

THE CARGO COURIER

123rd Airlift Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard, Louisville, Ky.

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Agribusiness team returns from Afghanistan



Photos by Maj. Dale Greer/KyANG

Above: Members of the Kentucky National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team II receive a standing ovation as they enter the Base Annex during a welcome-home ceremony here May 1. Comprised of about 60 Army and Air National Guardsmen, KYADT II just returned from a 12-month deployment to Afghanistan, where they worked to make Afghani farmers become agriculturally self-sufficient, fostered business opportunities through a women's-empowerment initiative and provided force protection.

Right: Sgt. Shahid M. Iqbal hugs his fiancée, Kara Feese, during a welcome-home ceremony held here May 1 for Kentucky Agribusiness Development Team II. KYADT II spent the past year teaching such subjects as bee husbandry and chicken farming to the Afghani people, with the aim of establishing sustainable agricultural markets that can both feed the nation and develop its economy. Sergeant Iqbal and Ms. Feese are getting married in July.



60 Kentucky Guard Soldiers and Airmen fostered self-sufficiency

By Army Capt. Stephen Martin
Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs

Hundreds of friends, family and co-workers packed into the Base Annex here May 1 to welcome home more than 60 Kentucky National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who had just returned from a yearlong agricultural-support mission in Afghanistan.

The troops, all part of the Kentucky National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team II, spent the past 12 months helping Afghani farmers become agriculturally self-sufficient, fostering business opportunities through a women's-empowerment initiative and providing force protection.

"ADT II had the unique responsibility of bringing some good, old-fashioned Kentucky agricultural know-how to a people plagued by decades of war," said Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, Kentucky's adjutant general. He noted that team members provided expert guidance on such subjects as bee husbandry and chicken farming.

"I can't say enough about their professionalism and the positive impact they made on the other side of the world," he added. "This team put Kentucky on the world map for the outstanding job they did."

The Soldiers and Airmen also worked alongside French, New Zealand and Korean coalition forces, covering the largest area of any of the Agribusiness Development Teams in Afghanistan.

Congressman John Yarmuth, who attended the welcome-home ceremony, praised the Kentucky Guardsmen for helping make the world a better place.

"I congratulate you on a job well done,"

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The 123rd Airlift Wing stands ready to answer the call under any circumstances

We all followed the significant events of the past month. Hard spring rains flooded many areas of Kentucky, leading to our governor's activation of specific Kentucky Army National Guard forces. Tornadoes destroyed areas of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and the Carolinas, killing many in their path.

The 123rd Airlift Wing stands ready to support our governor and the governors of other states as needed after a natural disaster.

We also witnessed the elimination of Osama bin Laden, and subsequently increased our awareness of possible terrorist acts of retribution and retaliation. President Obama has asked everyone to remain vigilant and be aware of the ongoing threat to the United States. Subsequently, the Department of Defense directed all military facilities to increase Force Protection measures to FPCON BRAVO.

I sent you a quick e-mail saying we will be ready. The 123rd Airlift Wing will always be ready to respond to the needs of our great nation. We will be ready to respond supporting our governor or another state's governor anywhere in the United States when called.

We will be ready to enable immediate airlift operations in response to a natural disaster or enemy attack whenever and wherever needed. FPCON BRAVO doesn't mean Business as Usual — it means Ready as Always!

FPCON BRAVO will require us to limit our base activities to Official Business Only. Unfortunately, we will not be able to host



Col. Greg Nelson
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

some of the civilian visits we had previously planned, but we must ensure that we are ready to do our job, minimizing the danger to those in our community.

This weekend, please ensure that you review your FPCON BRAVO responsibilities. Review our operational, communications, and information security measures. Know what we need to do at FPCON BRAVO, and what is needed if our readiness requirements increase.

Our anti-terrorism officer and 123rd Security Forces Squadron will provide FPCON BRAVO direction through our unit commanders. Please follow their direction.

Please remember your readiness and awareness measures, not just here on base, but at home, at your civilian job, at school and around the community.

You are the key to the 123rd Airlift Wing's mission success. Your readiness and ability to perform your specific skill sets enables the Kentucky Air National Guard and United States Air Force to fly, fight and win!

How well you prepare to do your job will define our ability to support our nation at a moment's notice.

This UTA and next week, we will participate in the New Madrid earthquake scenario of National Level Exercise 2011. But as you know, we are right in the heart of tornado season, and hurricane season begins in June.

The 123rd Airlift Wing is a first responder force in both the National Guard Bureau and United States Transportation Command hurricane plans.

We are working with Northern Command and United States Transportation Command to be their first enabling force, providing airlift operations for any emergency in the United States, including a response to enemy attack.

The 123rd Airlift Wing will be ready for the call. Know how critical your individual skills and efforts are to 123rd Airlift Wing mission. Take pride, stand tall and be ready!

The 123rd Airlift Wing Stands Ready!

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Our office is located in room 1160 of the Wing Headquarters Building.

We welcome your feedback. Please contact the Public Affairs Office directly if you have suggestions for articles or photography. Publication deadline for submissions to the next issue is July 5.

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Wing dedicates new plaque honoring retirees

The 123rd Airlift Wing dedicated the latest edition to its Retiree Monument last month — a marble slab bearing the names of 35 Airmen who retired from the Kentucky Air Guard in 2010.

A ceremony honoring the retirees was held April 16 in the Lt. Gen. John B. Conway Headquarters Building.

The monument, commissioned and funded by the Kentucky Air National Guard Retiree Group Inc., bears the names of all Airmen who have retired from the unit since its inception in 1947.

“This memorial stands for each and every retired member of this organization,” said retired Chief Master Sgt. Jim Turpin, a member of the group’s board of directors. “It serves to thank and remember those who gave their time and talent to make this a great wing.”

Kentucky Colonel



Maj. Dale Greer/KyANG

Kentucky’s adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini (left), and Mrs. Jodi Gorter, wife of 123rd Operations Group commander Barry Gorter, attach colonel’s rank insignia to the epaulets of the C-130 pilot during a pinning ceremony held April 9 in the Wing Conference Room. Colonel Gorter has been a member of the Kentucky Air Guard since 1991.

Siebert named USAF Distinguished Rifleman

Only 325 have earned the title in the history of the U.S. Air Force

Cargo Courier Staff Report

A member of the Kentucky Air National Guard has earned one of the military’s highest honors for marksmanship, the U.S. Air Force Distinguished Rifleman Badge.

Senior Master Sgt. John Siebert, captain of the Kentucky Air Guard Rifle Team, won the honor for consistently scoring in the top 10 percent of all marksmen participating in multiple Excellence In Competition combat matches at the local, regional and national level, and for logging a cumulative 30 points in a career of shooting.

“This is a major achievement for any marksman,” said Master Sgt. Darryl Loafman, captain of the Kentucky Air Guard Pistol Team and a shooting colleague of Sergeant Siebert’s. “The Distinguished Rifleman Badge is the kind of honor that truly must be earned through years of discipline and dedication.”



Siebert



Distinguished Rifleman Badge

Sergeant Siebert, who received his individually numbered badge during the Winston P. Wilson National Guard Combat Matches at Camp J.T. Robinson, Ark., now joins an elite fraternity of just 324 other Distinguished Riflemen in Air Force history. The distinctive badge is made of 10-karat solid gold and is more strictly regulated than the Medal of Honor, according to military regulations.

“It’s a real honor to be recognized among such a talented group of competitors,” Sergeant Siebert said. “These are some of the top marksmen in the entire United States military.”

The Kentucky Air Guard Marksmanship Team, which includes both the Rifle and Pistol Teams, has a long tradition of excellence, having earned more than two-dozen local, regional and national awards in the past decade, Sergeant Loafman said.

Sergeant Siebert said the Rifle Team is always seeking new members, and he encourages anyone who might be interested in competition shooting to contact him directly for more information on team benefits and requirements.

Senior Master Sgt. John Siebert may be reached via e-mail at john.siebert@ang.af.mil.



Above: Spc. Justin H. Allen and his wife, Laura, hold their 9-month-old daughter, Elissa Skye, during a welcome-home ceremony held here May 1 for members of the Kentucky National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team II. Elissa Skye was born during Specialist Allen's deployment.

Right: Amber Caskey greets her boyfriend, Staff Sgt. David A. Holeman, during the KYADT II welcome-home ceremony held May 1 at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base. The agribusiness development team was deployed to Afghanistan for a year.



Below: The Kentucky Army Guard's Staff Sgt. Derrick B. Dennis gets a welcome-home hug from one of his biggest fans May 1.



Above: Air Guardsmen who deployed to Afghanistan as members of the Agribusiness Development Team II pose May 1. Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini (center).



Kentucky's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, greets the members of KYADT II (below) for their outstanding service in Afghanistan, saying they "put Kentucky on the map."



Afghanistan

Continued from Front Page

he said. "You've made us all so proud, and we're so glad you've made it home safe."

Now that KYADT II is back in the United States,

the team's work has been handed off to Kentucky Agribusiness Development Team III, which arrived in Afghanistan a few weeks ago.

Like its predecessor, KYADT III is comprised of volunteer Soldiers and Airmen from across the Kentucky National Guard. The new team's commander is Col. Neil Mullaney of the 123rd Airlift Wing.



...Afghanistan as part of Kentucky ... 1 with the adjutant general,



...rd W. Tonini (above), praised ... standing accomplishments in ... e world map."



Above: Col. J. Hunter Mathews Jr., commander of KYADT II, thanked his troops during a speech in the Base Annex May 1.

Left: Congressman John Yarmuth expressed his appreciation May 1 to the more than 60 Soldiers and Airmen who comprised KYADT II, saying "you've made us all proud."

Below: Sgt. Quatrina E. Bilbrew, a human resources specialist with KYADT II, listens to Congressman John Yarmuth speak May 1 during the team's welcome-home ceremony in the Base Annex.



Photos by Maj. Dale Greer/KyANG

Family receives posthumous POW medal

Adjutant general bestows award for late U.S. pilot captured during WW II

By Maj. Dale Greer
123rd Airlift Wing Chief of Public Affairs

The family of a late Kentucky Air National Guard pilot was presented with his posthumous Prisoner of War Medal in a ceremony held April 16 at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base.

Merlin R. "Bob" Kehrer was a first lieutenant in the United States Army Air Corps who flew combat missions over Europe during World War II. His P-51 Mustang aircraft was shot down west of Stuttgart, Germany, on Feb. 24, 1944, and the young pilot was captured as a prisoner of war. For the next 14 months, Lieutenant Kehrer lived in captivity alongside other Allied POWs at Stalag Luft 1 in Barth, Germany.

"Merlin Kehrer was an American hero in the traditional sense," said Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, Kentucky's adjutant general, who presented the POW Medal to the pilot's children, Bob and Tom Kehrer and Bonnie Urbanski, before an audience of more than 50 Kentucky Guardsmen, friends and family in the Headquarters Building of the 123rd Airlift Wing.

"He took on a hazardous mission that required the best his generation had to offer. As a young lieutenant, he risked his life in the skies over Europe to save us all from a tyrant gone mad. He endured the most dire of human indignities as a prisoner of war, and yet he persevered. He survived.

"Perhaps his greatest accomplishment was that he came home and started a family. His children, Tom, Bob and Bonnie are here with us today."

General Tonini noted that Lieutenant Kehrer's dedication to service was so strong, he helped found the Kentucky Air National Guard following the war, earning a promotion to the rank of captain. It was in the service of the Kentucky Air Guard in 1951 that then-Capt. Kehrer was killed when his aircraft crashed near Leesburg, Va., while returning from a flight to Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C.

"I feel a deep sense of gratitude to this great aviator," General Tonini said. "Captain



Tech. Sgt. Dennis Flora/KyANG



Above: Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, Kentucky's adjutant general, presents a posthumous Prisoner of War Medal to the sons and daughter of a late Kentucky Air National Guard Pilot, Capt. Merlin R. "Bob" Kehrer, during a ceremony April 16 at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base. Captain Kehrer was a young lieutenant and P-51 pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps when his plane was shot down over enemy territory during World War II. He spent 14 months as a prisoner of war in a German POW camp.

Left: Then-1st Lt. Kehrer kept a journal detailing his experiences in Stalag Luft 1, including the meager rations he and his fellow prisoners were given to eat. He also recalls meeting Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme commander of Allied Forces in Europe, after his release from prison, calling him a "swell fellow." Lieutenant Kehrer later became one of the founding members of the Kentucky Air National Guard. (Courtesy photo)

Kehrer died young, doing the very thing he loved so much — flying for his country. I can tell you Captain Kehrer's legacy of service and sacrifice lives on today among our fighting men and women throughout the commonwealth. We live by the motto, 'Unbridled Service.' Captain Merlin Kehrer was the epitome of those two words."

One of Captain Kehrer's children, Tom, expressed his gratitude to the Kentucky Air Guard for recognizing the sacrifices of his father, a man who deeply enjoyed military service.

"I want to thank everybody in the 123rd (Airlift Wing)," said a visibly moved Tom

Kehrer, who was only 4 years old when his father died. "He loved it, he really loved it. I just wish I could have known more about him. God bless the 123rd, the American military and this beautiful country."

For someone who dedicated his adult life to military aviation, there's more than a little irony in the fact that Merlin R. "Bob" Kehrer had such a difficult time becoming a pilot.

His first term of military service came in 1937, when he joined a ground unit — the Kentucky National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 149th Infantry

See POW, Back Page

Airmen earn top awards from Guard Bureau

By Master Sgt. Philip Speck
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Two members of the Kentucky Air Guard have been recognized by the National Guard Bureau for their outstanding job performance.

Master Sgt. Cynthia Rogers was named Air National Guard Retention Office Manager of the Year for Region 4, a geographic area that includes nine states and the District of Columbia, while Tech. Sgt. Anthony Walker was named ANG Production Recruiter of the Year for Region 4.

“Both of these individuals are exceptional Airmen who perform their crucial duties with dedication and excellence, day-in and day-out,” said Senior Master Sgt. Scott Crimm, recruiting and retention superintendent for the Kentucky Air Guard. “Their outstanding commitment is one of the reasons why the Kentucky Air Guard consistently meets its recruiting and retention goals, keeping the unit strong and well-positioned to answer a wide range of mission needs all around the world.”

Sergeant Walker earned his honor with a long list of accomplishments, including targeted recruiting efforts designed to fill chronically understaffed positions in the special operations career field. During fiscal year 2010, those efforts resulted in a 100 percent staffing rate for pararescue and support positions, and a 90 percent staffing rate for combat control positions. Sergeant Walker also led the organization in overall recruits, enlisting 29 Airmen in the Kentucky Air National Guard during fiscal year 2010 to boost unit-wide staffing levels to 103 percent of the authorized troop count.

Lt. Col. Kathryn Pfeifer, commander of the Kentucky Air Guard’s 123rd Force Support Squadron, called Sergeant Walker a “truly outstanding recruiter who continually focuses his recruiting efforts, enabling us to find candidates to fill specific needs.”

“He has an exceptional way of interacting with candidates, cementing their interest in the Kentucky Air National Guard while engaging with unit commanders about their vacancy needs,” she added.

A strong supporter of diversity, Sergeant Walker worked with human resources during fiscal year 2010 to develop recruiting strategies intended to attract a broader range of young men and women to the unit.

“He’s continually working on plans and strategies to bring new Airmen into the Kentucky Air Guard,” Sergeant Crimm said. “He also gives back to the community by donating off-duty time to a local youth ministry and to a mentorship program.”

Sergeant Rogers earned her award with an equally long list of accomplishments, including a 94 percent reenlistment rate for fiscal year 2010. During those 12 months, only six Airmen elected not to re-enlist in the Kentucky Air Guard.

Sergeant Rogers also is a Post 9-11 Montgomery G.I. Bill guru, Sergeant Crimm said.

“She is recognized within the Air Guard recruiting and retention community as an expert on those benefits, and she briefed the entire Kentucky Air Guard on the program to ensure maximum awareness,” he said.

“Sergeant Rogers always has the best interests of our Airmen in mind,” Colonel Pfeifer said. “She goes above and beyond to ensure



Maj. Dale Greer/KyANG

The Kentucky Air National Guard’s Master Sgt. Cynthia Rogers and Tech. Sgt. Anthony Walker have been recognized by the National Guard Bureau for outstanding recruiting and retention performance. Sergeant Rogers was named Air National Guard Retention Office Manager of the Year for Region 4, a geographic area that includes nine states and the District of Columbia, while Sergeant Walker was named ANG Production Recruiter of the Year for Region 4.

unit members get the information they need on items such as the Yellow Ribbon Integration Program, tuition assistance, the Post 9-11 G.I. Bill or re-enlistment bonuses. She is a fair and honest individual who clearly outlines the benefits and programs available to our members, and who also keeps commanders informed on how they can further assist in areas where their Airmen are concerned.”

In her off-duty time, Sergeant Rogers serves the local homeless population by volunteering at Louisville’s Christian Wayside Mission complex. She also champions diversity recruiting efforts by attending minority events in the community.

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS

POW

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Regiment — while still a sophomore at Male High School in Louisville. He served with the Guard until July 21, 1939.

After the outbreak of World War II in Europe in the fall of 1939, the teenager attempted to join the U.S. Army Air Corps but was told he was too young. Undeterred, he traveled to Canada, where the Royal Canadian Air Force signed him up for flight training and a commission. He received his pilot's badge on Nov. 21, 1941, and was posted to England, then Egypt and South Africa.

Finally, on Nov. 15, 1943, he left the RCAF to join the U.S. Army Air Corps, which by then had deemed him old enough to serve.

As a P-51 pilot, Lieutenant Kehrer flew numerous combat missions over Europe before being shot down in enemy territory. During his 14 months of German captivity, he and his fellow prisoners received food rations of variable quality, at one point eating a single daily meal of turnip soup and perhaps a small potato, according to the lieutenant's log book.

Life wasn't always austere, however. He wrote that prisoners received occasional morale parcels from the Red Cross and were permitted to sing Christmas carols.

As the war drew to a close, the Germans began demolishing infrastructure and finally withdrew from Stalag Luft 1 on April 30, 1945, leaving the prisoners to care for themselves. When a Russian Army reconnaissance team showed up the next day, the prisoners "cheered lustily ... (for) about half an hour solid," Lieutenant Kehrer wrote.

After the men heard a radio broadcast May 7 announcing that the war had officially ended, they celebrated by shooting off flares, according to the journal. "The Russians are very friendly to us," Lieutenant Kehrer added. "They are doing all they can to make our lot a happier one."

The journal also contained a sobering reminder of Nazi atrocities during the war.

"A French concentration camp, with dungeons full, was discovered near here a couple of days ago," Lieutenant Kehrer wrote May 7.

"It contained about 2,000 Frenchmen, of which about 250 were dead and 300 were dying. They were in very bad shape. Some had been in dungeons for many

months & were hardly recognizable as human beings."

American B-17s arrived May 12 to begin evacuating the camp, according to the log book, and Lieutenant Kehrer departed for France within 24 hours. Before returning to the United States, he spent an undetermined amount of time at Camp Lucky Strike, near the Normandy Coast, where he met Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander of Allied Forces in Europe.

"I talked to him personally," Lieutenant Kehrer recalled. "He said he is damn proud of us.... He asked about my last mission, treatment & where I was from. He's a swell fellow! He said, 'I am just a G.I. Call me Ike.'"

Upon returning home from the war, the pilot flew the F-51 Mustang, a variation of the original P-51, for the newly formed Kentucky Air National Guard. He was piloting an F-51 on March 30, 1951, when the plane suffered a fatal crash in Virginia. His remains were brought home and interred at Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville.

Captain Kehrer never received his Prisoner of War Medal because of an administrative oversight, officials said.