

July 2016

# RABBIT TALES

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE 51ST AIR COMMAND GROUP



## 21st CSAF Swears In

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# RABBIT TALES

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*All photographs are Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.*

## 513TH UPDATE

### Upcoming events

Sunday – 1000 – Green Dot Bystander/Early Adopter Training  
(970th AACCS Auditorium)

Sunday – 1500 – Group Commander’s Call  
(552nd OG Auditorium/Fannin Hall)

July 17-Aug. 2 – Rim of the Pacific Exercise  
(Hickam AFB, Hawaii)

August 6-7 – Unit Training Assembly

### Cover Photo



WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- Gen. David L. Goldfein was sworn in as the Air Force’s 21st chief of staff by Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James during a ceremony at the Pentagon on July 1.

As the Air Force’s most senior uniformed leader, Goldfein is responsible for ensuring the 660,000 active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian Airmen under his command are fully trained and equipped. He also joins the Joint Chiefs of Staff as an adviser to the secretary of defense, National Security Council and the president of the United States.

“The Air Force is going to be relying on your determination, General Goldfein, to improve readiness, to improve our modernization, and most importantly -- always at the top of the list -- taking care of our Airmen,” James said. “It is a huge responsibility, it’s also an honor, and it’s also a great privilege, and I have every confidence that you are going to take our Air Force to new heights.”

### Promotions for July

Congrats to this month’s promotees!

**Amn** Jasmin Mendoza-Madrid  
(970th Airborne Air Control Squadron)

**SrA** Elizabeth Jennings  
(513th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron)

**SMSgt** Dan Gibb  
(513th Operations Support Squadron)

**SMSgt** Thomas Clark  
(970th Airborne Air Control Squadron)

### Fit to Fight hall of fame



Team Tinker



513th ACG

#### 1.5-Mile Run

Men: **7:51** **8:33** Men: Cpt. Bradley Bentlage  
Women: **9:44** **12:04** Women: SSgt Stephanie Jacks

#### Pushups

Men: **110** **101** Men: TSgt Jeff Inferrere  
Women: **65** **53** Women: Maj. Andromeda Augustino

#### Situps

Men: **109** **92** Men: 1st Lt. Michael Doughty  
Women: **84** **63** Women: 1st Lt. Amie Inman

#### 1-Mile Walk

Men & Women: **9:15** **11:22** Men: MSgt Darrell Freel  
**13:57** Women: MSgt Elizabeth Staff

# Not just another E-3 Airman



By Maj. Gregory Hutto  
*Director of Inspections, 513th ACG*

About 18 months ago, all the 513th senior leaders got together and spent two full days trying to develop a new strategy for our group—a strategy that would smoothly transition us from “survival mode” to a “thrive and grow” mindset. And so was born our current vision statement: “Experience, expertise, teamwork: The 1st Choice in AWACS.”

It is intended to communicate to each and every person in the group how we want to be viewed by the rest of the world. It’s what makes us different from the 552nd or any other E-3 unit out there. It’s also what we want to be. Not necessarily the first to volunteer for every pos-

To have our own identity distinct from all other E-3 units and known for what we have that no one else does: **experience!**

sible contingency, but to have our own identity distinct from all other E-3 units and known for what we have that no one else does: experience! At only 10 percent the size of the 552nd, we cannot always be when and where the fight is, nor is it our goal. However, as our vision states, we want everyone to know who we are and what makes us

unique. It’s not about being better; it’s about having been around the block (three or four times). It’s not about being smarter; it’s about having a breadth of experience from our civilian lives that adds a unique element to our game. Finally, it’s about getting the word out so that everyone else knows about us.

That’s where you come in. First, seek ways to apply your own civilian experiences for the benefit of the 513th and the Air Force in general. Second, spread the word wherever you are. The 513th ACG is different, and we need to be. Whether you are TDY to Kadena, going through upgrade training or working out at the base gym, let people know that you aren’t just another E-3 Airman. Tell them you belong to the 513th ACG!

# 513TH AIR CONTROL GROUP



## OUR MISSION

To provide **combat-ready AWACS Citizen Airmen to Fly, Fight & Win**

## OUR VISION

Experience, Expertise, Teamwork:  
**The 1st Choice in AWACS**

## Blended retirement system training now available

By Tech. Sgt. Bryan Franks  
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (AFNS) - Online training designed to educate Airmen about the new Blended Retirement System, the Defense Department system with changes on the current military retirement system, is now available via Joint Knowledge Online course number P-US1330. The course is also available to those without a Common Access Card -- to include family members -- via an alternate website.

The BRS was enacted into law in the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, and will go into effect Jan. 1, 2018. All currently serving members are grandfathered into the current military retirement system. However, those with fewer than 12 years of service as of Dec. 31, 2017, or Air Force Reserve component members with fewer than 4,320 retirement points may choose to "opt in" to the BRS during the designated opt-in period from Jan. 1, 2018, through Dec. 31, 2018.

"The BRS is a major change for our Airmen," said Brig. Gen. Brian Kelly, the Military Force Management Policy director. "Although the majority of Airmen serving today will not fall under BRS, it is important for all Airmen, either as leaders today, or as leaders tomorrow, to understand the changes that will impact Airmen in the future."

The BRS Leader Training is a 30-minute course designed to provide basic familiarity with the key components of the upcoming retirement

### Saving with the New Blended Retirement System

The Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act provides our military force with a modernized retirement plan built for retirement savings. Beginning in 2018, our service members can get **automatic and matching Thrift Savings Plan contributions** as well as mid-career **compensation incentives** in addition to monthly **annuities for life**. All service members under the current system are grandfathered into today's retirement system.

**1 Automatic and Matching Contributions**  
Automatic contributions are seen immediately

You Contribute	DoD Auto Contribution	DoD Matches	Total
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

The DoD automatically contributes 1% of your basic pay to your **Thrift Savings Plan** after 60 days of service.

*You'll see matching contributions at the start of 3 through the completion of 26 years of service, and...*

**You're fully vested—it's yours to keep—as of the beginning of 3 years of service and goes with you when you leave.**

**2 Continuation Pay**  
Received at the mid-career point

You may receive a **cash payment** in exchange for additional service.

**3 Full Retired Pay Annuity**  
Received after completing 20 years of service

Calculate your **retired pay base** by averaging the highest 36 months of basic pay. You'll gain this monthly annuity for life after completing 20 years of service.

**2.5% x Years Served x Retired Pay Base**  
after completing 20 years of service

system and the timeline for implementation. It is designed primarily for Air Force leaders at all levels, but is also open to all Airmen and others who wish to learn more about BRS.

"Education is key in providing Airmen the information they need in order to make informed decisions about the BRS," Kelly said. The Defense Department is on track to provide three additional courses with more detailed information within the next 18 months.

An "opt-in" course is targeted at those eligible to opt into the new system. This course will provide eligible active and reserve component members an understanding of both the current and new systems. The course will be available in January 2017.

A "train the trainer" course for personal financial managers, counselors and retirement services officers is targeted at those experts who serve

in an advisory role to commanders, Airmen and their families. This course should be ready by fall of 2016.

A new accessions course targets individuals who enter military service on or after Jan. 1, 2018. It is intended to provide those members who enter service under the BRS an understanding of their blended retirement benefits and personal options.

The Air Force is taking a comprehensive approach to BRS education. "Online courses are designed to provide basic knowledge and understanding," Kelly emphasized. "In addition to the aforementioned courses, Airmen will receive in-person education at various points in their career, starting in basic training, and professional counseling will also be available."

To learn more about the Blended Retirement System, visit [militarypay.defense.gov](http://militarypay.defense.gov).

## Safety: make it a habit for life

By Maj. Gen. Andrew Mueller  
U.S. Air Force Chief of Safety

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. (AFNS) -- The summer months equate to a seemingly insatiable appetite to get outside and have some fun. Good weather, warm temperatures and the extra daylight hours instinctively drive people to a wide variety of outdoor activities, which simply put, are a lot of fun.

Summertime can be an enjoyable time to relax and recharge with family and friends. These enjoyable summertime activities do not come without hazards. Too often, what was thought to be risk-free fun turns into a not so enjoyable injury or accident. In fact, in recent years, exciting and fun activities like swimming, rock climbing, mountain biking and canoeing have needlessly claimed Airmen's lives.

These injuries or accidents are almost always preventable through the application of solid risk management. "Do I have the right gear?" "Did I plan appropriately?" and "Do I have the necessary skills?" are essential questions to ask before diving into any summer fun. Identifying the hazards, assessing the consequences of those hazards and mitigating the risks are sound risk management principles, which can protect everyone.

Through increased awareness in the Air Force Risk Management program, the Air Force Safety Center looks to improve the use of



sound risk management principles in on-duty activities and develop habits in each and every Airmen which make safety a part of every on-duty activity. These habits can easily translate into off-duty activities as well, helping to keep Airmen

and their families safe all year long. As the crowds step out to have some fun this summer, take the time to re-establish safety habits and make the choice to assess and reduce risk for a memorable summer of fun.

## Thumper softball



These 1999 Thumper softball uniforms are being worn by 1999 teammates Angel Cervantes and Becky (Bower) Tatham. Or IS that Becky?

## 20 years later: Remembering the attack on Khobar Towers

By Staff Sgt. Christopher Gross  
*Air Force News Service*

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. (AFNS) -- Alfredo Guerrero, a staff sergeant at the time, wasn't supposed to be on top of Bldg. 131 in the Khobar Towers complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on the night of June 25, 1996. But as the acting flight sergeant for the military police unit, he was checking on the Airmen who were assigned to sentry posts.

Most of the Airmen in the building were assigned to the 4404th Wing (Provisional), and were in Saudi Arabia supporting Operation Southern Watch.

It was a time before the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant became a threat. In 1996, Hezbollah and Iran targeted Americans.

That night Guerrero arrived on the rooftop around 10 p.m., as he watched a large gas truck, followed by a car, make its way to the building he was on.

That same car and truck was also spotted by then-1st Lt. Michael Harner, who was inside the building beside Guerrero. Harner, who had only been on station for several days, had just returned to his room, opened a sliding glass door and stepped out onto his balcony. Before the truck made its way to Guerrero's building, Harner noticed it parked in a parking lot next to a mosque that was under construction. Days earlier, there had been no vehicle traffic through the parking lot.

"I watched as it drove right in front of me, and the lights from the compound shone, so I could see the people in the truck, and there was actually a vehicle following the truck," Harner

said. "I thought that was very unusual to see that, and I didn't know quite what to do about it, (because) nobody's shooting or nobody's doing anything."

The truck then parked beside Guerrero's building. Two men got out and hurried into the car, which sped off. At that moment, it clicked for Guerrero that this wasn't normal and something bad was about to happen.

"I got on the radio and called the control center to tell them what was going on, and, before I finished my first transmission, I thought about the people in the building and realized, 'Well, if this is what I think it is, this building is going down,'" Guerrero said. "And so, before I finished my first transmission, I told them I was beginning to evacuate the building."

The Airman with Guerrero overheard his radio transmissions and rushed into the building to begin evacuating. Guerrero got the attention of another Airman on the other side of the building and the two of them also began evacuating the eight-story building.

### The explosion

Guerrero only made it down a few floors before the blast went off.

"I was fortunate enough to be behind an interior wall and so most of the overpressure from the bomb went right behind me. So, I was kind of in a protected area," he said. "It just spun me around; it didn't knock me down or anything."

Not all were that lucky. The explosion killed 19 Airmen and injured more than 350 service members and civilians. It was so powerful that all of the windows in a 2-mile radius were blown out.

Sitting near the balcony door in the

dorm's common room, Harner recalled seeing a flash of light before the door was blown apart.

"I ate that sliding glass door," Harner said, as he described how the glass shredded his face, shoulder, arm and leg.

Both towers were dark. As Harner tried to feel his way around his dorm, he made his way back into his bedroom. He remembered yelling out of the hole in the wall where his window once was, "Is there anybody out there?"

"It was dead silence," he said. "And it was probably one of the most eerie feelings I have ever had in my entire life."

Over in Guerrero's building, an entire side of the building had completely collapsed.

"The next thing I knew, everything was pitch black. I couldn't hear anything or see anything," he said.

After he collected himself and was aware of where he was, Guerrero immediately began assisting the injured. After helping an Airman down the stairs and out of the building, he headed back inside to the second floor. It was there he saw a few Airmen lying motionless under some rubble.

"Everything was kind of blurry and surreal," he said.

Soon after, his leadership arrived. He briefed them on what he had experienced and was sent away to get checked out and cleaned up.

### 'Life left his body'

Right before the explosion, then-Staff Sgt. Selena Zuhoski was watching a movie in the recreation building with fellow Airmen.

"I remembered the lights flickered, and then I heard a deep 'boom.' And then I remember ... dust billowing in,



Nineteen Airmen died and more than 350 were injured in the terrorist attack at Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on June 25, 1996. The front of Bldg. 131 was blown off when terrorists detonated a fuel truck parked nearby. (Courtesy photo)

she said.

Zuhoski would later learn that she had been knocked unconscious.

As she regained consciousness, she and a group of people headed outside, where they saw a mushroom cloud around the site of the explosion. When they headed toward the damaged building, she said she saw people coming over the fence. Her first thought was that they were under attack.

The people hopping the fence were locals, coming to help.

After reaching the building, Zuhoski heard "there's a guy dying on the fourth floor. He's going into shock." With a flashlight in hand, she and others headed upstairs.

"There was a man there in a puddle of blood and there was a door that had been blown off its hinges," she recalled.

The group utilized the door as a makeshift gurney and carefully loaded the injured man onto it and carried him downstairs and outside, where they put him on a table until paramedics arrived.

As the group headed back into the building, Zuhoski waited with the

man until more help arrived.

"I held his hand and I was covering this wound on his chest," she said. "I was saying, you know, 'Hold on, it's gonna be OK.' His hand was really cold and he was saying 'Oh, God. Oh, God.' And I said 'Please. Please hold on.' And then ... I could tell the instant that the life left his body."

Paramedics arrived and took the man away, loading him onto a bus. Zuhoski then went back into the building to help more victims.

### Post-traumatic stress

Harner, who at the time was a pavements engineer for the 4404th WG, suffered deep wounds from broken glass, along with PTSD. After being transported to a local hospital, they cleaned him up and packed him full of gauze, concerned that sewing him up with glass left inside of his body could lead to infection.

Harner, who was deployed from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, was medically evacuated the next day to Germany, where he spent two days before being sent back stateside.

He would go on to receive the

Purple Heart, and for the next decade, shards of glass would continue to work their way out of his body.

Harner, now a colonel, serves as the associate director of civil engineers at the Pentagon.

Along with him and others, Zuhoski also suffered from PTSD.

"I probably didn't even realize the impact that this would have on me as far as being like a lifelong ... traumatic event," she said. "I thought that ... it would eventually fade, but it hasn't. It's gotten worse. I have nightmares, I have guilt. (I) wish I would have been able to do more."

With the support of her husband, Zuhoski said she's been able to use art as an outlet. Her husband set up a studio for her in their home about a year ago. "It's really been therapeutic for me," she said.

Zuhoski said talking openly to others who experienced the same tragedy has also helped.

With every tragedy, policies, procedures and ways of thinking are updated to help prevent another one.

Guerrero, now the anti-terrorism program manager at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, said one point he hits hard on when giving anti-terrorism briefings is to know the enemy.

"You have to know who you're dealing with and how far they're willing to go, what types of targets they're looking for," he said.

He said there are no front lines anymore, and it's everybody's responsibility to be vigilant.

"I think we've come a long way for protecting our folks. We're teaching other countries how to do it," Guerrero said. "My hope is that we've learned enough on where we can stop the next one, and so that's what scares me -- the next one. What is the next one and how far are they willing to go."



**Airman Jasmin Mendoza-Madrid**

**Unit:** 970th Airborne Air Control Squadron

**Job title:** Personnel

**Hometown:** Santa Ana, California

**Favorite team:** LA Angels

**What did you want to be when you grew up?**

A police officer

**Favorite part of your job:** Learning new things.

**Little-known fact about you:** I like to play the guitar.

**Favorite memory from your time in the 513th?**

Getting my first stripe.

**If you had superhero ability, it would be:**

The ability to fly, because it'd be cool and I could travel places faster.

**Watched any good TV shows or movies recently?**

The Big Bang Theory.



**Technical Sergeant Patricia Tubbs**

**Unit:** 513th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

**Job title:** Administrator

**Hometown:** Carrollton, Texas

**Civilian job:** Stay-at-home/homeschooling mom

**What did you want to be when you grew up?**

An actress, dancer and a barrel racer.

**Favorite part of your job:** Interacting with other members of the squadron.

**Little-known fact about you:** I do extra work in TV shows and movies.

**Favorite memory from your time in the 513th?**

Going to Washington, D.C. for the WASP convention and meeting all of the extremely interesting women who paved the way for female flyers. My assigned WASP was Betty Riddle from Tulsa.

**If you had superhero ability, it would be:**

Telekinesis.

**Watched any good TV shows or movies recently?**

I don't get to get out to the movies as much lately, but I have the new Star Trek movie on the 22nd scheduled in red ink on my calendar.