

JBSA

LEGACY

WWW.JBSA.MIL

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO

OCTOBER 23, 2020



Staff Sgt. Tyler Pokrywka, 502nd Operations Support Squadron airfield management, looks up information for C-130 aircrews in support of hurricane evacuation operations during Hurricane Delta Oct. 7 at Joint San Antonio-Kelly Field Annex.

Hurricane Hunters fly Delta missions from Joint Base San Antonio

Page 13



Activation ceremony heralds new chapter

Page 17



Library dedicates Community of Kindness Quilt

Page 10

Commentary: Cake with persistence

By Tech. Sgt. Kris Dube
ROBERT D. GAYLOR NCO ACADEMY

Persistence keeps you moving. It is a drive within you that helps to steer you toward your goals.

A lesson of persistence was given to me by my child after my husband baked a pumpkin candied pecan torte.

That evening for dinner, we tried one of those ordered meal services, you know, the one where everything comes in the box and all you have to do is follow the recipe.

As my family sat down, my youngest son, who was three at the time, dug into his green beans. I thought this was odd because my husband and I usually have to enter into negotiations with him when any green food is involved.

However, that night was different. As I asked my son if



COURTESY PHOTO

It is so easy to lose sight of a goal or give up and stop trying when you reach a barrier. When this happens, stop and evaluate how the consequences of that decision will impact the end goal and imagine how sweet that achievement will be.

he liked his meal, he quickly responded with a mouthful of food, "No!"

I was surprised as he continued to chew and swallow more green beans and reach for even more. I asked him the same question, and again received the same response, "NO!" So, I asked,

"Why?" His reply was simple, "Cake."

It is so easy to lose sight of a goal or give up and stop trying when you reach a barrier.

When this happens, we should stop and evaluate how the consequences of that decision will impact the end goal and imagine how sweet

that achievement will be. Consider your drive and will to accomplish the tasks you are facing, and persist!

Just as my son unknowingly did, he knew what was waiting for him at the end of his meal and had the determination to finish his green beans.

At the end of the day, my little man was teaching me a lesson about persistence and keeping my eye on the prize. Despite the tasks given at work, the amount of homework for classes, and the urge to hit the pause button, I remember that at the end of every goal is my "cake" waiting for me.

When life's obstacles become daunting and you want to call a time-out, remember there is "cake" waiting, as long as you have the persistence to get through this moment.

Voting assistance available on JBSA

By Rachel Kersey
502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As the Nov. 3 election fast approaches, Joint Base San Antonio Voting Assistance Offices are helping eligible voters prepare to cast their ballots.

The Voting Assistance Offices are headquartered in the JBSA Military & Family Readiness Centers and staff members are working hard to help all eligible voters raise their voices. But this year's election cycle comes with an extra challenge - COVID-19.

"I think it's fair to say that COVID-19 has affected all aspects of our lives, so voting is definitely not an exception," said Shancie Brown, a Community Readiness Consultant and Installation Voting Assistance Officer, or IVAO, at JBSA-Randolph. "We

are seeing a huge shift to mailed-in ballots in primary elections nationwide because, rightfully so, people are concerned about their safety during these times."

"Elections have consequences," Brown said. "By me exercising my right to vote, I have an opportunity to change the direction of matters that are important to me, my family and our community." Having a major election during a pandemic has been a challenge for JBSA voting assistance officers.

"It has limited the ability of IVAOs and unit voting assistance officers to personally reach people," said Dwayne Lanier, an IVAO at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston.

The good news is, there are many online resources to help those interested in exercising their constitutional right.

The FVAP.gov website is

very user-friendly, Lanier said, and it can provide most answers people are looking for.

Voters are encouraged to postmark their mail ballots early, if that is the option they choose to vote. It is projected that the U.S. Postal Service will receive an unprecedented number of ballots for delivery.

Early voting is also an option to avoid long lines.

"If people are able to vote early in their state, I would encourage them to do so," Brown said.

Fortunately, Texas is a state that offers early voting. All you need is to be a registered voter as of Oct. 5, 2020, and show up at the designated polling location with valid photo identification, such as a military ID, driver's license, or other government-issued photo ID.

"If you are registered to vote

in Texas, you can vote in-person at your local county voting polling place," said Tracy Bramlett, one of JBSA-Lackland's IVAOs and CRCs. "Early voting began Oct. 13 and ends Oct. 30.

On election day, individuals can vote at any polling place within their county. However, the rules are constantly changing, so individuals should look to news outlets or visit votetexas.gov for updated information, Bramlett said.

"We are also reminding our customers that the Military & Family Readiness Center is not a polling location. For Bexar County voters needing to locate their polling location, they can go online to: www.bexar.org/1568/elections-department.

The Voting Assistance Offices are open from 7:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

JBSA LEGACY

Joint Base San Antonio
Editorial Staff

502nd Air Base Wing
and JBSA Commander
BRIG. GEN.
CAROLINE M. MILLER

502nd ABW/JBSA
Public Affairs Director
MAJ. KIM BENDER

Editor
STEVE ELLIOTT

Staff
LORI BULTMAN
DAVID DEKUNDER
ROBERT GOETZ
SABRINA FINE
RACHEL KERSEY
AIRMAN 1ST CLASS
TYLER MCQUISTON

JBSA LEGACY
ADVERTISEMENT OFFICE
EN COMMUNITIES
P.O. BOX 2171
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78297
210-250-2052

This Department of Defense newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the DoD. Contents of the JBSA Legacy are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the DoD, or the U.S. Air Force.

Published by EN Communities, a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Air Force under exclusive written contract with the 502nd Air Base Wing and Joint Base San Antonio. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the 502nd Air Base Wing Public Affairs Office.

Everything advertised in this publication will be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any non-military factor of the purchaser, user, or patron.

Feedback Fridays

By Brig. Gen. Caroline M. Miller
502D AIR BASE WING AND JOINT BASE
SAN ANTONIO COMMANDER

Feedback Fridays is a weekly forum that aims to connect the 502d Air Base Wing with members of the Joint Base San Antonio community. Questions are collected during commander's calls, town hall meetings and throughout the week.

If you have a question or concern, please send an email to jbsapublicaffairs@gmail.com using the subject line "Feedback Fridays." Questions will be further researched and published as information becomes available.

Q. Hi there. In this crazy world we are all living in right now, I wanted to take a moment to share a positive comment about a gate guard.

Mr. Jarvis Rodgers, a security forces officer who was posted at the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Schofield gate Oct. 8, is an absolute "breath of fresh air."

I first met him last week at the Winans Road gate and he literally made the day for me and my daughters. We came home talking about him that night. He is definitely spreading a positive energy that is lacking in the world.

Today, he did the same as I passed through the gate with a friend. If there is any way to let his superiors know how much his spirit is helping those just passing through the gate, I personally would appreciate it. He

should be acknowledged for his job well done. Thank you.

A. Thank you so much for your positive feedback! Our Security Forces work hard every day to keep JBSA safe and secure. They perform duties which are not always pleasant or easy, but are critical to installation security and safety. For this, they deserve thanks for their continued dedication.

It is great to hear about positive attitudes and the impact that it has on those they serve.

Q. My unit has recently changed our mask usage orders to only be mandated if the person is closer than six feet for 15 minutes or more.

This has led to the reduced usage of masks in hallways and other public areas. Does the inclusion of a 15-minute rule meet the intent of the commander's guidance on face mask usage?

A. Thank you for your important question. Everyone should wear a mask in work and public settings, and when around people who don't live in their household. When alone in an office, the individual may remove their mask. When moving about the work space (hallways, restrooms, other common areas) when others are present, all individuals must wear their mask. However, exceptions to mask requirements may be approved by local commanders or supervisors, and then submitted up the chain of command for situational awareness.



COURTESY GRAPHIC

We encourage commanders and supervisors at all levels to enforce the mask policies and follow CDC recommendations while balancing their mission requirements.

In general, Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force guidance is to follow CDC guidance. Here are some reminders:

Wash your hands often.

Avoid close contact

Allow 6 feet of distance between yourself and people who don't live in your household.

Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others.

The mask is not a substitute for social distancing.

Cover coughs and sneezes.

Clean and disinfect frequently

touched surfaces daily.

Monitor your health daily.

Follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop. Current CDC guidance on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>.

Q. What are the on-installation hours for trick-or-treating?

A. JBSA's trick-or-treating hours are 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Security Force's Pumpkin Patrol will be dispatched during that time. Please adhere to all JBSA's Halloween COVID-19 guidance.

The full guidance can be read here: <https://go.usa.gov/x7xjs>

Have a happy, safe Halloween!

502nd Air Base Wing hosts '5-0-2 Who?' competition

BY 502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

"I know me ... You know you ... but who are WE?"

In an effort to help build wing culture, unity and brand identity, the 502nd Air Base Wing is hosting a friendly, fun competition known as "5-0-2 Who?"

Teams of four to 10 502nd ABW personnel will develop a 5-7 minute video presentation in which they recommend a new slogan, chant, mascot, logo and colors in support of the 502nd ABW Line of Effort No. 1 — Culture.

Videos will be graded by a panel of wing leaders based on how well they satisfy the objective, adopt 502nd ABW history & heritage, incorporate JBSA geographical diversity and team creativity, innovation, and enthusiasm.

All videos should be professionally appropriate with no profanity or inappropriate themes.

Top videos will be selected for a final round, where teams will perform live presentations at a JBSA venue in December.

To register your team, complete the registration form at <https://forms.gle/>

RMNHaqEKD2sqjRtw9 by Nov. 2, 2020. To submit your video, email media to jbsapublicaffairs@gmail.com with the subject line: "502 Who?" no later than Nov. 20.

Teams whose videos are selected for the final round will be notified with date/time/location of the finals.

All are strongly encouraged to participate in this historic opportunity to help build a new culture for the largest Air Base Wing in the Department of Defense.

If you have any questions, call 210-221-3760 for more information.



JBSA holds events, activities in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month

By David DeKunder

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

With displays of purple ribbons and buildings lit up in purple, Joint Base San Antonio is showing its support for survivors and victims of domestic abuse in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

On Oct. 19, members and volunteers with the JBSA Violence Prevention Program placed purple ribbons at Flag Plaza at JBSA-Randolph, the Truemper Street bridge and the 37th Training Wing building at JBSA-Lackland and the Walters Street and Brooke Army Medical Center's Interstate 35 gates at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston.

Also, the Taj Mahal at JBSA-Randolph and the Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center at JBSA-Lackland have been lit up in purple each night since Oct. 1 and will remain so until the end of October.

Marlo Bearden, JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Violence Prevention Program integrator, said the purple ribbons and light displays are a physical reminder to JBSA members of those persons impacted by domestic violence.

"We encourage people to use the ribbons that are being displayed as props for pictures or selfies to share their support for ending domestic violence, to lift those experiencing domestic violence with words of encouragement, and to start those sometimes tough conversations that can help stop abuse and or prevent death," Bearden said.

There are several Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities and events JBSA members can participate in that benefit programs to prevent domestic violence and



SARAYUTH PINTHONG

With displays of purple ribbons and buildings lit up in purple, Joint Base San Antonio shows its support for survivors and victims of domestic abuse in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Taj Mahal at JBSA-Randolph and the Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center at JBSA-Lackland have been lit up in purple each night in October.

help domestic violence survivors.

The JBSA Violence Prevention Program is holding domestic violence shelter drives at commissaries and exchanges at all JBSA locations. Collection boxes have been set up for JBSA members to donate items for women, children and men who are victims of domestic violence and are in shelters. Necessities that can be donated include soap, toothbrushes, underwear (women, men and children), socks (men, women and children), combs, brushes, tampons, disinfectant spray, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer. Donated items will be accepted until Oct. 30 and will go to a local shelter.

There are two contests JBSA members can participate in, the JBSA Violence Prevention Program logo contest and the Domestic Violence Awareness Month poster contest. Submissions for each contest can be sent to: usaf.jbsa.502-abw.mbx.502nd-abw-cvi-workflow@mail.mil. The contests run through Oct. 28,

with the winners announced Oct. 29.

The JBSA Violence Prevention Program is hosting a virtual 5K, which runs through Oct. 28. Participants are encouraged to get out and exercise by walking, running, biking or using a treadmill, stair climber or elliptical machine and to share selfies and videos exercising on their social media accounts, as well as the JBSA Violence Prevention Program Facebook page and other JBSA social media pages. While exercising, JBSA members are encouraged to wear purple attire in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

In addition, the JBSA Violence Prevention Program and the Family Advocacy Program are offering Scream-Free Marriage classes for couples as well as domestic violence awareness exercises. The Scream-Free Marriage classes emphasize healthy relationships through communication and focus on the signs of unhealthy relationships. The classes will

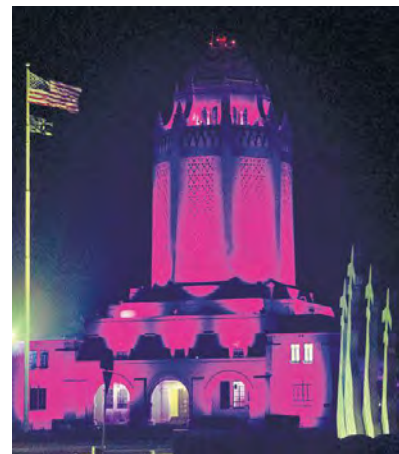
be held in four parts from 2 to 4 p.m. Oct. 20, 22, 27 and 29 at Arnold Hall at JBSA-Lackland.

The domestic violence awareness exercises give attendees a perspective on this type of interpersonal violence as experienced by a survivor. It gives the participant a deeper understanding of the profound impact domestic violence has on the members of both the JBSA and local community. The 30-minute exercises will be conducted via Zoom at noon, Oct. 21, 23 and 26.

For information on the Scream-Free Marriage classes and the domestic violence awareness exercises, call 210-831-5665.

Any JBSA members who are experiencing domestic abuse or violence in a relationship can seek help from the Family Advocacy Program by calling the program's 24/7 crisis line at 210-367-1213 to reach a Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate.

Domestic Abuse Victim Advocates help survivors of domestic abuse and violence through safety assessment,



AIRMAN 1ST CLASS TYLER MCQUISTON

safety planning and, if necessary, assisting victims through the process of securing protective orders. These advocates can also provide links to resources of support such as referring survivors of domestic violence and abuse to legal, medical, housing services and any other community services needed.

Other resources JBSA members can turn to if they or someone else they know is experiencing domestic violence or abuse include the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE), www.ndvh.org; National Dating Abuse Helpline, 1-866-331-9474, www.loveisrespect.org; National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 1-800-537-2238, www.nrcdv.org and www.vawnet.org; National Sexual Assault Hotline, 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE), www.rainn.org; and National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health, 1-312-726-7020 ext. 2011, www.nationalcenterdvtrauma.mh.org.

JBSA retirement offices assist with gaining, maintaining benefits

By Lori A. Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Joint Base San Antonio Retirement Services and Retiree Activities Offices assist, inform and prepare military members and their families during their transition to retirement. The offices are also available after the big day to keep them up-to-date on their rights, benefits and privileges.

Joe Silvas Jr., the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Retirement Services officer, is employed by the Air Force but runs the Army Retirement Services Office for pre- and post-retirement.

"Once our service members are placed on the retirement list, no matter the branch of service, I can assist them within the region, which includes south of Austin to the border, and east and west of that area," Silvas said, noting that the Retirement Activities Offices at JBSA-Randolph and JBSA-Lackland are staffed with volunteers.

Silvas said he can assist service members, retired members, and surviving spouses with everything pertaining to their retirement life.

"I offer pre-retirement support and a briefing once per month," he said. Due to COVID-19 precautions, Silva is sending information out digitally. He is available by phone, email and, if necessary, by appointment.

"I assist with survivor benefit pay, myPay accounts, updating personal information, emails, addresses, dependent information, or life-changing events," he said. "I can help them maintain their military retirement pay account, and I can help them make changes. I am doing everything by appointment currently, due to COVID, and I can mail everything to them if needed."

Silvas can assist former spouses, surviving spouses or dependents as well.

"I help out a lot of survivors," he said. "I help with their applications for benefits and entitlements."

When not under COVID-19 restrictions, Silvas normally holds an annual Retiree Appreciation Day.

"We normally hold one for the Air Force along with the retiree office at

JBSA-Randolph. We also hold one at Brooke Army Medical Center," he said, adding that he hopes those events will return in 2021.

There is also a Joint Base Retiree Council that provides a newsletter and utilizes social media to keep retiree communities informed, Silvas said.

"The council is composed of retired military members, officers and enlisted," he said. "The council provides advice and recommendations to the installation commander regarding vital issues and the concerns of retired members, spouses, surviving spouses and their families. The council members are knowledgeable and up-to-date with military retiree issues and concerns, and they are active in the local military community affairs."

According to Silvas, there are more than 150,000 retirees assigned in his area.

"The only branch I do not have full access for is the Coast Guard, but I can pick up the phone and find what they need," he said.

"Our retirees or survivors might not even own a computer. They may not even know how to get online, or maybe they do not want to get online," he said. "We can assist with getting all their updates completed and applications for benefits as required."

The JBSA-Randolph Retiree Activities Office, located at Pitsenbarger Hall, building 399, room 104, is run by volunteers whose purpose is to serve the needs of military retirees, spouses, widows and widowers. That office, which can only assist with post-retirement activities, reopened last week as well and accepts walk-ins.

Service members and families approaching retirement or post-retirement, or potential volunteers, can contact either office for assistance at:

- JBSA-Fort Sam Houston – usaf.jbsa .502-abw.mbx.502-fss-fsh-retirement-service-of@mail.mil, or 210-221-9004
- JBSA-Randolph – rao.randolph@us.af.mil; 210-652-6880 or 210-652-5778.
- The JBSA-Lackland Retiree Activities Office is currently closed, but services may be obtained through the JBSA-Randolph or JBSA-Fort Sam Houston offices.



COURTESY PHOTO

Joe Silvas Jr. (left), military retirement services officer, 802nd Force Support Squadron, meets with a client to discuss available services at the Retirement Services Office at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston Oct. 15.

Hatch Act limits political activities, even during telework

From 502nd Air Base Wing
Public Affairs

The Hatch Act, a federal law passed in 1939, limits certain political activities of federal employees, as well as some state, D.C., and local government employees who work in connection with federally funded programs. The law's purposes are to ensure federal programs are administered in a nonpartisan fashion, to protect federal employees from political coercion in the workplace, and to ensure federal employees are advanced based on merit and not on political affiliation.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel has received questions about the Hatch Act's application to the unprecedented number of employees who are now teleworking as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, OSC issued an advisory, which is intended to assist employees in understanding their continuing obligations under the Hatch Act.

The advisory addresses the following three areas that are particularly relevant



COURTESY GRAPHIC

for employees who telework: when employees are considered "on duty;" videoconferencing and other virtual communications; and social media.

The Hatch Act prohibits employees from, among other things, engaging in political activity while they are on duty.

Political activity is defined as activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, partisan political group, or candidate for partisan political office, according to the advisory.

Employees are "on duty" for purposes of the Hatch Act when they are: in a pay status other than paid leave,

compensatory time off, credit hours, time off as an incentive award, or excused or authorized absence (including leave without pay); or when they are representing any agency in an official capacity.

Employees maintaining a regular work schedule while teleworking have the same on-duty status as if they were reporting to their regular duty stations. Therefore, they are subject to the Hatch Act's on-duty prohibition during the hours they are working.

In order to maintain agency operations and employee engagement during the pandemic, many federal employees are now regularly required to participate in videoconferencing. Employees participating in virtual work-related conferences are subject to the same on-duty Hatch Act restrictions as when they attend meetings or communicate in-person with others at work.

This means, for example, employees should not wear a campaign t-shirt or hat while participating in a work-related

video conference call, and they should ensure that any partisan materials, like campaign signs or candidate pictures, are not visible to others during the call. These items should also not be visible in profile photos used for identification in work-related videoconferencing.

People were utilizing social media before the pandemic, and now they are embracing it full force to stay connected to their communities, families, friends, coworkers, and employers. The Hatch Act does apply to these social media communications.

Employees who use social media are encouraged to review OSC's social media guidance to understand what activities are prohibited and permitted at: <https://osc.gov/Services/Pages/HatchAct-AdvisoryOpinion.aspx#tabGroup15>

For more details, review DOD Directive 1344.10 at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/134410p.pdf> for service members.

TRICARE Open Season runs Nov. 9 to Dec. 14

From TRICARE Communications

Are you working on your fall to-do list? Don't forget to add health care as an item.

With the 2020 TRICARE Open Season coming soon, now is the time to start thinking about your and your family's health care needs.

Depending on where you live, and your beneficiary status, you may have many coverage options to choose from. Open season is also a good opportunity to learn about important changes, like TRICARE Select enrollment fees for Group A retirees, and if you need to take action.

If you're not sure which TRICARE plan you have, log in to milConnect at <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/> to access your Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS, record. There, you can verify your plan and enrollment status.

"Part of preparing for the open season period is making sure you show as eligible for TRICARE in DEERS and that your information is updated," said Mark Ellis, chief of the Policy and

Programs Section of the TRICARE Health Plan at the Defense Health Agency. "This will enable you to enroll in a health plan and access your TRICARE benefit."

Whether you need to make changes to your existing plan or find a new one, open season is your chance to do so. Any enrollment changes you make will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2021.

So, when is open season?

The TRICARE Open Season officially starts Monday, Nov. 9 and runs until Monday, Dec. 14. The Federal Benefits Open Season is also during this time. It allows certain beneficiaries to enroll in dental and vision plans through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program, or FEDVIP.

What are my health plan options?

Depending on your TRICARE eligibility, you may choose to enroll in the following plans during open season:

- ▶ TRICARE Prime
- ▶ TRICARE Prime Remote
- ▶ TRICARE Select



COURTESY GRAPHIC

- ▶ TRICARE Overseas Program Prime
- ▶ TRICARE Overseas Program Select
- ▶ US Family Health Plan

Keep in mind that the TRICARE Open Season doesn't apply to TRICARE For Life, or TFL. TFL coverage is automatic if you have Medicare Part A and Part B. It doesn't apply to premium-based plans either. You can purchase TRICARE Retired Reserve, TRICARE Reserve Select, or TRICARE Young Adult at any time.

What else do I need to know about open season?

- If you're eligible to participate, you have three choices for your health coverage. You may:
 - ▶ Enroll in a plan. If you're eligible for a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select but not enrolled, you can enroll for 2021 coverage.
 - ▶ Change plans. If you're already enrolled in a TRICARE Prime option,

or TRICARE Select, you can switch plans for 2021 coverage. You may also switch from individual coverage to family coverage, or vice versa.

▶ Stay in your plan. Want to keep the TRICARE plan you have? If so, you don't need to re-enroll. You'll continue in your current health plan through 2021 or as long as you're eligible. If you're a Group A retiree enrolled in TRICARE Select, you'll have to take action. Visit the TRICARE Select Enrollment Fees page to learn more.

As you get ready for open season, be sure to check out helpful tools on the TRICARE website, like the TRICARE Plan Finder (<https://www.tricare.mil/PlanFinder>) and TRICARE Compare Cost Tool (<https://www.tricare.mil/comparecosts>).

These resources will come in handy when you want to know which plans you're eligible for, cost differences, and how to get care. Remember, "If you don't enroll in a TRICARE plan, you'll only be able to receive care at military hospitals and clinics if space is available," as stated in the TRICARE Plans Overview.

Take command of your health, and learn about TRICARE Open Season. To keep up with TRICARE and open season updates, sign up for email alerts at <https://www.tricare.mil/subscriptions>.

Army secretary announces people as top priority

By Devon Suits

ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy announced Oct. 13 that “people” will now be the Army’s top priority, as the force works to give junior leaders more time to build cohesive teams.

“As we took a closer look at ourselves over these past couple of months, we understand that the last 19 years of combat operations and global deterrence has come at a cost,” McCarthy said during the opening ceremony of this year’s Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition.

“Just as we did with readiness, we must invest in people,” followed by readiness and modernization, he added. “The time is now.”

Army leadership will continue to put “people first” as they work to balance operational tempo requirements and make policy changes, said Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville.

Senior leaders released an action plan Oct. 13 that prioritizes people and teams, saying that people are the Army’s greatest strength.

One critical change is the new Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model, or ReARM, slated to be released in the next few months, leaders said. It aims to help leaders balance op tempo requirements with dedicated periods for mission, training and modernization.

Army leaders are also working to determine the level of total Army readiness necessary to meet operational requirements, the plan read. They will then use this information to pursue options and hopefully reduce the Army’s current cycle of heel-to-toe deployment rotations.

“We are taking a look at rotational deployments and working with the [combatant



National Guard Soldiers with the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team conduct training in the Boise National Forest, Idaho, Oct. 3.

THOMAS ALVAREZ

commanders] to see how we can accomplish the mission in innovative ways,” McConville said.

The action plan will also include the reevaluation of combat training center, or CTC, rotations, McConville said. Army leaders look to further foundational readiness through training at the squad, platoon, and company levels.

“Our CTCs are the gold standard for preparing our organizations for large-scale ground combat operations, especially in this time of great power competition,” McConville said, adding the Army must strive to balance its CTC rotations with other training opportunities.

Moving forward, the Army will consider a mix of multi-echelon training exercises such as command post exercises, tactical exercises without troops, and fire support coordination exercises, to train

Soldiers at the battalion and brigade levels, leaders announced in the plan.

“We will pursue options for the brigade combat training centers that are a mix of ‘in the box’ organic battalions, command post exercises, and heavy and light rotations,” McCarthy said. “These efforts will buy back time at home for our units to invest in their Soldiers and families.”

Additionally, leaders might waive a CTC rotation requirement for units scheduled to conduct a non-combat rotational deployment, but only if they can engage in similar collective training while deployed, the plan read.

“There is no intent to reduce the number of CTC rotations,” McConville said. “We are discussing the prerequisites required to go to a CTC and how they fit into” the rotational-deployment model.

So far in 2020, the Army has

responded to a wide range of missions, starting with a no-notice deployment of elements from the 82nd Airborne Division to the Middle East on New Year’s Eve, McCarthy said.

Months later, the Army “faced a global pandemic on a scale that the world has not seen since the Spanish Influenza in 1918,” he added.

The Army called up 45,000 active-duty, National Guard, and Reserve Soldiers to support a government-led response to COVID-19, while close to 180,000 Soldiers were deployed to operations around the world. Simultaneously, the Army worked with industry partners to ensure its modernization timeline continued to be on track.

“As one crisis tapered, another one began. Following the murder of George Floyd, massive civil unrest that had been simmering across the

country for decades reached a tipping point,” McCarthy said.

In response, the Guard was activated to work with local, state, and federal officials to ensure the safety of citizens and those who exercised their constitutional rights to protest. As civil unrest grew, Soldiers watched as peaceful protests turned violent, hijacked by outside actors, McCarthy said.

To reinforce a “people first” mentality, the Army is slated to publish new guidance on absent Soldiers to clarify actions when an individual fails to report for duty, leaders announced in the plan. Under it, the Army will consider them missing and take immediate action.

“This year, and its series of events, has hardened our resolve to create enduring change,” McCarthy said. “The Army is taking rapid, positive, and meaningful steps towards reducing systemic and symbolic inequities.”

The Army’s Project Inclusion initiative will ensure “that we have an organization that is truly inclusive and makes everyone feel like a valued member of the team,” McConville said.

Further, the Army will continue to focus on counseling, sponsorship, and reinforcing the “Army as a team of teams,” through the “This is My Squad” initiative led by Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston.

The National Museum of the United States Army also announced it would open on Veterans Day.

The new facility is located in a publicly accessible area at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. It is the first and only museum to tell the entire history of the U.S. Army since its establishment in 1775, museum officials said.

Enhanced health and safety measures will be taken to ensure the safety of visitors, official said. Free, timed-entry tickets will also be required to manage visitor capacity and provide an optimal experience for all.

FORT SAM HOUSTON

MICC contract enhances IMCOM emergency response communications

By Daniel P. Elkins

MISSION AND INSTALLATION
CONTRACTING COMMAND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Emergency response communications are getting a boost at 72 Army locations across the country and Puerto Rico following the September award of a contract for FirstNet wireless devices and services by Mission and Installation Contracting Command officials at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

Contracting authorities with MICC-Fort Sam Houston awarded a firm, fixed-price task order that ensures communications capabilities for Army public safety officers, first responders and emergency officials during national emergencies when emergency services are engaged and generally available wireless services may be impacted.

The award for wireless services is in support of the U.S. Army Installation Management Command Provost Marshal and Protection Directorate and valued at \$6.2 million for the base period of one year and two option years.

"This is helping us improve vital communications on our installations, depots and arsenals, including during catastrophic disasters or emergencies when communications capabilities are strained," said Col. Kevin Comfort, IMCOM Provost Marshal at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston. "We're adopting this because it is designed for public safety professionals with



COURTESY PHOTO

The damage and debris resulting earlier this summer as Hurricane Laura passed over Fort Polk, Louisiana, at a strength of Category 2 illustrates the Army's need for secure communications by emergency responders. Emergency response communications at 72 Army locations across the nation and Puerto Rico are being enhanced with use of the FirstNet platform following the September contract award by the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Sam Houston. The secure platform will allow Army emergency responders, operators and planners a more reliable network for responding to emergencies and natural disasters.

priority, preemption and highly reliable data communications that will improve our overall response and our interoperability with our civilian partners."

Sam Colton, the contracting officer who led a team in the award, said that while this technology has already been widely available and in use for the past few years by emergency medical services, fire, law enforcement, school transportation and other

critical infrastructure entities, increased research was necessary to limit competition to the only provider for FirstNet support.

Colton worked closely with MICC-Fort Sam Houston contract specialist Juan Juarez to conduct reviews of multiple contract actions administered by agencies inside and outside the command to establish adequate documentation for the award.

"What we found were files

that varied in the level of detail and how they were documenting the need and justification for FirstNet," Colton said. "From this we set out to put together a well-documented file for our action that could be used to help establish a standard starting point for field offices to be able to identify what would be required to properly document requirements within the MICC."

Their extensive research led

to attaining information from a 25-year exclusive agreement issued by the Department of Commerce to AT&T for FirstNet. They next worked with Calvin Prouty, an IMCOM law enforcement specialist who served as the contracting officer representative, to develop justification for use of the exception to fair opportunity authority in moving the procurement forward. Colton added that once the exception was approved along with their market research report and small business coordination record, "the process was able to run its normal course."

The nationwide platform came about following recommendations by the 9/11 Commission to enhance communications across the public safety spectrum. It serves more than 13,000 federal, state, local, municipal and tribal public safety agencies today. The contract task order calls for almost 3,200 lines of services, more than 3,000 devices and more than 700 signal boosters for enhanced indoor connectivity.

First use of the communications platform was piloted earlier this spring by the Army Materiel Command's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command at the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, North Carolina. FirstNet was used more recently by Army operations and planners at Fort Polk, Louisiana, during Hurricane Laura in August to assess damage and coordinate actions to restore base operations.



COURTESY PHOTO

Volunteers gather at the annual Joint Base San Antonio Volunteer of the Year Awards Ceremony at the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Military & Family Readiness Center in 2018.

JBSA's annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony Oct. 28

By David DeKunder

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Joint Base San Antonio will recognize the efforts of individuals and groups who have helped and given their time to the local community at the ninth annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony Oct. 28 at the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Military & Family Readiness Center.

The ceremony starts at 3 p.m. in the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston M&FRC auditorium with limited, by invitation only, seating due to coronavirus or, COVID-19, restrictions. The event will be streamed on Facebook Live.

Brig. Gen. Caroline Miller, 502d Air Base Wing and JBSA commander, will present awards to six individuals and three groups for their volunteer work in 2019. The award winners are among a total of 59

nominations submitted, covering nine award categories, submitted from JBSA members.

Dina Castro, JBSA-Fort Sam Houston M&FRC Volunteer Program director, said the ceremony will be scaled down from previous years because of COVID-19. Only individual and group award winners, JBSA officials, speakers and ceremony organizers will be in attendance to limit possible exposure to COVID-19.

Participants and those in attendance will be required to wear face coverings and seating will be set up for physical distancing.

Despite the restrictions and adjustments being put into place because of the pandemic, Castro said the focus of the ceremony is still the same — honoring the hard work and dedication of JBSA volunteers.

"The primary thing is, we're going to be celebrating all of our nominees and the

winners," Castro said. "That's what this is about. This event is really celebrating them and just being appreciative to them for all that they do."

Individuals and groups have been nominated for the volunteer service they have given at various organizations throughout JBSA that support and assist active duty members, military families, retirees, government civilians and youth.

The ceremony was scheduled to be held in April but was postponed due to COVID-19.

Castro said the challenge for the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston M&FRC was how and when to conduct the ceremony safely, in the midst of a pandemic. In planning the ceremony, she said organizers followed the example of the quarterly awards ceremony put on by the 502nd Air Base Wing, which was done virtually with only the presenters and award

winners present.

"Once we saw them do it virtually, just having the winners there, then it was like, 'Okay, now we know how we can do this,'" Castro said.

Castro said she felt it was important to put on the awards ceremony despite the delays, obstacles and challenges put forth because of the pandemic.

"These people are still worthy of receiving that recognition, even though it might be in a smaller format," she said. "We still need to celebrate the successes despite this COVID-19 situation."

In 2019, 7,267 JBSA members volunteered a total of 246,766 hours to their local community, which came out to a monetary value of \$6.7 million. According to the Independent Sector, an organization of nonprofits, foundations and corporations, the estimated value of volunteer time is \$27.20 per hour.

Castro said there is always a

need for more volunteers within the JBSA and the local community, including at medical facilities and in units and organizations. She said any JBSA member who wants to explore volunteer opportunities, whether as a way to build their resume, as a way to give back to their military and the local community, or a combination of reasons, can contact her at 210-221-2705.

Castro said being a volunteer allows military members to become more connected locally, especially if they are newcomers.

"It's a great way for people to get established in their community," she said. "You meet people, so you make those connections."

For information on accessing and watching the awards ceremony online, call the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston M&FRC at 210-221-2705.

Naval Medical Forces Support Command celebrates Navy birthday virtually

By Petty Officer 1st Class David Kolmel
NAVAL MEDICAL FORCES SUPPORT COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

COVID-19 has led to cancellations of many of the time-honored ceremonies that military members enjoy. As a way to commemorate the Navy's birthday, Naval Medical Forces Support Command, or NMFSC, used virtual means to honor the day.

The Navy command at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston hosted a cake-cutting ceremony on Microsoft Teams to celebrate the 245th Navy birthday Oct. 13.

"It's important to stop and take a minute and honor our tradition and to make sure that we pause, breathe and celebrate our naval service," said Rear Adm. Cynthia Kuehner, NMFSC commander. "Two hundred forty-five years is a good long while of honor, courage, commitment and dedication to sea service. We have a storied past and I am certain we will continue in that legacy of service and pride in the Navy."

The ceremony followed COVID-19 restrictions, but with the same traditions, such as a physically distanced cake-cutting ceremony and a limited number of attendees.

"It is important to annually hold a Navy birthday celebration to remember the Navy's heritage, history, and to commemorate what the Navy has accomplished in its 245 years," said Lt. Kimberly Melin, NMFSC lead for the ceremony. "Not being able to celebrate with a Navy Birthday Ball due to COVID-19, it's especially important this year to still have a cake cutting to uphold traditions as best we can in this unique time."

Petty Officer 3rd Class Hailey Johnson agrees with the importance of and honor of participating in the ceremony.

"It is a great honor to be in this year's ceremony, with all that is going on, was a nice chance to celebrate the Navy's birthday and bring back a little bit of normal to our lives," Johnson said as the youngest Sailor at NMFSC. "It was also a great chance to see some familiar faces, although in a smaller capacity than normal."

Along with traditional cake-cutting ceremony, NMFSC also read messages from President Donald J. Trump, Secretary of the Navy Kenneth J. Braithwaite, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday, and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell L. Smith congratulating the Navy on its 245th birthday.



PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS DAVID KOLMEL

(From left) Rear Adm. Cynthia Kuehner, commander of Naval Medical Forces Support Command; Capt. Elizabeth Montcalm-Smith, senior Sailor at NMFSC; and Petty Officer 3rd Class Hailey Johnson, youngest Sailor at NMFSC; perform the ceremonial cake cutting during a ceremony to honor the Navy's 245th birthday at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston Oct. 13.

Campbell Memorial Library dedicates Community of Kindness Quilt

By David DeKunder
502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Patrons and staff members of the Campbell Memorial Library at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston have come up with a creative way to promote kindness.

The library has put together a quilt consisting of images and illustrations on kindness created by library users, primarily military families and library staff members. Named the Community of Kindness Quilt, the 60 square-foot quilt was dedicated at the Campbell Memorial Library Oct. 14.

Measuring 6 feet tall and 10 feet wide, the Community of Kindness Quilt consists of 16 interlocking foam squares of images and illustrations. Library patrons and staff members drew, painted, used construction paper or whatever materials they could utilize in creating their images, illustrations or words on what kindness means to them on 2-foot by 2-foot foam squares provided by the library.

Darrell Hankins, Campbell

Memorial Library supervisory librarian, said 17 library patrons and nine staff members contributed images and illustrations for the quilt.

Hankins said the idea and name for the quilt came about during a library staff meeting this summer on community outreach and how to keep library patrons engaged during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The big reason we did it was, we wanted to ensure connectivity with the community because of the fact we had been open a short period and then we closed again because of COVID-19," Hankins said. "We wanted to have a way to remain connected to our community because we didn't want people to think we had forgotten about them."

The library set out the foam squares, which had been donated to the library by a patron earlier this year, on carts in front of the library as part of its no-contact services from late July to early August. Patrons took the foam squares, decorated them in their homes, then returned them to the carts



THOMAS CONEY

(From left) Theresa Whittaker, library technician; Carrie Panches, library aide; Darrell Hankins, librarian; Diana Pina, library technician; and Jessica Mullis, library technician, gather to display the Community of Kindness Quilt, a 60 square-foot quilt, which was dedicated at the Campbell Memorial Library Oct. 14.

at the library. Hankins said he was impressed by the quality of the images and illustrations submitted by library patrons, military families and library staff members.

"They took some time to definitely put their heart and passion into what they were doing," he said. "The artwork is really nice."

In addition, Hankins said the quilt project brought members of the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston community together for a

purpose — spreading the word about kindness.

"Everybody was very excited to do it and thought it was an awesome opportunity, and really a good thing for the library to put out there at a time like this," Hankins said. "It definitely lifted the staff members as well, just as much as it was a boost for the morale of the community."

"When you put a request out there, and your patrons take the time out of their day to create this representation, it

really comes back to recognizing you are having an impact. People are willing to contribute to the library's function as a place to have these type of engagements on a personal level with the community," Hankins said.

Hankins said library patrons who have not returned their foam squares can still create their images and return them to the library to be added to the quilt.

Plans are for the Community of Kindness Quilt to be placed on a wall near the front entrance of the library.

When the quilt is put up, Hankins said he wants it to be a reminder to patrons who will walk by it daily on the importance of being kind.

"I just think at the end of the day, it's all about just creating an awareness for people to remember to be kind," Hankins said. "No matter where you're at, kindness starts in your own community and spreads like ripples in a pond. A single act of kindness can definitely meet the difference between good things happening and bad things happening."

Texas mother follows son enlisting in Navy

By David DeKunder
502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A mother of two from Kerrville is following her son into the Navy, fulfilling her longtime dream of serving in the military.

Seaman Apprentice Bobbi Saenz has been in the Navy for eight months and is stationed at Naval Air Station North Island, near San Diego, California, where she is an aviation technician with the Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 35.

Bobbi enlisted in the Navy at the age of 39, after her eldest son, 21-year-old Seaman Diego Saenz, joined the Navy in November 2018.

The mother-and-son Sailors were both recruited by Navy Talent Acquisition Group San Antonio.

The elder Saenz shipped out to basic military training in February to Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois, and turned 40 while in boot camp. She graduated basic military training in April and completed training school at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida in July.

Joining the military is something Bobbi said she had wanted to do for a long time but had put it off while raising her two sons, Diego Saenz and Raul Vasquez, who is now 18. When her sons were grown, she decided it was the right time to enlist and pursue her dream of a military career.

The new Seaman said her family supported her decision to go into the military, especially Diego, who encouraged her to do so.

"My older son (Diego) was saying, 'You need to go after your dreams, you're still young enough to do all this. What are you going to lose if you do it,'" Bobbi Saenz said. "It was just something I felt it would be an honor to do."

Diego Saenz, stationed at Naval Station Everett in Washington state as an

engineer on the USS Gridley, said his mother told him about her decision to join the Navy while visiting him in New York City, where he was on deployment last year.

"I was proud of her because she wanted to do something with her life, and she chose this route," he said. "I know you can do a lot going this route; you get more opportunity and you're serving your country."

Following her son into military service, Bobbi was able to gain some insight from him on preparing for boot camp. Diego completed basic military training in January 2019.

Diego said he prepared his mother for what she would need to learn to get through basic military training, but the rest of the details of boot camp he left out for her to find out on her own.

"I didn't want to make it too easy on my mother," Diego said. "I wanted her to experience it herself, but I hoped I gave her the fundamentals she needed to know. I said it's going to be eye-opening to see what's going to happen; sometimes it's going to feel weird. But I said I'm pretty sure you've been through worst situations than this, so it's not going to be hard for you."

Bobbi Saenz said she knew she would have to overcome a few challenges to make it through boot camp, such as being older than most of the trainees and adjusting to the way things are done in basic military training.

"You are set in your ways throughout life, as far as growing up, how you live, how you take care of a home," she said. "You have your routine down, and after 39 years, you have to switch the entire routine. Everything changes, it was like rewiring myself."

Serving in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, mother and son Sailors have experienced adversity.

First, Bobbi's basic military



COURTESY PHOTOS

Bobbi Saenz (second from left) stands next to her son, Diego Saenz (third from left), at his high school graduation in Kerrville in 2018. Family members joining them are Raul Vasquez (left), Bobbi Saenz's son, and Jay Vasquez (right). Both Bobbi and Diego Saenz are currently serving in the Navy.



Seaman Diego Saenz



Seaman Apprentice Bobbi Saenz

training graduation ceremony was canceled in April because of the pandemic. Her two sons and her parents had planned to attend the graduation.

At about the same time his mother completed basic training, Diego tested positive for COVID-19. He had to quarantine for almost a month, but he recovered and is doing well now.

Even though they are at different duty stations, thousands of miles apart, the

mother and son service members keep in touch with each other often, whether by texting or FaceTime.

"We talk quite a bit," Bobbi said. "We talk about what we are doing. During technical school, I asked him questions on things for getting qualifications - and just to catch up on each other."

"We text every day and check up on each other and make sure we are doing all right," Diego said.

"I was proud of her because she wanted to do something with her life, and she chose this route. I know you can do a lot going this route; you get more opportunity and you're serving your country."

Seaman Diego Saenz, USS Gridley engineer, Naval Station Everett, Washington

Bobbi said having the chance to serve in the Navy fulfills one of her passions, helping people. Before joining the service, she worked two jobs in health care, as a pharmacy technician and part-time as a patient care technician in Kerrville.

"That's who I am," she said. "To me, I think my job is very important because I'm taking care of that person that is going to be flying that plane. It's my job to make sure those pieces of equipment that are my job are functioning properly, so the pilots can do what they need to do."

Diego said throughout his life, his mother worked several jobs so he and his younger brother would have the necessities and that she was always there for them. He said his mother also taught him some valuable lessons about life that he applies to his service in the Navy.

"She just always told us to never give up," Diego said. "She always told us, 'You are never going to get handed anything, you've got to work for it.' We had that hard work mentality, and it stuck with us."

LACKLAND

Hurricane Hunters fly Delta missions from JBSA

By Lori A. Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As Hurricane Delta made its way into the Gulf of Mexico Oct. 7 and headed for the Louisiana coastline, Joint Base San Antonio personnel jumped into action to support the evacuation of aircraft and personnel from the U.S. Air Force Reserve's 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

The evacuation of aircraft to JBSA is a normal occurrence, but Joseph Meaux III, 502nd Operations Support Squadron director of operations, said this time it was different.

"This operation had a twist," he said. "We not only have the C-130s evacuated here for protection from the storm, but we also have the four WC-130s conducting hurricane hunting operations. So, it's pretty exciting times at JBSA-Kelly Field Annex."

"Joint Base San Antonio is uniquely located where it's close to home but it also happens to be close to the mission this time around," said 1st Lt. Ryan Smithies, of the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron.

Smithies said evacuating the Hurricane Hunters to JBSA was essential to their mission during Hurricane Delta, allowing them to continue collecting important information from inside the storm, providing it to forecasters and government partners to keep people safe, and giving everyone the most current information.

Keeping the Hurricane Hunters flying out of San Antonio during the hurricane was no small task.



PHOTOS BY SARAYUTH PINTHONG

Tech. Sgt. Joel Ruiz, 502nd Operations Support Squadron, troubleshoots radio communications equipment in support of hurricane evacuation operations during Hurricane Delta Oct. 7 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.



Master Sgt. Ed Scherzer, 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, prepares for take-off in support of hurricane evacuation operations during Hurricane Delta Oct. 8 at Joint Base San Antonio-Kelly Field Annex.

"It takes a village," Smithies said. "We've got over 50 people here - maintenance, aircrews, operations ... the whole contingency to keep this mission going around the clock."

An important part of keeping the weather mission flying was the support provided by the 502nd OSS.

Lt. Col. E. Yancey Walker, the 502nd OSS commander, said he considers his squadron JBSA's gateway to the sky, especially during evacuations.

"We control the airspace, provide airfield management and instrument approach

maintenance, as well as Host Aviation Resources Management and weather support," he said. "This is the fourth time that we've had U.S. military aircraft evacuate to our location this year. We had an evacuation from the wildfires in California, and this is our third iteration for the hurricanes or tropical storms that have hit the Gulf Coast."

Several other JBSA partners assisted with the evacuees as well, Walker said.

The 502nd Logistics Readiness Squadron, the 502nd Force Support Squadron

and security forces personnel provided fuel and lodging, and protected the extra aircraft, he said.

"It's really becomes a team effort just to support the contingencies as they come through here," Walker said.

Another advantage of evacuating aircraft to San Antonio is the amount of available space.

"We've got parking for aircraft on the east side of JBSA-Kelly Field Annex, near the Port San Antonio, and on the west side of the field near the 433rd Airlift Wing," Walker said. "One of the nice things about Kelly Field is that it is far enough inland that it's not typically threatened by the storms themselves."

The JBSA-Kelly Field Annex also offers longer runways.

"We have one of the longest runways in the region. It's 11,550 feet, and we have a lot of concrete to support parking aircraft as well," Walker said.

"Between the west side, our east side, and the Port San Antonio ramp, we have the ability to host a lot of aircraft, so we're an attractive customer for both our military assets and for Federal Emergency Management Agency operations.

"We also have space where they can store materials such as water, food and clothing," he said. "Then, we have the ability to launch those materials out of here on the larger aircraft, or on something much smaller that can get into a disaster area."

There has been one unique challenge during this year's evacuations - the precautions needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Part of avoiding

transmission of the disease is staying out of confined spaces, Walker said, which has been a challenge in the airfield control tower.

"We've had to take extreme precautions in terms of monitoring our personnel for symptoms and sanitizing the workstations in between crews," he said. "One of the other adjustments we had to make in order to prevent cross-contamination was reducing hours from 24/7 to 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. However, we're going back to 24/7 this week."

"We can't shut down the runway because of COVID," Walker said. "It's a vital support asset both for the civilian community and for our military, so we just had to find ways to mitigate the risk and continue operations."

As for Smithies, the weather reconnaissance squadron, and the Hurricane Hunters, they remain ready as they prepare to close out the 2020 hurricane season, which has been unprecedented.

"It's hard to say what the rest of this season will bring," Smithies said. "It's been a very busy one for sure. Keesler Air Force Base is in the path of storms frequently, and it's important to have bases like Joint Base San Antonio to go to. It is a prime location for us to safely move our assets out of harm's way while continuing the mission that we wouldn't have been able to support had we stayed at home."

"We are incredibly thankful that Joint Base San Antonio has provided the hospitality and means for us to continue operating, and the support of the 502nd Operations Support Squadron has been critical to the success of our mission."

Next-generation helmets keep Defenders lethal, ready

By Malcolm McClendon

AIR FORCE INSTALLATION AND
MISSION SUPPORT CENTER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Air Force Security Forces Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland is delivering the next generation of ballistic helmets to security forces units as part of its effort to standardize and modernize Defender equipment across the Air Force.

The helmets will replace the Advanced Combat Helmet, which security forces Airmen had to modify and outfit with bulky additions to accomplish different mission sets, said Master Sgt. Markus Nelson, an AFSFC individual equipment manager.

“Defenders perform a variety of duties around the globe, anything from guarding bases in combat environments to protecting nuclear armament,” he said. “In alignment with the Security Forces Enterprise Plan, we had to find a solution to have one standard helmet that would keep all security forces Defenders lethal and ready, no matter the task.”

The new helmet is lighter, cooler, has better padding and comes with a built-in railing to fit accessories, such as night vision goggles and tactical communication equipment, Nelson said.

The 71st Security Forces Squadron at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma, was the first unit to receive the new helmets and took no time to strap them on.

“It is actually really quick to put on and easily adjustable, allowing me more time to check my Airmen and make sure everyone’s gear is on straight,” said Senior Airman Craig Smith, a 71st SFS Airman. “The biggest improvement I noticed is it’s lightweight and if I take a hard turn in a Humvee, I know



Airman Alex Orquiza (left) and Senior Airman Craig Smith, both 71st Security Forces Squadron personnel, wear the next generation of ballistic helmets during a door breaching exercise at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma, Sept. 15.

I’m not going to break my neck.”

Master Sgt. Darryl Wright, 71st SFS logistics and readiness superintendent, said this is the most agile helmet he’s worn in 19 years as a Defender.

“I just got back from a deployment and this helmet is

made for hot areas like that; and even where it’s not as hot, the mobility and light weight of the helmet makes a significant difference in what you can do,” Wright said. “Even back here at home when we do readiness exercises, we bring all our fighting gear, including the

helmet. Exercises get you prepared for the fight and having next generation gear like this helmet improves Vance Air Force Base’s security readiness.”

Nelson, who is also an experienced defender with 14 years of service, said this is what he and his team at the



AFSFC Logistics Directorate work for: to get the right gear to Defenders in garrison and down range.

“My team’s work is directly impacting more than 38,000 Defenders across the Air Force for the next five to 10 years,” Nelson said, “and with the help of strategic partnerships, like those with the 771st Enterprise Sourcing Squadron, we’re doing it a lot quicker too.”

The helmets are part of the AFSFC initiative to modernize weapon systems, individual protective gear, contingency support equipment and deployable communications systems. Those include the M18 modular handgun system, M4A1 assault rifle, M10A1 semi-automatic precision engagement rifle, M320A1 grenade launcher, modular scalable vest and female body armor.

“We’re identifying salient characteristics of the best individual equipment industry has to offer at the best value to achieve standardization across the force,” said Lt. Col. Barry Nichols, AFSFC director of Logistics. “This effort is instrumental in keeping Defenders throughout the security forces enterprise ready and lethal with procurement of the most cutting-edge and innovative equipment available in order to accomplish missions safely and effectively.”

PHOTOS BY SENIOR AIRMAN TAYLOR CRUL

149th Fighter Wing celebrates redesignation anniversary

From 149th Fighter Wing
Public Affairs

Twenty-five years ago Oct. 16 in Gunfighter history, the 149th Fighter Group was redesignated as the 149th Fighter Wing at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. Today, the 149th FW trains combat-ready F-16 pilots for worldwide operations.

The formation of today's 149th Fighter Wing traces back to 1943 when the 396th Fighter Squadron was activated and served honorably during World War II.

During the war, the 396th FS served in the European Theater, where it earned the Belgian Fourragere. The unit also earned the Belgian Croix de Guerre twice and was recognized with the Distinguished Unit Citation for action over Mons, France, Sept. 3, 1944.

After the war, most Guard units were given the lineage of similar World War II combat units. In keeping with this tradition, the 396th FS was inactivated Aug. 20, 1946 and



COURTESY PHOTO

Twenty-five years ago Oct. 16 in Gunfighter history, the 149th Fighter Group was redesignated as the 149th Fighter Wing at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. Today, the 149th FW trains combat-ready F-16 pilots for worldwide operations.

later re-designated as the 182nd Fighter Squadron, a Texas Air National Guard unit.

The 182nd FS received federal recognition Oct. 6, 1947 and was given a fighter-bomber mission.

The 182nd began flying the F-51 "Mustang" in 1947 and accepted its first jet, the F-84E

"Thunderjet" when the squadron was called to active duty during the Korean War.

The squadron, as an element of the 136th Fighter Wing, was the first Air National Guard squadron to see combat during that war; the first Air National Guard unit to shoot down a MiG-15; and the first to successfully demonstrate the applicability of aerial refueling during combat.

On July 1, 1960, the unit was re-organized as the 149th Fighter Group with the 182nd FS as a component of the group. On Oct. 16, 1995, the 149th Fighter Group was redesignated as the 149th Fighter Wing.

On Oct. 23, 1999, the mission of the 149th FW changed from an Air Combat Operations unit to a Formal Training Unit under the Air Education and Training Command. Although the unit has experienced several reorganizations in its 73-year history, the 149th has always flown fighter aircraft.

For a video about the history of the 149th Fighter Wing, visit <https://www.149fw.af.mil/About-Us/History/>.

DLIELC resumes mobile training teams after pause

From Defense Language
Institute English Language
Center Public Affairs

On March 19, the Department of State advised U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19. In response to the global health advisory, the closing of international borders and the cancellations of international flights, Defense Language Institute English Language Center personnel on outside contiguous United States mobile training teams, or OCONUS MTTs, repatriated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States, along with the State Department, lifted the

global level 4 health advisory Aug. 6 and returned to a country-specific level advisory system.

During this pause, the DLIELC remained committed to assisting security cooperation partners to build their English language capacity through the fulfillment of American Language Course book orders, English language labs, and providing training to international military students at the resident campus and at three Language Training Detachment sites in Puerto Rico, the United Arab Emirates and Japan.

In line with the 2017 National Security Strategy to maintain a forward presence and with the 2018 National

Defense Strategy to deepen interoperability, the DLIELC's 637th International Support Squadron worked closely with U.S. security cooperation partners to ascertain local travel restrictions and to ensure health and safety protocols of MTT sites.

Saudi Arabia MTTs to Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam are set to depart later this year and continue into the spring. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command assignments to Komaki, Japan and Bangkok, Thailand are also moving ahead and MTTs will begin to deploy this fall. English language training teams to the Indo-Pacific region would support the networked security architecture and the greater

pivot to Asia.

Aside from the seven-month COVID-19 pause, the MTT to Komaki has been a recurring assignment providing English language training support to the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force student pilots. The training mission aims to build the conversational skills of the Japanese pilots and prepare them for the Oral Proficiency Interview, or OPI, listening and speaking assessment. Passing OPI scores qualify Japanese pilots to participate in red flag training exercises for joint readiness and interoperability.

The last DLIELC MTT to Thailand was in 2013, prior to the 2014 Thai coup d'état. The 2017 National Security Strategy

stresses the importance of re-energizing the U.S. alliance with Thailand.

The upcoming MTT to Bangkok would reinvigorate this alliance by training host nation ELT managers and instructional staff on the use of American Language Course materials. The Bangkok MTT will provide in-country workshops at the Royal Thai Armed Forces, or RTAF, service language institutes and the RTAF service language academies.

By training the Thai trainers, DLIELC becomes a key security cooperation driver in meeting the objective of encouraging coalition partners to share burdens under a strong defense network.

Keesler Air Force Base, Air Education and Training Command keep BMT pipeline going

By Senior Airman
Suzie Plotnikov

81ST TRAINING WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived earlier this year, the way units and people operate in the Air Force changed. With a threat like this, there was a risk the training pipeline could have stopped, but due to the flexibility and adaptability of the 81st Training Group at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, the Basic Military Training pipeline has continued to supply the Air Force with the Airmen we need.

"There are operational units that have people either separating or retiring from

those units every day," said Chief Master Sgt. Jason Buckley, 81st TRG superintendent. "I think to operate efficiently. It's critical to be at 100 percent. With approximately 11,000 Airmen projected to separate or retire from the Air Force this year, it was absolutely critical that the 81st TRG continued to supply operational units around the world with lethal and ready Airmen."

BMT graduates used to be transported by bus from Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland in Texas, but now they are transported by a commercial aircraft to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection and increase the readiness of the

training group force.

"The Airmen benefit from not having to travel approximately 12 hours by bus, which leaves them more physically capable to hit the ground running," Buckley said. "The flight from San Antonio to Keesler is just over one hour and the entire crew is vigilant about following and enforcing CDC guidelines for reducing the spread of COVID-19."

Within days of the onset of the stop movement associated with the pandemic, Keesler was able to receive BMT graduates due to the teamwork displayed by the 81st Logistics Readiness Squadron, the 81st TRG, the 737th Training Group and the 502nd Logistics Readiness

Squadron.

"I coordinate with the deployment distribution flight officer in charge every week to find out how many Airmen we're going to get this week and what time the aircraft is coming in," said Tech. Sgt. Brian Teachout, 81st LRS deployment and distribution flight NCO in charge. "I coordinate with our operations support flight to find out where the aircraft is going to park so we know where we're going to work. I then coordinate with public health, the training group and our ground transportation team in order to receive them."

Since March, Teachout has worked 27 missions to receive approximately 2,200 Airmen

that graduated BMT at JBSA-Lackland to supply the Airmen we need so the Air Force can continue to dominate in space and cyberspace.

"Within days of being notified of the stop movement order we were able to receive BMT graduates who would fill seats in our courses and eventually graduate and resupply our force," Buckley said. "Continuing to technically train Airmen at Keesler Air Force Base and around Air Education and Training Command serves notice to any competitor that even a pandemic doesn't place our military in jeopardy of being supplanted as the world's deadliest fighting force."



Basic military training graduates from Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland exit a commercial aircraft at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, Sept. 29. BMT graduates used to be transported by bus from Lackland, but ever since COVID-19, they transitioned to being transported by aircraft to reduce the risk of infection among the students to keep the training pipeline going.

RANDOLPH

Activation ceremony heralds new chapter in trainer aircraft maintenance story

By Robert Goetz

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A trainer aircraft maintenance training center that will serve the needs of Air Education and Training Command for decades to come will be activated during a ceremony at 10:15 a.m., Oct. 29, in Hangar 62 at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph.

The ceremony, which will adhere to COVID-19 health and safety protocols, will feature remarks by Maj. Gen. Craig Wills, Nineteenth Air Force commander, and a display of T-1A, T-6A and T-38C trainer aircraft.

The Maintenance Training Center, situated on the south end of Hangar 62, is the culmination of a four-year effort to create a facility that will produce a new generation of trainer aircraft technicians to follow in the footsteps of an aging work force of mechanics who were trained as active duty Air Force members.

The Air Force reclassified trainer aircraft maintenance as a commercial activity in the mid-1980s, so it was no longer an active duty function, said Brian Bastow, Logistics Management Branch chief for the Nineteenth Air Force Directorate of Logistics. Maintenance duties were turned over to a civilian force consisting of those Air Force-trained technicians who retired or separated from the service.

"That was OK because the Air Force was benefiting from a trained work force," he said,



RICH MCFADDEN

"but now many of those professionals are retired or about to retire and we didn't have the capability to replace them."

The MTC will provide that capability.

"For new technicians we've been hiring high school graduates with mechanical aptitude and training them through on-the-job training, but it takes a long time for unstructured OJT," Bastow said. "With the MTC, we'll have the courses to train them in a structured setting."

Nine instructors are awaiting the start of classes in a matter

of weeks, and the courses they teach will run the gamut from basic maintenance of the T-1A, T-6A and T-38C aircraft that serve AETC to more advanced classes such as jet propulsion and avionics.

"We don't have students enrolled yet, but we estimate we'll be training several hundred a year," Bastow said.

The training center features a large 10,000-square-foot open area with a resurfaced floor that will accommodate the trainer aircraft used for training as well as new lights, overhead infrared gas heaters and specialized electrical

components to power the aircraft.

The renovation project included an overhaul of the large hangar doors, which were made fully operational again to allow aircraft to be towed in and out of the hangar. The doors rest on big wheel assemblies and are opened by pushing them manually on a rail in a horizontal direction. Paint was scraped off the glass window panes on the top part of the doors to allow for natural lighting.

A 5,000-square-foot office area on the second floor of the hangar, previously used by the

Ruben Pesina, 12th Maintenance Group, repairs a panel from a T-38C Talon aircraft during a phase inspection at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph. A trainer aircraft maintenance training center in Hangar 62 at JBSA-Randolph will soon be producing a new generation of trainer aircraft technicians to serve Air Education and Training Command.

502nd Civil Engineer Squadron for carpentry and metal shops, is also part of the training center. The 502nd CES continues to occupy the north side of the hangar.

In addition to producing technicians for the 12th Flying Training Wing at JBSA-Randolph and Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, the training center will serve maintenance units for the flying training wings at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi; Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas; Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas; and Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month: Foreign affairs specialist provides diverse skill set

By Robert Goetz

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

After applying for a position with the Air Force Security Assistance Training Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph late last year, Andy Smith received an automated email telling him he was not qualified for the job.

Then, something surprising happened.

"After receiving the email, I just thought I'd move on and find another job," Smith said. "But then I received a phone call for an interview for the job I applied for."

A few days later, during the phone interview with a hearing panel consisting of

three AFSAT team members, Smith learned why he was chosen for an interview and ultimately for the position.

"They said one of the reasons I was selected was that I have a great work ethic and a diverse skill set they could use at AFSAT," he said.

His "charisma and good looks," along with his "good sense of humor," Smith joked, helped his cause as well.

Smith, who is wheelchair-bound due to lifelong cerebral palsy, applied for the AFSAT position through Schedule A, a hiring authority that allows federal agencies to hire individuals with disabilities directly into the workforce.

He started his job as an

AFSAT foreign affairs specialist in March, at the beginning of the novel coronavirus pandemic, so he has spent nearly all of his time as a teleworker — a work style that is second nature to him.

"In this particular office, our duty is to support the men and women who go overseas to support our international partners; that's what we do in a nutshell," he said. "We make sure they get to their location in a timely fashion so they can complete their mission. Our office works with all of our international partners — Canada, Mexico, The Bahamas, Saudi Arabia, Poland and other countries."

Smith is assigned to the AFSAT "Teams" office, which manages mobile training teams, also known as MTTs, said Charles Bailey, AFSAT Mission Support director.

"When the pandemic hit the U.S., there was almost an immediate requirement to recall all MTTs from around the world," Bailey said. "Andy played a direct role in making that recall a complete success."

Smith was also recently selected to participate on AFSAT's governance team, Bailey said.

"The GT is recording best practices, policies and processes in an attempt to develop continuity and capitalize on 21st century technology," he said.

Smith, who also has arthritis in his hands and wrists, said he's had a few challenges at his job. One of them was a delay in the delivery of a speech recognition program that allows him to speak into his computer with the software translating his spoken words into text, but once the software was delivered, it was installed in less than a day.

Another challenge was learning military jargon, a



COURTESY PHOTO

Andy Smith works with the Air Force Security Assistance Training Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph as a foreign affairs specialist and is assigned to the AFSAT "Teams" office, which manages mobile training teams.

common issue for anyone new to the Department of Defense.

But his proficiency in computer technology has enabled him to make an impact "right out of the gate," Bailey said.

"One of the first impacts

Andy made was a collaborative guide to our virtual onboarding process," he said. "Many of the ideas he and the team suggested were incorporated into our onboarding business practice."

Bailey agreed with the review panel's assessment of Smith's skill set.

"One of the key things that Andy brings is an added diversity that makes our team stronger and more vibrant," he said. "He has maintained a positive attitude during the pandemic and certainly brought new perspectives to our team."

Smith's disability has posed challenges for him all of his life, he said, but with the help of supportive parents and his own resiliency, he's been able to overcome obstacles and succeed in his educational endeavors and in the

workplace.

"My parents were really encouraging," he said. "They would tell me, 'As long as you put your mind to it and you're doing your best, that's all we ask of you.'"

Because sports and other physical activities were not an option for him, Smith turned to video games, computers and technology — and to academic pursuits.

He has earned bachelor's degrees in history and interdisciplinary studies and a Master of Business Administration, and he plans to pursue a doctorate in education this fall.

Smith's diverse employment background includes jobs as an American Red Cross medical records technician, a search engine marketing specialist, an information technology cybersecurity and SharePoint consultant, a Navy logistics management consultant, and a support technician for a cloud-computing company.

He said he continues to receive support in his current position, particularly from supervisors such as Bailey and Kathleen Doss, AFSAT International Training Program manager, whom he cited for "facilitating things for me."

Smith also acknowledged the DOD's role in championing individuals with disabilities.

"Schedule A was a really big help in getting me this job because it enabled my resume to be seen more easily," he said.

Smith said his position with AFSAT enables him to contribute to the defense effort.

"What I enjoy is getting the opportunity to help — in some small way — our government complete the mission of training our partners to make the world a little bit safer."

COURTESY GRAPHIC