite the scare, there was work to be done.

“We continue mission,” West said as he grabbed his gear in the hours after his emergency landing. His co-pilot, Anson Smith, an Oregon National Guard Who drills out of Pendleton, orbited 262 to provide cover with their three machine guns.

Evarts, a highly experienced army aviator, radioed for help. A nearly Apache gunship pilot on another mission responded and told the Guardsmen that he and his gunner were on the way.

As the downed crew waited, curious villagers began to gather around the landing site. Evans and Smith made low passes over them in an attempt to get them to keep their distance.

A few minutes later, they touched down and reinforced the security perimeter with their load of Polish infantry.

“These were critical moments. Without the firepower an Apache can provide, the men on the ground were terribly vulnerable to a sudden enemy attack. It took thirteen minutes for the Apache to arrive. ‘Longest thirteen minutes of my life,’” West quipped.

“Me and the Apache reached the area, Evans radioed the gunship crew to ask, ‘How much fuel do you have?’”

When at last the Apache reached the area, Evans radioed the gunship crew to ask, “How much fuel do you have?” The Apache pilot didn’t hesitate. He keyed his mic, “Doesn’t matter. We’re not leaving you behind.”

“On the ground, West and Speal breathed a sigh of relief. There would be no Blackhawk Down scenario this day.”

The Taliban are simply too fearful of the Apache’s rockets, missiles and 30mm automatic cannon to brave an assault with one overhead.

As a result, the relationship between

it onto the parched Afghan soil. In seconds, Snuf slows the engines down and even the Polis in back puffed out the ramp to establish a protective perimeter around the crippled aircraft.

When at last the Apache reached the area, Evans radioed the gunship crew to ask, “How much fuel do you have?”

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Oregonians pay tribute to all veterans at parade in Albany, Ore.

The history of Veterans Day

World War I – known at the time as “The Great War” – officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles outside the town of Versailles, France.

However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied powers and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.”

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words: “To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with grateful thanksgiving for the victory, both because of the things for which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.

The original concept for the celebration was for a day observed with parades and public meetings and a brief suspension of business beginning at 11:00 a.m.

The United States Congress officially recognized the end of World War I when it passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926. An Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 U.S. Code, Sec. 87a) approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday—a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as “Armistice Day.” Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen in the Nation’s history; after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 87th Congress, at the urging of the veterans service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word “Armistice” and inserting in its place the word “Veterans.”

With the approval of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

In 1958, the White House advised VA’s General Counsel that the 1954 designation of the VA Administrator as Chairman of the Veterans Day National Committee applied to all subsequent VA Administrators.

Since March 1989 when VA was elevated to a cabinet level department, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has served as the committee’s chairman.

The Uniform Holiday Bill (Public Law 99-335; 96 Stat. 339) was signed on June 28, 1986, and was intended to ensure three-day weekends for Federal employees by celebrating four national holidays on Mondays: Washington’s Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Columbus Day.

It was thought that these extended weekends would encourage travel, recreational and cultural activities and stimulate greater industrial and commercial production. Many states did not agree with this decision and continued to celebrate the holidays on their original dates.

The first Veterans Day under the new law was observed with much confusion on October 23, 1971. It was quite apparent that the commemoration of this day was a matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens, and so on September 20th, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 94-276 (89 Stat. 479), which returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in 1978. This action supported the desires of the overwhelming majority of state legislatures, all major veterans service organizations and the American people.

Veterans Day continues to be observed on November 11, regardless of what day of the week on which it falls. The restoration of the observance of Veterans Day to November 11 not only preserves the historical significance of the date, but helps focus attention on the important purpose of Veterans Day: A celebration to honor America’s veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

Information courtesy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
Continued from front page:

DALLAS, Ore. — While the weather forecasted showers and cloudy skies, the sun shone brightly on downtown Dallas, Ore., as three buses pulled up to the parking lot in front of the old Dallas Armory, Nov. 4. More than 80 Oregon Citizen-Soldiers of the 162nd Engineer Company stepped off the buses and into the arms of waiting family members and friends. Combat boots and sneakers shuffled through red and gold autumn leaves, as cameras clicked and tears flowed.

The unit returned to Joint Base Lewis McChord, Wash., Oct. 29, following a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.

Danielle Baca, wife of the unit’s commander, Capt. Bob Baca, was happy to have her husband home. She beamed with pride as other family members hugged Soldiers.

“I’m incredibly proud of him and our kids for hanging in there,” Danielle said.

She added that deployments such as this are as much a learning experience for family members as they are for the Soldiers who deploy.

“These kinds of things don’t make you who you are, they show you what you’re made of,” she said.

For her husband, Capt. Bob Baca, the unit’s commander, the homecoming was a welcomed event.

“It’s been a long year being apart,” he said.

The unit held its demobilization ceremony one day later in the same spot. Since their old armory lies vacant following a fire, a large tent was erected at 817 Church Street for the ceremony.

Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, the Adjutant General, Oregon, joined Oregon Chief Justice Paul Danner, Oregon Congressmen Kurt Schrader, Dallas Mayor Jim Fairchild, Independence Mayor John Mc Ardle, and Monmouth Mayor John Oberst for the event.

“You have our sincerest gratitude,” Rees said from the stage in front of the unit and family and friends in the thousands.

“We’re home.”

Pvt. 1st Class Derek Cork, who was injured during the deployment, participated in the ceremony via the internet video software “Skype.” He and his family watched the event from a hospital room at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Following the conclusion of the demobilization ceremony, the unit’s Soldiers filed past the laptop computer and paused to say hello, or took time to chat with him via mobile phone.

The unit mobilized for the deployment in September 2009, conducting pre-deployment training at Fort McCoy, Wis., before departing to Afghanistan as part of a 400-day deployment. Approximately 100 Citizen-Soldiers joined the 204th Engineer Company from Washington State, providing route clearance throughout Afghanistan.

For his part, Cork was thrilled in charting more than 15,000 miles of roads during more than 6,000 hours of active missions, and nearly 200 IED events during their deployment.

“Soldiers in the unit earned more than 13 Bronze Star Medals, 78 Combat Action Badges, 60 Army Commendation Medals and five Purple Heart Medals.

Baca said that while the deployment was busy, and a few of his Soldiers received non-life threatening injuries, everyone came home.

“Our Soldiers ran hundreds of missions, and we brought everyone home,” he added.

Baca said one of the biggest things that kept Soldiers going on the deployment were the care packages sent by fellow Oregonians.

“I’d like to thank all of Oregon for keeping us in their thoughts,” he said.
Retirement a time full of opportunities

Story by Richard P. Norton, Lt. Col. (Ret.),
Chairman, ORNG Retirees and Veterans Council

For those of us who joined the military prior to the end of the draft, it was not uncommon to hear the explanation, “when can I get out of this chicken outfit?”

Well, most retirees today reflect back on our years served in the National Guard with great pride and a true sense of accomplishment. For those anticipating retirement, you look forward to experiencing all that you have dreamed about; vacations, working in the garden, time spent with family and friends, and the inevitable “Honey-do-list.”

Retirement is a privilege you have worked hard for and you should enjoy every minute of it, if you have prepared yourself properly.

After spending years with a clear purpose and sense of direction, retirement may feel like a big black hole of purposelessness. What about those may be able to find things to do around the house, but still don’t feel they have accomplished anything truly worthwhile? At the end of the day, putting on that housecoat seems pointless.

Fortunately, many find this transition easy to adapt to and they are to be admired. But to most, you suddenly realize that you miss being around the uniform and you miss all the people you have grown to love and respect. Leaving the Guard after many years can be a difficult task.

Consider attending a regimental or unit retiree luncheon or breakfast that can bring you back into the fold. Consider volunteering in your old unit or joining an organization such as the Employer Support for Guard and Reserve, or working as a volunteer for the Oregon National Guard Association (NGAUS), USA, or AFA. And if you are an officer, consider the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). Any of these options can fill in those gaps between vacations, hunting, and fishing trips.

Volunteering, part-time work, or taking on seasonal jobs and physical activities are a great way to get your spouse and get out of the house. The added benefit is that you will feel useful, and continue to engage and challenge your mind, including your now retired body. Retirement is a new opportunity to set and work towards future goals. It can make your retirement more acceptable for your positive mental health.

Retiree luncheon set for April 15, 2011

The next Semi-Annual Retiree Luncheon is scheduled for April 15, 2011, at the Salem Eagles Lodge #2081, 2771 Pence Loop, SE, Salem, Ore.

The Retiree’s gather starting at 11:00 am for social time and lunch is served at 12:00 noon. All retirees and former state and federal employees of the Oregon Military Department are welcome.

All attendees must RSVP so the committee can provide the Eagles Club with an accurate headcount.

For more information, or to RSVP, contact CW5 (Ret.) Lee Ashwill at (503) 393-9320 or via e-mail: leebarba@comcast.net.

OR Military Museum needs artifacts

While it’s not really an official “museum”, the four display cases inside the new 41 Infantry Division Armed Forces Reserve Center at Camp Withycombe, Ore., hold as much stuff as many small museums.

Each case measures 45 feet long, 6 foot high, and 28 inches deep. The first two refer to the 41st as it relates to their local history: Camp Murray (Wash.), Camp Roberts (Calif.), Fort Harrison (Mont.), as well as Camp Withycombe (Ore.).

In fact, it is the same people who ran the Oregon Military Museum that are responsible for the display cases at the 41st Infantry Division “AFRC,” and a lot of the uniforms and artifacts they already have on hand come from this museum.

However, the Oregon Military Museum Curator, Tracy Thoennes, has invited members of the 41st IDA to participate in the interpretation of our history by donating items, as well as the stories that go with them.

“The items most of interest are those quintessential artifacts that tell a compelling story or anecdote,” says Thoennes.

The displays cannot house operable guns or live ammunition, and the working community is attempting to store replicas of a Springfield rifle, drill rifle, M1, and various other weapons. The shopping list reads like a treasure hunt. One recurring item is footwear; hobnail boots from WWI, shiny russet brown riding boots from 1944, combat boots with three quarter lace-ups from 1917, and a “jungle suit with sneakers.” The mannequins trace the change in uniforms from war’s start to finish.

Other equipment and supply items mentioned include a “300” radio, shaving kit, pith helmet, V-mail, “Montana Peak” hat, WWII bombers, and so on. Any items that were used in WWII by 41st Soldiers, the Japanese or the Australians are of interest.

The third case is for equipment and supply items, and the fourth case highlights the 41st experience with the Japanese and the Australians.

This is the first time Oregon will have a display location dedicated exclusively to the 41st Division. There are museums located at the camps used by the 41st, which refer to the 41st as it relates to their local history: Camp Murray (Wash.), Camp Roberts (Calif.), Fort Harrison (Mont.), as well as Camp Withycombe (Ore.).


Members of the Oregon State Defense Force met Oct. 23 at Camp Rilea on Oregon’s northern coast for an emergency management class.

Lorraine Churchill, USAI Grant & Program Coordinator, a sergeant in the Oregon State Defense Force and Search and Rescue volunteer, taught the class.

The USAI grant program’s mission is to support and help plan, equip, staff and train volunteers in high-threat, high density urban areas of the country.

The Portland-Metro area is considered a Tier II location, which is part of 53 areas receiving the 45 percent of the total available USAI funding. The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), receive top priority funding by USAI.

Since 2003, the Portland area has received $48 million in funding from USAI. The counties of Columbia, Washington, Clark, Multnomah and Clackamas are part of the Portland Urban Area, overseen by the City of Portland which acts as the region’s grant administrator.

Officials said the money goes toward urban search and rescue, onsite incident management, hazardous materials response and decontamination, community and citizen preparedness.
Kingsley Airmen upgrade jets’ engines during busy cycle

By Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Thompson, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. -- A lone F-15 lifted into the sky Sept. 9, 2010 heading south to Arizona where it joined a number of other Kingsley jets in what is commonly referred to as the “boneyard.”

Since the beginning of the year maintainers at the 173rd Fighter Wing at Kingsley Field have converted the entire fleet from the F100PW100 Pratt-Whitney to the more responsive and efficient F100PW220 Pratt-Whitney engine, and as tail number 016 left the base for the last time, the extensive project was finally complete.

Master Sgt. Sean Campbell, who works as a crew chief, reflected on nearly a decade of service to his plane, both while here and previously on active duty at Nellis AFB, Nev.

“The hardest part was letting the jet go,” Campbell said. “There was a lot of hard work and pride tied up in that jet.”

And according to propulsion superintendent, Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Van De Hey, that hard work began anew with the conversion process.

He said the -220 project was “unprogrammed” meaning the maintenance group and by default, the wing—absorbed the cost of the upgrade. Additionally, the wing did the work without the help of on an on-site technical representative.

“The 173rd Fighter Wing Engine Shop found creative ways to acquire training and tooling,” said Van De Hey.

“The computer integrated nature of the -220 engine, and its testing and diagnostic requirements proved to be the largest obstacle in the conversion,” he said.

“Despite these tremendous obstacles, the professional and dedicated members of the Engine Shop made the difficult conversion situation seem simple and seamless,” Van De Hey added.

Base supply pitched in by requesting equipment Management, and the Air- craft Electric Shop.

(173rd Fighter Wing Engine Shop) From Tinker, Elmendorf, Wright-Patterson, and Eglin to touch our people how to over- haul the engines in-shop as well as take care of flightline maintenance,” said Tech. Sgt. Robert Thorpe. “We are also bringing in another instructor from Nellis AFB at the end of the month to teach our people some of the new diagnostic capabilities we have now.”

Thorpe said the critical element in making the training successful was the way the maintainers worked hard to absorb the new tasks and how they are passing along the knowledge to their new people.

“I can bring in instructors from all over the world, but without their initiative to take responsibility to master the material, it doesn’t matter—they deserve all the cred- it,” Thorpe said.

At the end of the project 12 jets have been converted, and the rest of the fleet are “iron flow” jets which already have the -220 engines.

Chief Master Sgt. Victor Krieger, the chief of maintenance, says a number of different shops around the 173rd Fighter Wing were critical in the execution of the project including the Propulsion Element, Flight Line Personnel, Maintenance Training, Plans and Scheduling, Base Supply, (i.e. Equipment Management), and the Air- craft Electric Shop.

He added that after receiving the first -220 engine in August 2009, the last “iron flow” jet is scheduled to arrive here at Kingsley Oct. 21, leaving 24 upgraded aircraft gracing the ramp at Kingsley Field.

By all accounts the conversion project caps a busy run for maintenance personnel at Kingsley, say maintenance personnel. This has been accomplished while maintaining a robust flying schedule, which routinely flies 10 jets in the morning and turns eight of them around for afternoon or evening flying missions.

At the same time the wing is undergoing a major inspection and gearing up for additional flying missions, Kingsley Field steps into the role of sole provider for F-15 training for the Air Force.