

Deployed MWD faces dental woes

See pages 5, 6 and 8

Wing bids farewell to command chief

See pages 2 and 3



SAND SCRIPT
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photo by Tech. Sgt. Denise Johnson

On the cover

Staff Sgt. Sarah Merklinger, a military working dog handler with the 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, takes a look at Bojar's injured teeth Friday. See pages 3 and 4 to see how the 380th MWD team overcome the challenges to ensure Bojar's dental needs are fulfilled at this undisclosed deployed location.

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photo by Tech. Sgt. Christopher A. Campbell

Chief bids his wing farewell

Members of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing meet with Command Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Slater at the Airman's Creed morale rock in front of wing headquarters here. Chief Slater is wrapping up his tour at the wing after spending 10 months at this deployed location. See the related article on this page and photos and story on page 3.

Action Line

► If you have a question or comment you would like to direct to the wing commander, send an e-mail with subject line "Commander's Forum" to: 380aew.pa@adab.afcent.af.mil. The commander will provide a response by e-mail for most issues; however, Public Affairs may consolidate duplicate questions and print the responses in a future issue of the Sand Script. People are encouraged to work issues through their chain of command prior to using the forum.

The Airman's Creed

***I am an American Airman.
I am a Warrior.
I have answered my Nation's call.***

***I am an American Airman.
My mission is to Fly, Fight, and Win.
I am faithful to a Proud Heritage,
A Tradition of Honor,
And a Legacy of Valor.***

***I am an American Airman.
Guardian of Freedom and Justice,
My Nation's Sword and Shield,
Its Sentry and Avenger.
I defend my Country with my Life.***

***I am an American Airman.
Wingman, Leader, Warrior.
I will never leave an Airman behind,
I will never falter,
And I will not fail.***

Perspective

Command chief wraps up 380th AEW tour

Editor's note: The following questions were posed to 380th Air Expeditionary Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant, Kevin G. Slater, upon his pending departure from this deployed location. His responses encompass his impressions and observations of, as well as his hopes for, the Airman he will bid farewell to at the end of August. (Questions posed by Tech. Sgt. Denise Johnson, 380th AEW Public Affairs)

Q: What were your first thoughts when you learned of your assignment to Southwest Asia?

A: I was immediately excited about the opportunity to serve with a unit engaged in combat operations. I can't imagine anyone reacting in any other way. An environment where our mission is #1 24/7 ought to be every professional Airman's dream.

Q: Describe your first impression when you stepped off the plane here.

A: I arrived by commercial air. It was late by the time I arrived, but I could immediately see our living conditions would be significantly better than my expectations – I envisioned tents with privacy curtains built from 550-cord and poncho liners – this was obviously based on my previous deployments.

Q: How do you feel about this mission?

A: Every 380 AEW Airman should be proud of their contributions as part of a one-of-a-kind wing. No other organization combines global vigilance and global reach in the way our wing does. Every day we deliver life-saving information from High Altitude ISR platforms while also providing fuel to dozens of U.S. and coalition aircraft responding to calls for help from our guys on the ground. I can't imagine anyone not being excited about our mission.

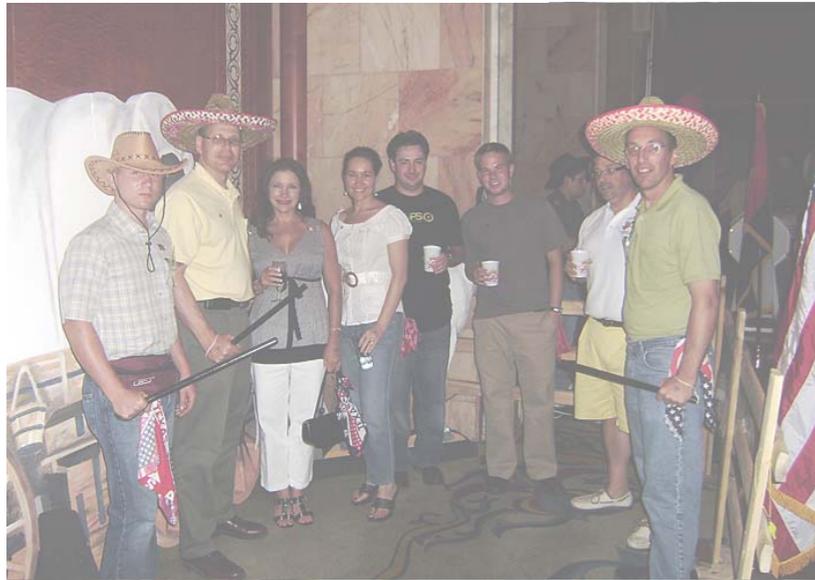
Q: What stands out the most, in your assessment, about this assignment?

A: I've seen it before, but I'm always amazed at how well we transition from one rotation to another. I've watched incredible Airmen of all grades roll in here, "swap jerseys" with their incumbents, and consistently take our mission to the next level. I consistently hear mission capability and mission effectiveness rates are higher in the AOR than at home—I'm convinced this is a result of the sense of purpose that is easier to find when your mission is to generate or fly combat sorties into the area of operations every day.

Q: Do you feel as though you've achieved your goals?

A: I believe my goals of connecting with our Airmen on a personal level, helping each to better understand our mission and their specific contributions, increasing every Airman's sense of purpose, and getting every Airman to consider their legacy have been largely accomplished. I'm glad to see and hear more Airmen talking about the ATO (especially those not connected with flightline operations). And, although not originally a goal of mine, I am very excited to see the professional interaction between our Airmen and the soldiers of the 5-52. I've witnessed a lot of learning going on, on both sides.

Cont'd on page 3



‘Chief’ bids his wing farewell

Continued from page 2

sitting across from the Wing HQ building — I’m most proud that many of our people have chosen it as a backdrop to their reenlistment ceremonies. I enjoyed bringing the leadership lessons of “Starship Troopers” to several hundred Airmen of all grades, active duty, guard, and reserve, from dozens of bases around the world, I hear “On the bounce” much more than I’ve heard it in the past. I’m proud of the work our chiefs, first sergeants, and commanders did to build a viable recognition program focused on mission accomplishments. Every month I enjoy shaking the hands of our best of the best — the result of a sound submission and selection process. Finally, I’m refreshed by the demands of “good order and discipline” and the positive impact

those demands have on our mission and the professional behavior of our Airmen.

Q: What, if anything, do you wish you had more time for?

A: Why, everything of course. I learned long ago our individual contributions are like singular laps in a relay race of indeterminate length. I don’t expect to ever cross a finish line. I’m focused on running my lap to the best of my ability before passing the baton to my relief who I’m sure will be focused on the same thing.

Q: Aside from family, what did you miss the most from back home; what will you miss the most from here, upon your return?

A: Motorcycle riding! Going months without “wind

therapy” definitely took a lot of getting used to. As with every assignment, I will miss the people. I’ve enjoyed my opportunity to work for two great general officers, to work closely with several dozen very professional chiefs, first sergeants and commanders. I’ll miss the 24/7 “fly the ATO mentality” of the base and its Airmen.

Q: Are there any projects you were able to begin but will not see come to fruition? Which projects, if any? What are your hopes for them after you’re gone?

A: I’m not sure I started any projects — I think I simply provoked a lot of thought and discussion on who we are as Airmen and how we go about doing our business. I see promise in the focus of our professional organizations. I see and hear more about coaching,

teaching and mentoring every day. I am convinced the broad and deep networks our Airmen have been building while deployed here will reap significant rewards for our Air Force in the future.

Q: What parting words do you have for the enlisted members you represented here?

A: Life is what you make of it; whether that’s a life deployed or a life at home. All of our Airmen have sacrificed in order to accomplish the mission — the sacrifices each of us make to accomplish our mission can also be viewed as opportunities; opportunities for each of us to grow as Airmen and as people. I look forward to crossing paths with 380 AEW Airmen anywhere, anytime.

Credit/debit-card fraud hits deployed wallets

By Tech. Sgt. Denise Johnson
380th AEW Public Affairs

An increased number of deployed members here have recently become the subject of credit-/debit-card fraud.

The 380th Air Expeditionary Wing is fighting back through effective data compilation, analysis and education.

Staff Sgt. Frank Mamea, 380th Expeditionary Security Forces noncommissioned officer in charge of investigations and police services, said there are several things people can do in response to an increase in financial crimes.

The 380th ESFS implemented a Victim of Financial Crime questionnaire Tuesday. Sergeant Mamea said, "It's one of the things we can do to be more effective on the data-collection side, since it's geared toward financial crimes."

The questionnaires are turned in for analysis. "We look for trends or common traits," said Col. Paul Murphy, 380th AEW vice commander. "Our hope is to educate our Airmen – we want to inform our folks so they can make smart decisions."

Wing officials are using several outlets to make sure the word gets out, such as the commander's access channel, the base publication, intranet, daily bulletin and word of mouth.

"Improving and streamlining investigative techniques is very important," Colonel Murphy said. "But preventing the crime is the key. We do that by educating our people and capitalizing on our internal communications venues."

Deployed Airmen are subjected to stressors above and beyond that of typical home-station duties. They are far from home which often makes it difficult to deal with financial issues. The 380th AEW leaders are sensitive to the necessity for deployed Airmen to have peace of mind in regard to matters of the home, to include their finances.

"We don't need our Airmen to be worried about finances when we have an Air Tasking Order to carry out. Our mission is dependent on their peace of mind," Colonel Murphy explained.

The vice commander is set to appear in a video currently being produced by the 380th AEW Public Affairs office. The video will feature the

vice commander discussing ways to avoid becoming a victim of debit-/credit-card crimes.

Military members are not required to report credit/debit card crimes through military channels. The onus of the investigation falls on the banks' shoulders, as it is the financial institution that suffers a loss as well.

"It's in the military members' best interest to report any financial crimes to security forces," Sergeant Mamea said. "Too much information is always better than too little. It gives us more to go on for the analysis."

Reporting the crime to the security forces squadron will not relieve the victims of the financial institution. In fact, the victim must report the fraud to his or her bank in order to be eligible for restitution, which is not guaranteed. Rules and responses vary depending in respective banks.

"We can provide victims with incident reports or statements to be filed with the bank," Sergeant Mamea said. "Banks have different requirements, so it's important for anyone who is subjected to electronic theft to contact their bank and our office immediately."

As further information is being developed, wing leaders will continue to take an active roll in ensuring members here are educated and informed on ways they can protect themselves.

"We highly encourage folks to use the base finance office for cash withdrawals," Colonel Murphy said. "To facilitate that, we try and make sure the finance office hours are user friendly and convenient."

For more information regarding ways to withdraw or access cash on base, contact the 380th Expeditionary Financial Management Office at DSN 434-3511 or visit the finance tab, under wing organizations, on the intranet site: <https://dhafra.adab.afcent.af.mil/>.

Anyone who has been a victim of a financial crime since their arrival here should contact the 380th ESFS Law Enforcement Desk at DSN 434-2800. The LE phone line is manned 24 hours a day.



**By order of the 380 AEW/CC,
effective immediately: Runner's
Road is officially closed to all
pedestrian and bicycle traffic until
further notice. Personnel may
utilize Phantom East and West in
lieu of Runner's Road.**

**Controlled Burn
(paper documents ONLY)
Don't feel like
shredding it all?
The base fire department will
oversee an open burn
Saturday, Aug. 23
5 to 9 p.m.
Some rules will apply!!!!
Anyone interested can contact
Fire Prevention or
Station 2 at 434-2500**

MWD team takes bite out of dental care



Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Denise Johnson
380th AEW Public Affairs

Editor's note: The identities of the civilians, as well as the locations of events in this article, are being withheld for security purposes.

Bojar arrived at this undisclosed deployed location a little more than a week ago. He came off the C-130 Hercules with a bloody mouth and cracked tooth ... again. Man! He hates to fly.

Bojar, a 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Military Working Dog, is one of six new dogs that arrived since the beginning of August on deployment rotation.

"Bojar suffers from flying anxiety," said Tech. Sgt. Duane Stinson, 380th ESFS kennel master. "He chewed on his kennel during the flight which caused fairly significant damage to his gums and teeth."

Canine dental problems in Southwest Asia can pose unusual challenges. Not every deployed location maintains medical facilities or specialists to

support the MWD mission. Bojar's location is no exception. Veterinarians are few and far between; canine dentists are even fewer and further between.

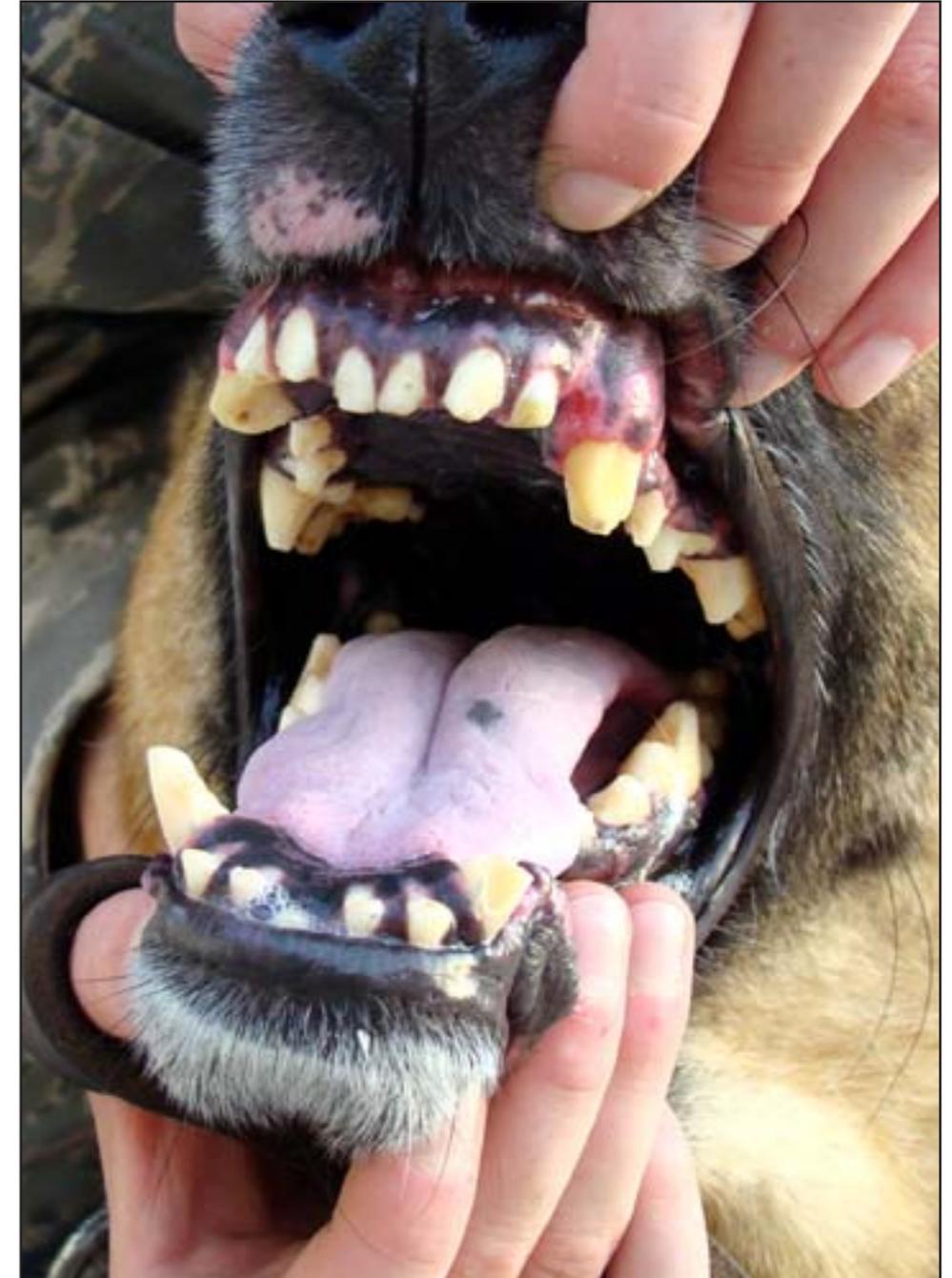
Sergeant Stinson and Staff Sgt. Sarah Merklinger, Bojar's handler, donned civilian attire in lieu of military uniforms Monday and loaded Bojar into the back of an unmarked SUV. The MWD team, under the guise of civilians, headed to a veterinarian in the local area for an exam and dental X-rays.

The vet is contracted by the U.S. Air Force to support the medical requirements of the MWD unit here.

"We really appreciate doing the work for the U.S. base on a number of fronts," the veterinarian said. "Firstly, because of the people who come in; they are so polite, so respectful, it's such a nice relationship."

The doctor added that the dogs are obviously well looked after. "They come with thorough medical records and histories," he said. "The history prevents us from wasting time and going down avenues that have already been looked at. It makes my job easier."

*Story cont'd on page 8,
more photos on page 6*



Above left: Staff Sgt. Sarah Merklinger, 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, looks over Bojar after he was anesthetized at a local veterinarian's office Monday. Bojar, a military working dog, injured his teeth and gums while traveling to his deployed location. Sergeant Merklinger is from Waco, Nebraska. She is deployed here with Bojar from Kadena Air Base, Japan.

Above: Staff Sgt. Sarah Merklinger, Bojar's handler, takes a close look at his injured gums and damaged teeth.

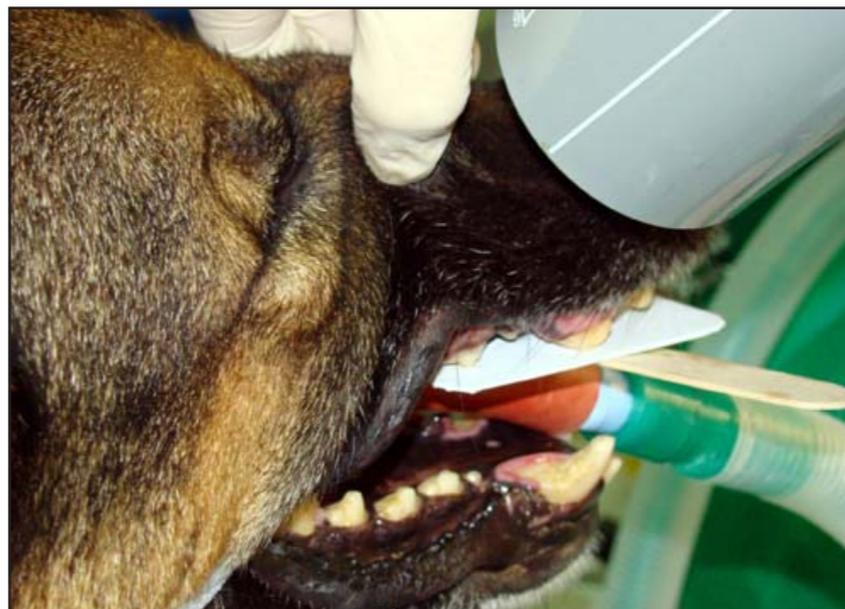


photos by Tech. Sgt. Denise Johnson

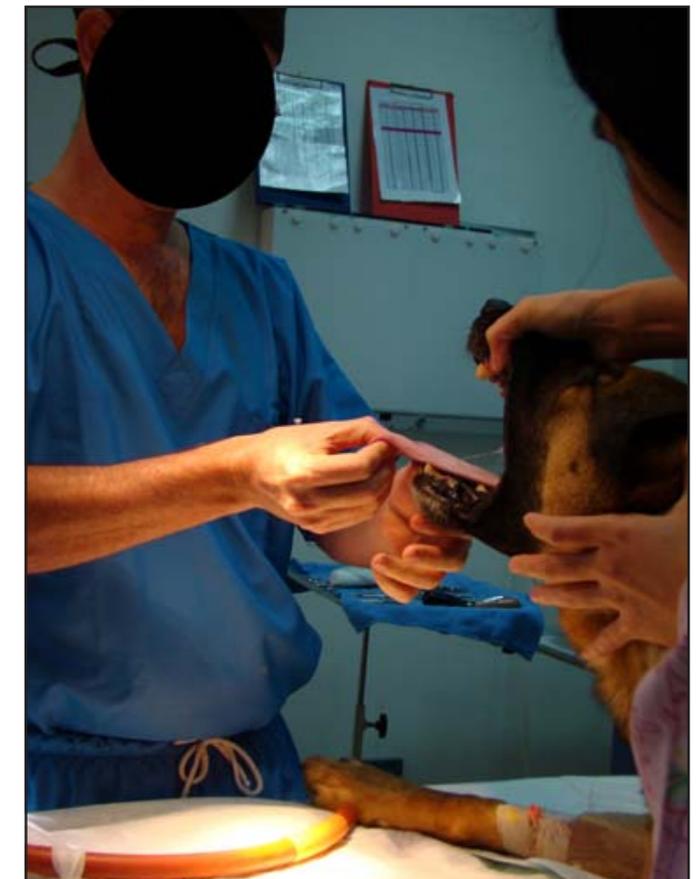
Above: Bojar, a military working dog with the 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, has an X-ray taken of his teeth at a local veterinarian's office at an undisclosed deployed location Monday.

Middle, top to bottom:

- Bojar, a military working dog with the 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, is being prepared to have X-rays taken of his teeth Monday at a local veterinarian's office at an undisclosed deployed location. Bojar injured his teeth and gums while traveling to his deployed location from Kadena Air Base, Japan.
- The unidentified dentist goes over the results of the X-rays with Staff Sgt. Sarah Merklinger, Bojar's handler.
- Bojar has a plate placed in his teeth for the X-rays the veterinarian requires.



Above and below: Staff Sgt. Sarah Merklinger, 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, takes a break from training Tuesday with Bojar. Bojar was back in training less than 24 hours after his visit to the veterinarian. Bojar was anesthetized and X-rayed Monday by an unidentified local veterinarian shown below preparing to put a tube in Bojar's throat.



Vikings 'thank' first sergeant as road warrior re-enlists

For most Airmen, planning and packing for a deployment is crammed into the final week (in some cases the final few hours) before they are scheduled to depart home station. In the case of Master Sgt. Mike Mujwid, 960th Expeditionary Airborne Air Control Squadron first sergeant, his planning began several months earlier.

He was responsible for ensuring that all 142 deploying members of the squadron and support personnel had room assignments, family care plans and knowledge of support mechanisms in-place to keep them mentally, physically and spiritually healthy during their combat rotation through Southwest Asia.

However, preparing for a deployment is nothing new for this combat veteran. Since entering the Air Force in 1991, Sergeant Mujwid has deployed six times, including tours supporting the Army and the Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. His outstanding leadership and interpersonal skills made him an easy choice to send to the First Sergeant Academy in December 2007, after his re-assignment from the 3rd Combat Communications Support Squadron to the Viking Warriors of the 960th EAACS at Tinker AFB, Okla.

Sergeant Mujwid is a dedicated, focused warrior who consistently puts the mission and the member first. During his tenure with the Vikings, he has spent countless hours making sure all 323 members of the squadron and their families have had the best care available. The meaning of service before self is on display for all who will take note of this warrior's accomplishments. Sergeant Mujwid will raise his hand today to reaffirm his continued commitment to our nation, our Air Force and our people after 17 years of spotless service. The men and women of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing and the Vikings would like to say "THANK YOU" for all you do every day for our Airmen, their families and our Air Force.

*By James Ord
960th EAACS*

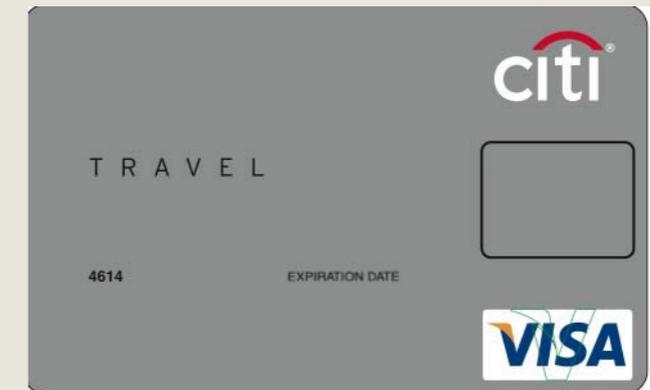


photo by Tech. Sgt. Denise Johnson

Thirsty Camels take 3-on-3 tourney title, 21-14

Thirsty Camel teammate, Justin Miller, sinks one for two Saturday. The Thirsty Camels won the 3-on-3 basketball tournament at the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing basketball court Aug. 14. Randy Golleher, Jesper Stubbendorff and Ben Hopp rounded off the four-man team. The Thirsty Camels finished the final game over Team 5, 21-14.

Operation: New Air Force Travel Card Issued by Citi®



Attention all military travelers –

The new Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC), issued by Citi, is on the way. All government cardholders will receive their new cards during the Aug 13 thru Sep19th timeframe (plus mailing time). Initial distribution will begin with cardholders at OCONUS bases and migrate from the west to the east coast (see schedule below).

Your new travel card will be mailed to your mailing address on file with Bank of America, so please ensure that information is current. Any mail sent to an incorrect address will be returned to Citibank. Notify your local Agency Program Coordinator (APC) if you have not received your new card by Oct. 1. Remember – the new card will not be active for use until Nov. 30 so you'll still need your Bank of America GTC until that date.

What to do upon receipt of your new card: Please verify receipt immediately upon receiving your card. This can be accomplished either by phone or on-line. The necessary information will be on a sticker that is affixed to your card. The receipt verification process allows tracking of cards to ensure all cardholders receive their new GTC prior to Nov. 30. **For more information:** Your primary contact for transition information is your local APC. Cardholders can also obtain additional GTC information on the Air Force Portal (<https://www.my.af.mil>), www.defensetravel.dod.mil, or www.gsa.gov/smartpay

MWD cont'd from page 5

The foreign veterinarian conducted his exam of Bojar and attained the required photos and X-rays of the damaged teeth. He will share the results of the exam with U.S. veterinarians who are deployed in another location in the Area of Responsibility.

"When I speak with the U.S. vets, they're very responsive," the vet said. "It's a very professional relationship."

The local MWD team reciprocated the respect and appreciation.

"We're very lucky to have this vet looking after our dogs' medical needs," Sergeant Stinson said. "He's highly qualified and has provided us with top-notch service."

Bojar underwent anesthesia and had X-rays taken at the civilian facility. He woke several hours later to his handler's voice. "Hey, Bojar, how ya doin'?" Sergeant Merklinger said as she knelt beside the groggy canine. Bojar found his feet and leaned against his handler's legs for support.

"I will leave it to the military specialists and let them decide the fate of Bojar's teeth," the doctor said. "We don't want the dog to be in any pain obviously."

According to the veterinarian, there are a number of options for Bojar's continued care. He could have his teeth capped or extracted. Another option is to put him on antibiotics until he rotates home.

"His well-being is critical," Sergeant Stinson said. "Any time we lose a dog for health issues it hurts the mission and another team has to pick up the slack."

A military working dog like Bojar will generally have two responsibilities: patrol work and detection. Patrol work requires the animal to be able to bite so Bojar will be on a brief respite from those duties until the situation with his teeth is rectified, according to Sergeant Stinson. He will continue to work, however.

Bojar's detection reputation precedes him with several finds in Iraq including weapons caches, explosives and buried explosives, according to Sergeant Merklinger.

"Bojar alerted on a cement wall in Iraq," Bojar's handler, explained. "Soldiers tore the wall down and found a round casing. He's very special."

The canine is no less ardent in his new duty location, regardless of his dental woes. He alerted in a warehouse on his first day on the job here, three days after his arrival. Although the alert didn't turn up any explosives, it's possible the item he alerted on had been exposed to something prior to arriving here.

"The item could have been used to touch old



Staff Sgt. Sarah Merklinger, 380th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, waits for her four-legged partner to wake up Monday.

cartridges or munitions," Sergeant Stinson said. "We'll never know for sure; but we do know we need to trust our dogs."

Bojar's teeth will be on the mend before long as he continues to receive expert care from his handler and the professional medical team outside the perimeter.

And although his patrol duties may be temporarily limited as far as his bite goes, his keen nose will stay on the job.

"The capability the (MWD) bring to the fight cannot be replicated by man or machine. By all measures of performance their yield outperforms any asset we have in our inventory. Our military would be remiss if we failed to invest more in this incredibly valuable resources."

-General David H. Petraeus
Commanding General Multi-National Force – Iraq
Feb. 9, 2008

380th AEW congratulates staff-sergeant selectees

NAME	UNIT		
		ZINKY, CHRISTOPHER	380 EMXG
		PARKER, JEFFREY DAV	380 EMXS
GIBSON, ROBIN NOELL	380 AEW	BALLESTROS, ERICK	380 ESFS
STIDHAM, HEATHER KA	380 AEW	BARTLETT, JOHN MACK	380 ESFS
WILSON, PAUL ISADOR	380 AEW	BINGHAM, JENNIFER A	380 ESFS
CASTRO, GUILLERMO A	380 EAMXS	BROWN, EARL JASON	380 ESFS
HEAP, ROBERT M	380 EAMXS	CADOTTE, BRIAN DOUG	380 ESFS
MILLER, JONATHAN DO	380 EAMXS	IMAN, JUSTIN TODD	380 ESFS
SEYMOUR, JOSHUA RAY	380 EAMXS	KELLY, KATHLEEN ANN	380 ESFS
SHOENHAIR, NICHOLAS	380 EAMXS	KOEHLER, ROSS JOHN	380 ESFS
BERTHAUD, PAUL ANTH	380 EAMXS	LOVELL, KYLE PETER	380 ESFS
KELLER, ADAM TRAVIS	380 EAMXS	MINGEE, MARCUS DALE	380 ESFS
PRESSLEY, JOHANNES	380 EAMXS	ARRINGTON, BOBBY KA	380 ESFS
SMITH, DEVON TYLER	380 EAMXS	BURGHER, BENJAMIN T	380 ESFS
GOODE, JAMES ROBERT	380 EAMXS	BYRNES, MATTHEW SCO	380 ESFS
RAY, BRADLEY ALLEN	380 EAMXS	DAWSON, OLIVIA KATH	380 ESFS
BENCY, STEVEN PAUL	380 ECES	DEESE, BAXTER GERMO	380 ESFS
BLACK, JEROME DAVID	380 ECES	GOLDSMITH, AARON JA	380 ESFS
DIEHL, CHAD EVAN	380 ECES	KEEPLER, JASON LAMO	380 ESFS
EDMISTON, KENNETH H	380 ECES	KURDZIOLEK, MICHAEL	380 ESFS
GREEN, CORY M	380 ECES	LAWRENCE, MICHAEL G	380 ESFS
MUNSON, MICHAEL JOH	380 ECES	LEE, AVERY JEROME	380 ESFS
MURPHY, MICHAEL JOS	380 ECES	LINGER, BRANDON PHI	380 ESFS
OLSON, STARLA LEANN	380 ECES	MARCUM, JENNIFER LY	380 ESFS
SALAZAR, MIGUEL ANG	380 ECES	OSBORNE, BRADLEY KE	380 ESFS
CROWE, SEAN P	380 ECONS	PITTMAN, CHALOM LEE	380 ESFS
NORMAN, SHARDAY OLE	380 ECONS	REICHEL, ANTHONY E	380 ESFS
VILSACK, MATTHEW C	380 ECONS	ROOMSBURG, MICHAEL	380 ESFS
JACKSON, ANDRE RAYM	380 ECS	THOMAS, VANESSA JAN	380 ESFS
CAUSEY, ROBERT DILL	380 ELRS	ESSICK, KENNETH CLA	908 EARS
MATTSON, LARRY MARK	380 ELRS	GORRING, JOSHUA THO	908 EARS
SMITH, SUMIRA VIATO	380 ELRS	MACHON, GARRETT KEI	908 EARS
NICHOLS, JUSTIN ROB	380 EMXG	SCOTT, LAWRENCE LAV	908 EARS

Airmen confirm faith while deployed

Permission flows from Washington, D.C.

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Denise Johnson
380th AEW Public Affairs

A deployed priest received permission from his archdiocese to confirm two members of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing here Sunday.

The 380th AEW's Father (Maj.) Peter Zalewski confirmed Staff Sgt. Natalie Carbajal, from the 380th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron Personnel Support for Contingency Operations; and Airman 1st Class Jorge Flores-Vazquez, with the 380th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, in a ceremony at the base chapel.

Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments in following with the Catholic religion. Other sacraments include baptism, the eucharist, reconciliation, matrimony, holy orders and anointing the sick. The Catholic Church teaches that, in sacrament, Christ gives grace directly to the recipient, if he or she is properly disposed.

Sergeant Carbajal seems to be just that. "Being confirmed means making myself a better person i.e. wife, daughter and mother to be," she said. "It makes me feel good to know that I am practicing my religion and believing in something bigger than myself; having that connection with God."

Airman Flores-Vazquez also attests to his disposition, "This means a lot to me. I know now my future children will be raised with a lot of love and faith in Christ." The Airman said another reason he had his confirmation here was so he could be married in a Catholic Church when he goes home.

Both Airmen were raised and baptized in the catholic faith. They said their families are very pleased with their confirmations. "My family was very excited for me and wished they could be here to witness the event, they sent their love and support," Sergeant Carbajal said.

Father Pete said he was pleased to confirm the two, "We met a lot; Sergeant Carbajal and Airman

Flores-Vazquez were serious about it and asked a lot of questions. They studied hard and proved their commitment."

According to church hierarchy, the bishop is the rightful person to perform confirmations. The bishop sits above a priest in the church "chain of command." He can, however, delegate the authority to perform the ceremony through a formal request process.

"We had to get permission from the Military Archdiocese in Washington D.C. to do the confirmations here," Father Pete said. "We had good reason to do it because one of them is getting married soon and the other is going to be a Godparent."

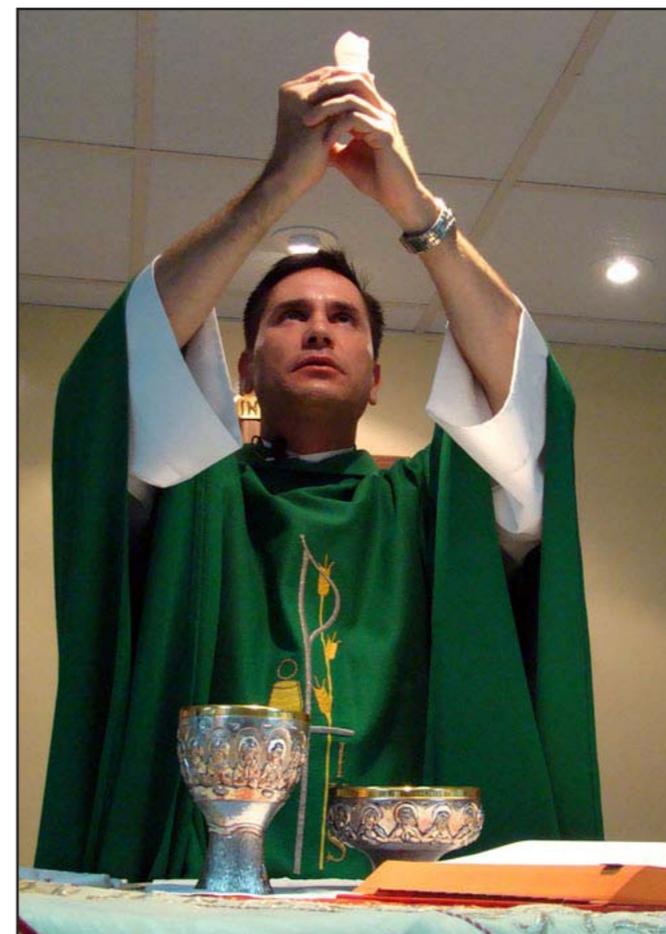
Father Pete also explained that it's important to consider the unusual lifestyle of military members and their families. "With our deployment rates these Airmen may not be able to be confirmed elsewhere. On top of that, confirmation exists to make a person a more powerful witness ... so when we can do it, we should."

Airman Flores-Vazquez seems to have indeed become a more powerful witness, "Since I started going to confirmation classes, I've been a lot more confident in my performance at work. Having faith in myself and in Christ helps me with everyday mission-essential tasks. It lets me know I can get through any obstacle the mission – or life – may throw at me."

Sergeant Carbajal said the confirmation has also affected her ability to do her job, "I feel that a good relationship with God makes me more grounded and focused, so I can concentrate on what I need to."

Both Airmen began their religious journeys as children. Airman Flores-Vazquez said he remembers prayers with his mom when he was a child, "When I was a little kid, my mom and I used to pray every night before I went to bed." He said he hopes to share that faith with his future children, as well.

Here, in what some may find to be the most unlikely of places, the two have taken another step on their respective personal journeys.



The 380th Air Expeditionary Wing's Father (Maj.) Peter Zalewski puts his hand upon Airman 1st Class Jorge Flores-Vazquez, 380th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, during a confirmation ceremony at the base chapel here Sunday. Staff Sgt. Natalie Carbajal (second from right), from the 380th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron Personnel Support for Contingency Operations, was also confirmed in the ceremony.

Left: The 380th Air Expeditionary Wing's Father (Maj.) Peter Zalewski performs a confirmation ceremony at the base chapel here Sunday.