Hawaii Air National Guard 154th Wing
Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii

Kūka'ilimoku

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Airmen spread aloha in the desert

by Gregg K. Kakesako, Honolulu Star Bulletin

Nearly four dozen Hawaii Air National Guard airmen deployed to Iraq for six months will be hosting a luau next month to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Hawaii statehood.

With help from people in Hawaii, they want to bring aloha to the Kirkuk Regional Air Base, according to Master Sgt. Sean Iida, first sergeant of the Maui-based 292nd Combat Communications Squadron.

Iida said he wants "the folks back home to know that the aloha spirit is alive and well out here in the desert."

Besides airmen from Maui, the contingent includes citizen reservists from the 291st Combat Communications Squadron in Hilo and the 293rd Combat Communications Squadron that is normally based at Hickam Air Force Base.

courtesy photo

Master Sgt. Sean Iida wants people back home to know "that the aloha spirit is alive and well out here in the desert."

In an e-mail, Iida said the Kirkuk base commander wants to invite the 1,000 airmen who make up the 506th Air Expeditionary Group to the Aug. 21 luau, which would be held in the base's dining facility.

courtesy photo

Hawaii Air National Guard members in Iraq are getting ready for a luau next month to commemorate Hawaii's 50th anniversary as a state. Staff Sgt. Johnelle Tumbaga, Senior Airman Laura Hunter, Senior Airman Stephanie Ignacio, Senior Airman Larissa Lerma, Tech. Sgt. Mona Lisa Palone, Tech. Sgt. Barbara Jean Nesbitt and Master Sgt. Tammy Thompson practice the hula.

Iida wrote: "It started out as just an idea that we could do here at our squadron (61 people), and mushroomed when the higher-ups got word of it.

"As far as entertainment, we have folks practicing to perform hula (females), haka (males), and will have a few musicians perform," Iida wrote.

So far, the Hawaii reservists have donations from the islands that include more than 700 leis from the Sheraton Hotels and bags of rice from family members.

The statehood luau menu currently calls for kalua pig, lomi salmon, chicken long rice, haupia, macaroni salad, Spam and cabbage.

"Things that we could use are packets of powdered haupia (about 40), kukui nut leis (about 20), elbow and knee wraps for males haka (about 20 sets) and luau decorations," Iida said in the e-mail.

Iida can be reached by writing to him at: 506 ECS/CCF, Unit #70074, APO, AE 09359; or e-mail him at sean.iida@hotmail.com.

Commander's Call: Our new identity

by Col. Joseph K. Kim, interim Commander 154 WG

Aloha!

At every level in our Air National Guard, the issue of our "identity" is a very common topic.

For most of you, the issue of our Guard identity revolves around missions and machines which justly recognize us for the great work we do for our great state and nation, both at home and deployed.

For example, for many Guard units, in the past, our identity has been tied closely to concrete things, like our aircraft.

Those aircraft that we see, touch and fly every day while we are at work represent superb mission execution, meticulous maintenance practices that keep legacy airframes in top combat ready states, and the indispensable support mechanisms. Year after year we as an Air National Guard Team bring to bear unbeatable and ever improving mission success across all of our state and federal missions.

With fewer new aircraft and the resulting associations with our Active and Reserve components, we can no longer associate our identity strictly with hardware.

Our new identity will be the successes we achieve training and deploying as a Total Force Team, the recent ORI and our C-17 aircrew and maintenance being prime examples.

Due to our visionary leaders, we are blessed with a bright future in the Hawaii Air National Guard.

It was your superior performance in day to day operations, inspections and deployments that enabled that success.

We must carry that winning attitude forward as we continue to develop our Classic Associate in the C-17, and begin our new missions and Active Associates with the F-22 and KC-135.

We must capitalize on our core competency of experience and the added relevance our Active partners bring to create synergies and keep Team Hickam the most desired location in the Total Air Force!

My sincerest congratulations to Col. Sakai and especially Lt. Col. Traettino as we unfurl a new flag as the 154th Operations Support Flight becomes the 154th Operations Support Squadron!

The 154 OSS will continue to develop into the home for our Wing's combat expertise as we train for future deployments and inspections.

Please continue to develop our young 154th Wing members and please keep safety as a focus item throughout the year, but especially during the "101 Critical Days critical days of summer."

I know it's said often, but you and your families are our most valuable asset! Mahalo Nui Loa!

photo by Master Sgt. Kristen M. Stanley

Lt. Col. John Traettino, 154th Operations Support Flight commander, proudly represents the OSF as the Flight becomes a Squadron during an activation ceremony here. Presiding over the ceremony was Col. Braden Sakai, 154 OG commander, with guide, Master Sgt. Jason Seales, 154 OG first sergeant.

Kuka'ilimoku

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All photos are United States Air Force photos unless otherwise noted.

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Leadership starts with discipline and order

by Command Chief Master Sgt. Robert S.K. Lee III, 154 WG

Aloha All! Patriotism permeates throughout this month as we celebrate our nation's independence documented by our United States Constitution.

The preamble as stated, "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America," expresses the intent of our fore fathers.

www.archives.gov

Founding Fathers signing the U.S. Constitution.

In defense of our Constitution, military organizations crafted a structured professional environment that is based on discipline and order, which empowers our nation to bring peace as a world power. The cloth of our charge of protecting this great nation is woven from the principles of leadership, integrity and trust. Proper utilization of any chain-of-command is paramount when ensuring mission success.

Trust is breached when the chain-of-command is broken; integrity lost if we do not allow certain levels within the organization opportunities to address issues, and leadership falters when those same opportunities are ignored. Stand with a strong conviction of adhering to those practices that help solidify the reason for our existence in defending democracy.

Let's all ensure that discipline and order are held together through leadership, integrity and trust.

Let's Roll!

What's so good about the SNCOA?

by Master Sgt. Rob Joy, HQ 201 CCG

A wise man once said," The only constant is change." And speaking from experience, I can honestly say that this is especially true as it pertains to leadership. As Senior Non-Commissioned Officers, we are charged with the responsibility of mentoring in two directions - up to our junior officers and down to our mid-level NCO's and airmen.

But what tools have you been given to make sure that you are doing the best job possible? Well sure, many useful programs have come and gone like 'Quality Air Force' and Stephen Covey's 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,' both of which have some very good tools to throw into the leadership bag.

But, I would argue that we have not spent enough time and effort on learning leadership techniques for a myriad of reasons, two of the most popular being time and money. Whatever the reasons may be, I believe we have neglected the obvious solution, which is attendance at one of our Air Force in-residence Professional Military Education Schools.

If you would indulge me for a moment, I would like to submit these numbers to quantify and strengthen my position.

Having recently returned from the Senior Non-Commission Academy at Maxwell AFB, I will focus my data on the Senior NCO ranks. There are 459 Senior NCOs currently assigned in the Hawaii Air National Guard, only 12 or .03% have attended the SNCOA. Of those 459 SNCOs, 97 are E-8s of which only two have attended the SNCOA and just eight of the

see SNCOA page 9

First Sergeant Diamond Tips

When you are outside and not in a designated no-hat/no salute area, you must wear your hat; this includes the Shoppete gas pumps.

Not your average deployment: the saga continues

by Capt. Tony Montes, 154 LRS

part 3: Arriving in Honduras

courtesy photo

Joint task headquarters building at Enrique Soto Cano Air Base.

I didn't know it till a few days later, but I was told that the airport in Tegucigalpa is actually rated the second most dangerous airport in the world to land in! It takes a special certification for the pilots to actually fly in there. I'm glad I didn't know that ahead of time!

On arrival to the airport, we were whisked away to customs. The whole H1N1 flu was being taken very seriously, and everybody had to be screened and had there temperature taken behind an infrared scanner. But it was very exciting to be in another country!

After a very long three hour bus ride through the mountains I arrived at Enrique Soto Cano AB, Honduras. It's the home of Joint Task Force Bravo which has been running a counter-drug and humanitarian assistance mission in Latin America for 25 years now!

I was shocked to find that the base looked strikingly similar to North Shore, Oahu! Yes, complete with palm trees with coconuts, mango trees, geckos and chickens running around!

My sponsor asked if I was hungry. Oh yeah, matter of fact I had been craving a bento box from Kay's Bento from the minute I left Hawaii! Ugh, it was going to be a long six months till I had any "ono grindz" like that I thought. But to my surprise, my sponsor took me over to a cookout that some of the logistics folks were having.

I didn't get my bento box, but I was treated to a feast of Chicken Adobo, this awesome chopped Spam with lime dish, and fried rice! What were the chances that my first meal in Central America was going to have some island flair to it? I didn't contemplate the irony too long as I heard my fellow POL troops in the back of my head saying, "Captain, go grind!"

After my first week here, I can't believe that this

see DEPLOYMENT page 8

HIANG members earn Master's of Science degree

by 154 WG/PA

Members of the Hawaii Air National Guard were among the conferees at the Central Michigan University graduation held at the Hickam Air Force Base Officer's Club May 17.

"We should take advantage of the educational benefits provided to members of the Hawaii Air National Guard," said Tech. Sgt. Venus Santamaria-Lusk, 154th Mission Operations Flight. "Knowledge is power, she added.

courtesy photo

Traditional tossing of hats following awarding of degrees.

Tech. Sgt. Santamaria-Lusk along with 1st Lt. Love Williamson earned their Master of Science in Administration from Central Michigan University.

"The pursuit of higher education is not just a personal goal, but also a goal to inspire others to create opportunities in one's career and to strengthen the country as a whole," said Tech. Sgt. Santamaria-Lusk.

courtesy photo

Tech. Sgt. Venus Santamaria-Lusk, Central Michigan University graduate.

HIANG member earns police officer award

by Tech. Sgt. Betty J. Squatrito-Martin

Traditional Guardsmen in the Hawaii Air National Guard have the opportunity to experience two career paths. Sometimes those career paths converge and cover similar ground. The two careers can simply be a matter of changing from one color of blue to another color of blue. That is the way it is for Master Sgt. Steven H. Matsuda, 154th Security Forces Squadron who dawns the blue of the Honolulu Police Department when he is not serving as a member of the Hawaii Air National Guard.

The Honolulu Police Department recognized Master Sgt. Matsuda's service by naming him the Metropolitan Police Officer of the Year for 2009 during an awards ceremony held at the Honolulu Police Department Headquarters in May.

"It is truly a humbling experience," said Master Sgt. Matsuda 154th Security Forces Squadron Armory Weapons Storage Non- Commissioned Officer in Charge. "So many police officers do great things every day that just to be nominated is an honor," he added.

Master Sgt. Matsuda, has been with the Hawaii Air National Guard for 23 years and with Honolulu Police Department for nearly 17 years.

courtesy photo

Master Sgt. Steven H. Masuda, with wife, Susan and daughter, Stephanie, receives a recognition plaque from Police Chief Boisse P. Correa.

He has spent the last 10 years as the administration field officer for the Community Affairs Section of the police department.

No matter what role Master Sgt. Matsuda is playing, he is serving his community.

According to the Honolulu Police Departments *Blue Light* newsletter, Master Sgt. Matsuda, while wearing the Honolulu Police Department blue, is responsible for supervising and training 72 reserve officers and staffing for large events such as the Honolulu City Lights Parade, Sunset in the Park, and vanguard operations.

"It's truly an honor to be recognized for doing my job," said Master Sgt. Matsuda. I couldn't do it without the love and support from my family and the men and women of the Reserve Officer program, he added.

Finding funds for college

by Retention Office

The Retention office will be hosting a "College 101" on July 17 and Aug. 17, in Bldg 3417, Mission Support Group Conference Room at 9 a.m. until 11:30 am.

The focus will be helping Guard members find resources to fund college.

If interested and plan to attend, please email or call Tech. Sgt. Ricky Patrick in the Retention Office at 448-7249, so plans can be made accordingly.

July 12, close of business, is the last day to turn in your grades for the Spring 2009 semester.

If there are situations that will prevent you from turning them in please inform the Retention Office personnel.

Era of New GI Bill begins

by Maj. Beth Kelley Horine, AFPC Public Affairs

For Maj. Eric Hanley, an MC-130 pilot out of Eglin AFB, Fla., and Master Sgt. Floyd Kirkland, 4th Contracting Squadron superintendent and first sergeant at Seymour-Johnson AFB, N.C., the transfer-to-dependent option of the new GI Bill significantly changes their financial futures.

Active duty Airmen and Selected Reservists can apply to transfer their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to their dependents after Aug. 1, 2009, through the Transfer Education Benefits Web site under development by the DoD's Defense Manpower Data Center.

Eligible members who do not plan to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for themselves and only transfer their benefits to their family members do not need to apply for the Post-9/11 GI Bill separately. The act of applying to transfer benefits also serves as application for GI Bill benefits for the member.

see GI page 9

News Briefs

Paralegal vacancy

A traditional vacancy position is available for the 154th Wing Legal office. Closing date for application is Aug. 2, 2009.

Minimum AFSC qualifications and a current general score of 51 is required.

Non-Prior Service Airmen-must complete three years in current AFSC to be eligible. Interview times will be scheduled by the JAG personnel. For additional info on this position, contact: Capt. Mason Martin, 448-7278 or Tech. Sgt. Blaine Osato, 448-7276

If you would like to apply for this vacancy contact or visit us in the Retention office to initiate your a Career Change Worksheet. Be prepared to provide a resume at the interview.

Volunteers needed

This past May $2,800 were raised at the car wash! Family Readiness will be purchasing the postage for 220 care packages for deployed servicemembers! A minimum of 20 people are needed to prepare the packages for shipping. Packages will be assembled July 17, from 4 p.m. until finished, at the 154 MDG.

If you would like to volunteer please email Staff Sgt. Ryan Yung: ryan.yung@hihick.ang.af.mil, or call, 227-7398, by COB July 16.

Packages will be sent to the post office the following Monday. If you would like to donate any snacks or items in the package, please drop them off to Staff Sgt. Yung at Finance or Lorna at Family Readiness. Donations will be taken up to July 16, 2009. Thank you very much for your support with this project. Your brothers and sisters in harms way will appreciate it!

June promotions

Promoted to MSgt. (E-7)

293 CBCS	Kaopuiki, George K.
154 MXS	Kobayashi, Charles H.
154 SFS	Oshiro, Gary M.
154 LRS	Santiago, Javier

Promoted to TSgt. (E-6)

154 MOF	Castanares, Cherie K.
204 AS	Oshiro, Steven T.
292 CBCS	Romias, Nichole M.
199 FS	Young, Jorena L.

Promoted to SSgt. (E-5)

199 FS	Baker, Roderick H. Jr.
154 OSF	Gillespie, Michael
154 SFS	Guerrero, Lloyd P.
154 MXG	Johnson, Sean N.
154 MXS	Panado, Joey L.
204 AS	Parker, Scott
154 MXS	Pinol, Vic Jr.
154 SFS	Souza, Melissa L.
154 OSS	Tomas, Billionard
154 MXS	Uema, Stephen Y.
203 ARS	Victorino, Anthony A.
154 MDG	Walker, Gennielle

154 WG

Drill Dates
Aug. 1-2, 2009
Sept. 12-13, 2009
Oct. 3-4, 2009

SNCO conference

The Senior Non-Commissioned conference is scheduled for Aug. 5-6 at the Nehelani Banquet and Conference Center, Schofield Barracks.

The registration point of contact is Master Sgt. Rich Costa. Please submit your applications/registration by July 17, 2009

New First Sergeant

Master Sgt Marcus Della Sala, 154th Logistics Readiness, has recently been selected as the First Sergeant for the 201st Intel Squadron.

Maintenance officer vacancy

The 154th Maintenance Group is in search of a few professional and hardworking individuals with leadership skills ready to take on the challenge of becoming an officer in the aircraft maintenance arena or transferring to our fine organization as an officer up to the grade of Major.

If this is you, email your resume to Lt. Col. Duke Ota, at duke.ota@hihick.ang.af.mil or mail to 154 AMXS/CC, 360 Mamala Bay Drive, Hickam AFB, HI 96853-5517. These positions are all traditional Guardsmen positions.

POSITION: Aircraft Maintenance Officer, AFSC 21AX

STATUS: Traditional Guardsman –Commissioned Officer

LOCATION: Hickam AFB, Hawaii

CLOSING DATE: July 31, 2009

Interviews will be scheduled for August time frame.

SUMMARY: You will be involved in many areas of concern: safety, facilities, vehicles, deployments, manufacturing, future force, airfield management, construction, contracting, budgeting, training, finance, etc...Positions are rotated and assignments will be with both fighter and heavy aircraft. Previous maintenance experience may allow attendance to the "short" accelerated course.

Please send your resume along with cover letter (include civilian competencies with transferable skills). College transcripts not required. References/letters of recommendation are helpful.

If you have any questions on the positions, don't hesitate to call Lt. Col. Duke Ota, at DSN 448-8429.

Ready, reliable, with the proper attitude

by Maj. Daniel Leatherman, 154 WG Chaplain

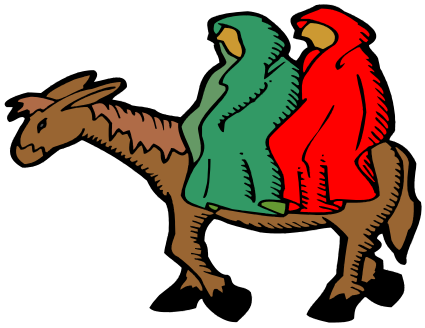
Hafa Adai!

With this Chamoro greeting, I write this article to you while deployed to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in support of deployed forces. I have just arrived a few days ago to relieve our own Chaplain Nagamine who has done wonderful work here at Andersen and laid a solid foundation for continued ministry.

The Chaplain Religious Support Team has the support of the 36th Wing Chapel Program and are provided two vehicles for use in support of our operations. The first vehicle is a Ford Ranger pick-up. A/C is a needed luxury here, and we are thankful to have it. The second vehicle is an open air, all terrain, 4WD, two-seater by Kawasaki. It's called a Mule.

There are no frills in this thing. It readily and reliably gets us to and from our points of ministry and visitation. There's only the "natural" air conditioning of the wind, no radio, and you often need ear protection when driving. It's a beast, but it's a reliable beast, one that hauls the cold refreshments to hard working men and women out on the Andersen Flight line.

In many ways it is not unlike the humble donkey that carried Jesus into the city of Jerusalem. It was not a triumphal steed that carried forth the teacher and preacher of Nazareth into a crowd to shouts of praise and a king's welcome. For us, the things that enable us to be truly effective in the world are not necessarily bright, glitzy and high speed. The elements that sustain us and help us to be all that God calls us to be are rooted in things such as simplicity, integrity and humility.



For us, we could have a fancier car for our work here in the chaplaincy, but that would not make us more effective, what we have in the Mule is the right vehicle and the right attitude.

Continue to pray for all deployed personnel and their families.

WORSHIP SERVICES

General Protestant Service
12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m., UTA Sundays, Bldg.3416, 2nd floor, Na Koa Conf Room.

Catholic Services
5:00 p.m., Saturdays, Nelles Chapel
10:30 a.m., Sundays, Chapel Center

Jewish Services
7:30 p.m., Fridays, Pearl Harbor Aloha Chapel on Makalapa Road.

Buddhist, Muslim or other faith groups
call either the Wing Chaplain's office at 448-7275 on drill weekends or during other times the Chapel Center at 449-1754.

courtesy photo

A message from Capt. Colette Ching, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar

My trip downrange was uneventful (which is always good). I got to get really familiar with my firearm as we have to carry it around everywhere, even into the chow hall and BX. I spent time in Saddam Hussein's Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, and got to see how the Army lives. The work here at the CAOC is extremely challenging as we support both theaters, but the living conditions are very comfortable for the region. It gets up to 130 degrees on some days but I work at night and sleep during the day, so I miss most of the heat. I am learning a ton and feel I will grow tremendously from my experience here.I do miss Hawaii, family and friends, but I'm busy much of the time; so, the time will fly by. Please tell everyone I said hello. I'll be back in no time.

Aloha,
Colette

Equal opportunity provides tools for success

by Thea Skinner 21st Space Wing Public Affairs staff writer

6/19/2009 - PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. -- The purpose of the Equal Opportunity office is to promote good relations between people in the workplace without regard to race, national origin, color, religion, gender, age or disability.

The EO office at Peterson assists civilian and active duty personnel in discrimination and sexual harassment complaints, provides education, and surveys organizations through climate assessments.

Maintaining functional and healthy relationships is of high importance to Rex Jones, the new 21st Space Wing Equal Opportunity director.

"On a list of priorities, family and faith are at the top," Mr. Jones said. "I think if you are asked to manage a profession it is about managing people. If you can manage relationships at home, I think you should be able to manage relationships in the workplace."

Mr. Jones is new to the area, but has a local tie: in the early 1990s Mr. Jones was mentored by retired Chief Master Sgt. Bob Vásquez at Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash.

"One of the reasons America is great is that we Americans value and expect that all people have the equal opportunity to reach their own individual potential," Chief Vásquez said. He is now the U.S. Air Force Academy's Center for Character Development course director.

"Commanders are entrusted with seeing that Warrior (Airmen) and their families don't discriminate and are not discriminated against and do, I believe, an exceptional job at that. I think it's one of the reasons Warrior (Airmen) stay in service," he said.

While Mr. Jones is new to the area, he is not new to the field. He arrives here from Hawaii, where he was the state equal employment manager for the National Guard. Mr. Jones is licensed to teach and mentor the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, various "personality tests," which are lessons in personal change. The skills assisted him during an Air Force merger of separate civilian and military EO offices.

The merger also placed discrimination and sexual harassment under the same EO roof. Mr. Jones thinks another merger will occur across the Air Force with sexual assault response coordinators in the near future.

"Even though our force is becoming more sensitive to these issues we still need to provide a process," he said. "A lot of people don't like change, but it is beneficial - even those that do not like it will be one step ahead of the workforce."

The military portion of EO is conducted through in-house investigations and interviews with parties involved, while the civilian portion requires a company to conduct the investigation that is sent to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and a federal judge.

Chief Vásquez, also an adjunct professor at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, is presently focused on relationships while writing a leadership book.

"The most basic human need in human relations is respect," Chief Vásquez said. "We all want to be respected for who we are and what we do. The next level is valuing. We all want to be valued as a person and want our work to be seen as important, because we bring something different to the table. The third level is celebrating the differences. When you get to that level you really have a healthy group, unit, team and family."

There is a hotline for military personnel and civilians to call in EO complaints and the calls are kept confidential. To reach the EO hotline, call 1-888-231-4058 or DSN 665-5241.

Deployment

is actually considered a deployment! I've enrolled in a month-long Spanish Immersion class run by the Army.

I am staying in a wooden "hooch" with cable TV and premium channels. There is no running water in the hooches, so this is where I earn my hardship pay! But it gives the place a summer camp feel to it! There is a nice little BX about the size of the Shoppette on Hickam. The Dining Facility is not bad, and the Colonel brags that they have the best ice cream in the Army!

The MWR program here is incredible! We actually get four day holiday weekends and can travel around country! They say the diving near the resort island of Roatan is world class! There are also old Mayan ruins to visit and other trips too. The Chaplain also does hikes up to poor villages in the mountains to deliver food to the needy.

I'm telling you folks, this place is truly a gem! I am very, very fortunate to get an assignment like this. But the moral of the story is that there are many other great opportunities being offered out there, and they are available to us in the Air Guard! Take advantage if you get the chance and see what's out there. And remember, being a volunteer can be very rewarding!

I'll write more as my deployment continues...

SNCOA

319 assigned E-7s have attended the SNCOA. If you are following the math, this leaves two Chief Master Sergeants that have completed SNCOA and one of them is retiring this UTA.

Currently 218 of the 319 E-7s have not as yet completed course 14. As we speak, the preferred method for attaining leadership skills is through voluntary career development courses, which satisfy's the basic promotion requirements for E-5 thru E-8. I understand that this is by far the easiest and, in some cases, the only way to complete the necessary requirements due to the citizen Airmen nature of our workforce. Using this system alone, however, does not allow for the practical application of the presented skills, and in my opinion is comparable to sending an airman out to fix an aircraft without significant On-the-Job training. I have always explained that although the appropriate voluntary CDC should be done as soon as possible, a follow-on application to attend the in-residence equivalent should also be accomplished to round out the learning.

I'm guessing right about now you're asking yourself, "What's in it for me"? I'm here to tell you that the SNCOA was one of the most positive experiences in my career and I highly recommend it for all who are able to attend. The course is 7and one half weeks long with a very engaging and challenging curriculum. My class was comprised of SNCOs from all five branches of service as well as coalition representation from Botswana, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, and Germany. The phrase "Total Force Integration" takes on a whole new meaning at the SNCOA, and the international students provided us a TFI perspective we would not have thought otherwise possible. The living conditions were more than adequate as billeting is in a campus setting and within close proximity to the academy. The rooms are large and have a queen-sized bed, full kitchen minus the stove, 32" flat-panel television with DVD player, and most important your own PRIVATE BATHROOM. Lastly, the dining facility is within walking distance and the food and hospitality are outstanding.

Prior to graduation we were offered an opportunity to meet with our MAJCOM Command Chief Master Sergeant, who in this case was the outgoing Chief Master Sgt. Smith. He introduced the incoming Air National Guard Command Chief Master Sgt., Chief Master Sgt. Muncy, who explained that it was his intention to increase our ANG allotment of seats in the AFSNCOA from 130 to 150. I only counted 126 ANG personnel in the room, which meant we did not fill 4 seats in my class alone.

From a training management stand-point, it is very difficult to ask for more seats when you cannot fill the current allotment. It seems logical to me that attending an institution that is challenging academically with comfortable living conditions and getting paid might spark your curiosity. Therefore, I would like to ISSUE A CHALLENGE to the 406 eligible Master Sgts. and Senior Master Sgts. out there. Apply for the Air Force Senior NCO Academy for Fiscal Year 2010 in the hopes of being selected as a student.

I believe that as the largest organization in the Air National Guard, we are missing a valuable opportunity to gain the leadership tools necessary to keep pace with our constant change. It is safe to say, you will not regret your decision and you just may become as excited as I am about the in-residence experience.

GI

For more details, call the Total Force Service Center at 1-800-525-0102 or visit the Post-9/11 GI Bill spotlight link on the "Ask" AFPC Web site.

Post 9/11 GI Bill versus the Montgomery GI Bill. Airmen and veterans who currently have the Montgomery GI Bill and meet the eligibility requirements for the Post-9/11 GI Bill may apply to convert to the newer bill as of May 1, for a program start date of Aug. 1, 2009. This is a one-time, irrevocable conversion. Currently, approximately 187,000 Reg ular Air Force Airmen are eligible to make the switch, if desired.

"For most eligible veterans, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is a better alternative than the Montgomery GI Bill," said Mr. Hawthorne. "Deciding which GI Bill to use depends on several factors, including the type of education or training you plan to take, the location of your school, and the amount of benefits received under each program."

Individuals converting to the Post-9/11 GI Bill from the MGIB generally will be limited to the amount of remaining months of MGIB entitlement. However, if all MGIB benefits have been used (36 months), individuals are still eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill and can receive an additional 12 months of benefits (48 months total, combined between two GI Bills, allowed under law).

The VA serves as the primary resource for information on all GI Bill education benefits. Airmen can find Air Force specific information on the AFPC "Ask" site by clicking on the Post-9/11 GI Bill spotlight link; or call the Total Force Service Center at 1-800-525-0102.

Additional Guidance can be found at the following:

VA's Post-9/11 GI Bill:

http://www.gibill.va.gov/pamphlets/CH33/CH33_Pamphlet.pdf <http://www.gibill.va.gov/pamphlets/CH33/CH33_Pamphlet.pdf>

DoD's GI Bill site:

http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/2009/0409_gibill/ <http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/2009/0409_gibill/>

Opting out of SGLI not a good idea

by Air Reserve Personnel Center News Service

DENVER - For the price of a soda a day, a young Airman could have prevented his family's financial hardship caused by his recent unexpected death.

Even though the $27 a month Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance premium --providing $400,000 in coverage -- is automatically deducted from Airmen's paychecks, they are able to decline. Senior Master Sgt. Ramon Roldan, Chief of the Air Reserve Personnel Center's Entitlements and Benefits, relayed the sad story of this airman basic who opted out of coverage.

"It was tough. We discovered while handling the case for the grieving family that a recruiter or his unit had talked him into opting out of SGLI because he was single, not making much money yet, and so young," Sergeant Roldan said. "Unfortunately, neither knew his time would come sooner than expected.

The consequence was that the family missed the financial benefit that SGLI could have provided to them."

He pointed out that SGLI would have covered this Airman even though he was not on duty or deployed.

The truth is, talking about the SGLI benefit for Guard and Reserve Airmen can be uncomfortable. But whether you're pulling combat duty or kitchen duty or just driving around town, you never know when your time might come. And the question is: where would that leave your family?

ARPC officials are concerned that Airmen are not taking that question seriously enough. Airmen are opting out of SGLI coverage at alarming rates; in fact, more than 6,800 Airmen don't have any SGLI coverage and many more carry only partial benefits. SGLI coverage is automatic from the time of enlistment; you are not covered only if you submit a form to decline it.

Gloria Goodgain, Deputy Director, Personnel Programs Management at ARPC, urges Airmen to "make an informed decision about SGLI coverage."

For Ms. Goodgain, the legacy those who opt out leave their loved ones is not a happy one. "When folks are young, they think they're going to live forever," Ms. Goodgain said. "But of course, they don't. And all too often the tragedy we see here is that when a member passes away without any SGLI coverage, their loved ones are left with an expensive heartbreak on top of the loss of life."

Ms. Goodgain and Sergeant Roldan are both adamant about making sure all Airmen understand the consequences of terminating their coverage and the benefits of serving in uniform on or off duty with SGLI coverage.

"It's a mystery to me why you wouldn't want it," Sergeant Roldan said. "It's automatic when you are appointed or enlisted unless you otherwise decline.

For just $27 a month, you have $400,000 in life insurance coverage. That rate rarely changes, and you're covered for your entire career."

Opting back into SGLI or increasing coverage to full benefits requires a commander's approval and sometimes a medical screening, officials said.

Sergeant was quick to point out that in a typical 20-year hitch, that's only about $6,480 for life insurance that accepts you without a medical examination. He also said that $1 of that monthly amount provides up to an additional $100,000 in traumatic injury coverage. So whether you die or suffer a traumatic injury -- on- or off-duty -- SGLI has you covered.

And for a small amount more, spouses are automatically covered with Family SGLI.

"What's $27 for peace of mind? Believe me," Ms. Goodgain added, "the families and spouses who call here are almost always surprised to find out-- after the fact -- that a member had declined the coverage early in their career. It's sad; just to save a few bucks."

And according to Goodgain, what ensues is anything but peaceful.

The DPP folks are trained to answer any questions about entitlements and benefits. They serve as wingmen and are keenly sensitive to keep Airmen and their families' best interests in mind.

This day, as they do every day, they were earnestly talking about why it's important not to gamble with your life insurance. "Look, this is not a sales pitch, we're not pushing life insurance," Ms. Goodgain continued. "The message we want everyone to hear is that for the price, you can't get any better coverage anywhere at any time."

Combat Survival Training, SERE vital to mission

by Master Sgt. Jason A.F. Caires, 204 AS

Pilots and Loadmasters from the 204th Airlift Squadron attended Combat Survival Training here Jun 8-9.

Sometimes a pilot's mission to fly, fight and win takes an unexpected turn. An enemy surface-to-air missile or aircraft malfunction may force the pilot out of the relatively safe cockpit or aircraft, placing them on the ground and in hostile territory; survival training is used to prepare them for such occasions. CST is a refresher course designed to re-familiarize pilots and loadmasters with skills they were taught in basic survival training courses prior to their first operational flying assignment.

Although the basic course is a 17-day program that runs the gamut of hunting, hiking, evading and applying the code of conduct in a simulated prisoner of war camp, the CST program is a fast-paced two-day course that incorporates new tactics, training and procedures that weren't utilized during the basic course.

The goal of both courses is identical, to provide pilots the skills to return home safely.

The CST course consists of two phases. Day one is devoted to academics training from Senior Master Sgt. James Munoz and Master Sgt. Michele Ramos, which covers combat medical procedures, sustenance, protection from the environment, navigation and signaling techniques, and how to evade, resist and escape from enemy forces. On day two, the pilots travel to the east range, about 20 miles north of Hickam Air Force Base, for operational training. During the operational training, pilots are challenged to meet their basic survival needs while evading to a recovery site.

In addition to contending with Hawaii's notoriously unpredictable weather and thickly forested terrain, they face being hunted by aggressors. The 204th Aircrew Flight Equipment Shop, Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape specialists manage all aspects of the program, but for the operational portion, they get help from Tech. Sgt. Dane Kaneshiro and aircrew flight equipment specialists who are more than willing to add to the team effort in the role of opposing forces in an effort to make the day as realistic as possible.

To add to the pilot's arsenal, they are provided hands-on training with the equipment they fly with in the area of responsibility, which is particularly useful for communication with recovery forces. The AFE specialists talk to the pilots on survival radios, giving instructions to keep them moving to their recovery site. Movement becomes more challenging for the pilots and loads, but so does the aggressors' ability to find them.

CST culminates with recovery. As the pilots and loads approach their recovery site, a simulated special operations team apprehends them and ensures they are correctly identified by use of special coded call signs. Once complete, it's back to the aircraft for the 204th pilots and loads who fly combat missions regularly.

Lt. Col. Gregory Woodrow, 204 AS commander, described the squadron's CST program for the wing's pilots as "the most realistic and comprehensive combat survival training I've had in a while, and it was an awsome experience for everyone."

The level of realism, from enemy troops with M-16s and simulated bombs to Special Operations and Rescue teams lurking in the woods, forces pilots and loads to get in character and practice the classroom lessons. Also, prior to the start of the CST, Capt. B.J. Itoman turned in her I-phone and leatherman tool. Without the practical application, the only time they would use these learned skills would be during actual combat scenarios; far from ideal.

Should they have a mishap in the air, the CST course arms pilots and loads with the skills necessary to return home safely.

photo by Master Sgt. Jason F. Caires

East Range (L to R) Master Sgt. Michele Ramos 204th Airlift Squadron, Senior Master Sgt. Darrin Morris 204 AS, Tech. Sgt. Ryan Hunt 203rd Air Refueling Squadron, Senior Airman Nevin Keaulii 204 AS, Capt. B.J. Itoman, Maj. Anthony Davis 204 AS, sitting, Lt.Col Woodrow 204 AS Commander, Staff Sgt. Larson Miral 204 AS, and Senior Airman Daniel Lee 204 AS.